

HC presses for road safety

Up to government to implement guidelines

THE High Court (HC) ordered the government to implement 28 guidelines by a seven-member expert committee formed under a court order designed specifically to reduce road accidents and traffic jams. The ruling puts the responsibility squarely on authorities to implement a wide range of measures that would greatly reduce the high casualty and injury rate people suffer as a result of accidents on highways. According to the World Health Organisation, that figure stands at around 21,000 per annum.

The government had, on earlier occasion, banned 3-wheelers from highways, but the drive against errant drivers of such vehicles sputtered out after a few weeks. The question then is why take a decision which is only going to be implemented half-heartedly. We thank the HC for stepping in to address vital issues of road safety. However, these are steps that should have been taken by relevant bodies of the government and existing rules ought to have been implemented without making it necessary for the HC to step in.

The series of measures spelled out by the HC like raising penalties for law breakers, making it mandatory for drivers of long distance vehicles to carry valid permits while possessing a certain level of education are all enforceable under existing laws or laws that are being amended. The issue of putting up or removing barriers that hinder visibility or cause obstructions to free movement of fast moving vehicles on roads should go a long way in addressing the nagging problems of safety. We certainly hope that the recommendations are implemented without delay.

Trump's irresponsible utterances

Neurotic comments are counterproductive

WE are constrained that the irresponsible comments coming out of some GOP presidential hopefuls have only helped to spawn Islamophobia in the USA, the most recent of which is Donald Trump advocating shutdowns of all Muslims entering the US, even Muslim US citizens who happen to be abroad at the moment. Trump's suggestion comes in the wake of the killing in San Bernadine.

While it is understandable that as a part of free speech everyone has the right to vent his or her feelings, what has been uttered in the name of campaign speech is regrettable and utterly reprehensible. And equally alarming is to see the number of adherents to Trump's views. Populism may fetch a few votes for a candidate but carries within it seeds of his undoing. History tells us that all fascists were once popular leaders.

Our concerns stem from the likely serious and far reaching consequences such comments will have long after the elections are over. Even if Trump were not nominated, and we hope that he would not be, his utterances are bound to create a mindset among a segment of Americans about Muslims that may not be easy to erase.

We are happy to note that there have been across the board condemnation of the comments including Trump's fellow Republicans. And both President Obama and Hilary Clinton have hit the right chord. It will be a gross mistake to target the Muslims in general.

COMMENTS

"EC turns a blind eye"
(December 6, 2015)

Najli Hasan

Every organisation turns a blind eye and deaf ear to ruling-party people's violation of laws; it's nothing new.

Dian

AL-backed mayoral candidates are staging showdowns and bringing out processions and motorcades, showing no regard for the electoral code.

"Families ask govt to bring them back"
(December 5, 2015)

Dian

The families of the victims of enforced disappearance have resorted to every possible means to get back -- or at least to get the news of -- their near and dear ones. They have filed diaries, written to the home ministry, formed human chains, held press conferences, sought help from the government, but with no result.

Ayan Mohammed

Only those who have lost someone in that matter would understand the pain of the victims' families. Unfortunately, the influential of this country do not lose their near and dear ones like that.

Naila Irin

The government must take necessary steps to bring back or at least trace the victims of enforced disappearance.

Ayesha

The government cannot in any way avoid its responsibility as the victims have allegedly been picked up by the RAB.

Violence is not inevitable

Nine Dhaka-based women Ambassadors submitted this joint op-ed for the "16 days of activism against gender-based violence" campaign.

AS women ambassadors representing nine nations, there are certainly a wide range of issues on which we focus. Yet we all vigorously agree on this: the urgent need to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in Bangladesh, in our own countries, and across the globe.

Studies show that gender-based violence (GBV) is disturbingly pervasive. Worldwide, the World Health Organization estimates that one of every three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence by a partner during her lifetime. Here in Bangladesh, findings from the Report on Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey 2011 published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics indicate that as many as 87 percent of married women have ever experienced any type of violence by their husbands.

We can do something to stop it.

Gender-based violence threatens entire communities, precludes economic growth, and fuels cycles of violence and conflict. A recent World Bank study showed that violence against women has significant economic costs. These include health-care costs, lost income for women, decreased productivity, and negative impact across generations.

According to UN Women, violence against women causes more death and disability for women and girls between the ages of 15 and 44 than do cancer, traffic accidents, malaria and war combined.

Gender-based violence comes in many forms, from intimate partner violence to sexual assault to early and forced marriage. Each form of violence is a stain on our collective humanity, a barrier to peace and stability, and a call to action for all of us. Violence is not inevitable -- and each of us can do something to stop it.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based

Violence is an opportunity for everyone to act. Every November 25, the International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women kicks off the 16 Days, which ends on Human Rights Day on December 10. Launched by the United Nations, the campaign demands action from everyone -- men and women,

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boys and girls, government officials and community leaders. Around the world and across Bangladesh, people are taking action to raise awareness and promote social norms that refuse to tolerate GBV, prerequisites for preventing this scourge.

WOMEN ON THE MOVE

SARAT DASH

BANGLADESH has a long tradition of activism against gender based discrimination. By some accounts, it's as old as similar traditions in more developed countries, which have since achieved a good degree of parity between the sexes in areas like civil liberty, freedom, education and employment. It's therefore a happy coincidence that the UN's 16 days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence run through and end right after the very day Bangladesh sets aside to pay its respects to Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, a pioneering champion of women's equality in the region and someone who stood up for women during a time when feminist notions were new, anywhere in the world. Begum Rokeya pushed for economic equality between men and women and she might have been pleased to see that today both men and women from Bangladesh are travelling overseas in search of work.

However, employment-related migration is a recent phenomenon for Bangladeshi women. Until 2004, only 1 percent of labour migrants from Bangladesh were women but this increased rapidly to 19 percent by 2015, much faster than the institutional mechanism has been able to keep up, leading to a range of issues particular to female migration being inadequately addressed. Some of these issues are common to both men and women, like access to health care and information, low wage rates, but some, particularly related to skills, education and justice, are slightly more specific. Women are also subject to different risks, including physical, sexual and verbal abuse as domestic workers, who make up the bulk of Bangladeshi women going overseas for work.

Many migrant women are excluded from social and legal protection as domestic work is rarely covered under labour legislation. This is further complicated by the fact that Bangladesh hasn't ratified the Domestic Workers Act itself, making it difficult for the government to require the same of destination countries. Women migrant workers (domestic workers) are frequently confined to the employer's home, often with no means of communication, social support or security. They also endure lengthy working hours, are paid low wages, and have their papers confiscated.

There are a number of factors that keep migrant women in a perpetual state

of vulnerability. Firstly, they are often from rural environments and are unable to operate optimally in a more sophisticated domestic environment. They struggle to handle appliances, be it washing machines and microwaves, or function in a foreign cultural and linguistic context, and are mistreated because of this. Secondly, their virtual isolation means they have limited social contact and are entirely at the mercy of their employer's whims, with little or no recourse to support. Finally, there is an absence of structures like helplines, associations and legal assistance to which they can turn.

The government of Bangladesh has attempted to address these by establishing Technical Training Centres (TTC), where IOM supported the

defined policies and implementation systems to ensure the protection, rights and well-being of women migrant workers are required. These need to be applied to protection clauses in bilateral agreements to guarantee safe working conditions and access to a support system and health services. Embassies overseas should provide socialising opportunities for women migrants so that they can leave their employers' houses and have access to their Labour Attachés, as well as to a community support structure. Recruiting agencies should also play a stronger role in securing better working conditions from companies in destination countries.

The other area of focus is economic opportunity. According to an IOM study (Returnee Female Migrant Workers of

they are only able to avail of the lowest paid jobs.

Women migrants with a low-level of skills and education are also less able to claim their rights and are at a higher risk of exploitation. They are more likely to be employed and (be forced to) accept working in unsafe and unregulated sectors as they rarely have an alternative.

Recognising the woman migrant worker's potential contribution to local and national development and upgrading current policies, including the National Skills Development Policy 2011, the National Women's Development Policy 2012, and the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013, will be a beneficial situation for everyone - the migrant, the country and the overseas employer.



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introduction of domestic workers' training curriculums and equipment. The government has also appointed an expanding pool of designated Labour Attachés in diplomatic posts to provide support to overseas migrants; again the IOM has supported this initiative. The IOM also provides pre-departure orientation packages to help migrants find their way in a new environment and reaches out to local NGOs in destination countries so that they can provide some support. Domestically, entities like the Bangladesh Obibashi Mohila Sromik Association (BOMSA) and Obhibashi Kormi Unnayan Programme (OKUP) also exist to protect the welfare of migrants.

But more needs to be done. Clearly

Bangladesh - Insights into Improving the Employment Experience and Opportunities in Reintegration, 29 January, 2014), as many as 67 percent of female migrants had no training experience prior to going abroad. But, females migrating for work constitute an important potential source of income for Bangladesh. They can contribute to economic growth by easing pressures in the local job market, but most importantly, it has been found that female migrant workers tend to remit a greater share of their earnings than men. Currently, investments in building a skilled female workforce remain limited, leading to the under-utilisation of migrant women's potential to contribute to local and national development, since

Even the simple act of providing a certification of prior learning for skills picked up during a previous job can give migrants better bargaining power and access to higher paying jobs the second time around. Often, migrants have picked up language and technical skills that could put them in a higher bracket instead of having to reapply as unskilled labour.

Bangladesh has made great strides in creating domestic opportunities for women in the workforce. With overseas employment becoming a rapidly growing sector, the country has a renewed responsibility to affirm its commitment to the ideals of visionaries like Begum Rokeya.

The writer is Chief of Mission, IOM Dhaka.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

A lesson from Chennai

Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu in India, has been under water since November 9, 2015; thanks to the torrential rain. This beautiful city has been paralysed and nearly 300 people are estimated to have died because of the flood. Dhaka city has already experienced baleful situations due to light rain as the drainage system does not work. The government and the Dhaka City Corporation authority must come forward with a master plan that consists of improving the drainage system and resurrecting Dhaka's rivers by saving them from the hands of unscrupulous businessmen.

Otherwise, our situation could be worse than Chennai. MD. Abdul Karim
Bangladesh Bank



PHOTO: AFP

Introduce DRS system for BPL

- It's highly unfortunate that the umpiring has been very poor during the entire tournament of BPL. LBW decisions which went in favour of the bowler despite TV reviews indicating that the ball has clearly missed the leg stump. Catches behind the stump were not given out, although reviews clearly showed the ball nicking the bat. This kind of sloppy umpiring is unacceptable. I, therefore, suggest that the Decision Review System (DRS) be introduced in BPL matches. Since this is only a T20 game, time is not a factor.
- Aminur Rahim
- New DOHS, Mohakhali
- Dhaka