

Have we forgotten about dignity?



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SHUPROVA TASNEEM

I’VE been thinking a lot about dignity lately. I initially sat down to write about one of the (too) many pressing issues that have dominated news headlines over the past month. I considered writing about corruption in the public sector, or the spiralling costs of living. I thought about writing on how ordinary people are struggling to pay their bills even as the super-rich continue to line their pockets with taxpayers’ money through dodgy energy contracts that reward them for producing zero electricity. I even briefly considered writing about the stress on our foreign exchange reserves, before accepting that there are experts who are far more suited to speak on this than me.

In the midst of my research, I came across a sentence that I now can’t seem to get out of my head: “The dignity of the human person is not only a fundamental right in itself, but constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights.”

Apparently, “dignity” is a big buzzword in international human rights circles. It is rooted in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, where the very first article proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. In recent years, the right to “die with dignity” has also come up in the countries that are having conversations around assisted dying in the final stages of life. It’s a simple, albeit slightly morbid, concept stemming from a sense of self – the right to hold one’s head high and be treated with respect, regardless of what position in life one is.

This sense of self, I believe, is deeply rooted in our culture. Sometimes it can take a toxic turn, where an entire family’s “honour” (or shame) is associated with the



Thousands of tea workers in northeast Bangladesh went on a strike last month demanding a decent, dignified daily wage.

FILE PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

behaviour of its members, especially the women. But a lot of the time, it is simply a quiet wish in the life of every Bangladeshi who just wants a roof over their heads, some food on their plates, and some stability, security and dignity for themselves and their families. And as we saw in 1971, when this quiet wish to not bow your heads among equals is not met, it eventually turns into a deafening roar for change.

In recent decades, Bangladeshis have seen a lot of change. For a long while now, our main buzzword has been “development.” And it is true that, despite the blow of the pandemic and the subsequent global economic downturn, we have still

seen a great deal of it. We have been labelled as one of the fastest growing economies in the world, we’ve seen major structural changes and social transformation, and we’ve done really well in a number of human development indicators.

Of course, there is a growing concern that all this development has

wage. Their demands eventually fell on deaf ears, and they had to make do with an increase of Tk 50 in their daily wage. Even then, this was considered generous by the usual standards, since the last time they got a raise, it was by Tk 18.

Supporters of tea estate owners took to the social media to proclaim

of others’ labour, while not only ignoring their right to choose how to organise their life, but all the while acting like we are doing them a great favour by providing them employment (that we ultimately benefit from). The RMG sector is an example of this, where you routinely hear tone-deaf industry leaders talk

Tea is not the only industry where we are happy to consume the fruits of others’ labour, while not only ignoring their right to choose how to organise their life, but all the while acting like we are doing them a great favour by providing them employment (that we ultimately benefit from). The RMG sector is an example of this, where you routinely hear tone-deaf industry leaders talk about how much they have done for female workers, instead of talking about how much money these workers have put into their pockets.

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During the pandemic, we heard a lot of talk about valuing health workers who were risking their lives to provide care to patients. Yet, if you were to walk into a hospital right now, you would see “ward boys” and “ayahs” being ordered around, zero respect being shown for the services they provide. We talk about food security, but do we value the labour that agricultural workers put in to produce the food on our tables? How often do you end up referring to someone who is of a “lower class” to you as *tui*, even

if you aren’t even that familiar with them? We fixate on the economic importance of migrant workers’ remittances – which in August crossed the USD 2 billion mark for the second consecutive month – yet, how annoyed would you be if a migrant worker sat next to you on a flight and asked for help in filling out their passenger form?

You might be thinking, surely there is too much happening in the world right now to be hung up on this. But in my opinion, this isn’t an individual issue. Our complete inability to accord dignity to some of our hardest working citizens goes hand-in-hand with the creation of a culture where authority figures demand either silence or ingratiation. So when police officers abuse power, when public sector officials take bribes, when employers refuse weekly holidays, and when universities’ moral-police their students, the norm is to just grit your teeth and take it.

And it’s not just living with dignity that seems a distant reality for so many people in this country. It’s dying with dignity, too. Take, for example, the Chawkbazar fire last month, where six employees of a road-side restaurant finished working all night, went to rest in a break room, and were burnt to death from a fire originating from a plastic factory in the same building. They were all young, working men from ordinary backgrounds. Their injuries were so severe that only one person could be identified for certain. It’s possible, though, that after a gruelling night shift, they fell asleep quickly and asphyxiated from the smoke before the fire even touched their bodies. And as always is the case with these “accidents” that continue to happen over and over again due to corporate negligence, a probe committee was formed, nothing came of it, and we all forgot about them.

But if the people in a country with so much development and so much progress can’t even expect a dignified death, then what was it all for?

Some early lessons from Pakistan floods



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Dr Saleemul Huq is director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).

SALEEMUL HUQ

THE ongoing devastating floods in Pakistan, which follow a deadly heat wave from just a few weeks back, is not just another flood event. They are, in fact, a manifestation of the undoubted fact that the world is already suffering the impacts of climate change and the consequent losses and damages. Even when the floodwaters continue to inundate nearly a third of the country, with over a thousand people dead and millions homeless, it is still possible to identify what needs to be done going forward in Pakistan as well as the South Asian region, and indeed at the global level.

The first lesson for Pakistan is that, though a flood of this magnitude might have been a once-in-a-century event in the past, it will, unfortunately, become more frequent in the years to come. Hence, it is essential to put in place appropriate measures to prepare the country and the people to be ready to face such events in the future through adaptation to climate change. This problem is not just Pakistan’s, but of every country in South Asia, particularly because of shared rivers and ecosystems, such as the Indus River between India and Pakistan, and the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers between Nepal, India and Bangladesh. All these common problems will require much better cooperation between the neighbouring countries as no country can deal with this problem on its own.

Thus, the environmental cooperation and particularly efforts to adapt to climate change need to be coordinated between the countries in South Asia. This can and should also include sharing knowledge on how to tackle the different problems, as each country has expertise in an issue that can be shared with the other countries. For example, Bangladesh can share its expertise in cyclone warning

and preparedness as well as locally led adaptation in its coastal areas. India can share expertise in urban adaptation and also adapting to heatwaves, while Nepal and Bhutan have expertise in adaptation in mountain ecosystems and Pakistan has expertise in managing droughts. There is much that can be achieved by enhancing knowledge-sharing within the region through regional bodies and groups, such as Saarc.

From now on, we will see new, perhaps record-breaking weather events in different parts of the world more frequently, with cumulative impacts that might dwarf the impacts of the Covid pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war put together. The world is not at all prepared for facing this emergency, and must get ready urgently if we hope to minimise the adverse impacts of these events.

At the global level, there is also much that can be done and needs to be done on a priority basis. The first issue is linked with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), where the developing countries have been advocating for creating a fund to cover the losses and damages caused by human-induced climate change. Unfortunately, this demand, which was put forward by Pakistan on behalf of the developing countries at the annual climate summit COP26 last year, did not get accepted by the developed countries. It has now been put forward again for the agenda of

the upcoming COP27, scheduled for November this year. It still has to be adopted at the beginning of the COP by all the other countries – we should all lobby very hard to ensure that. If it fails to get adopted, then COP27 will be a failure before it even starts.

The climate change minister of Pakistan has already declared the enhanced magnitude of the floods in the country as the result of human-induced climate change, hence the need for the rest of the world to provide finance to Pakistan to address the losses and damages caused by the floods.

One of the greatest global champions for promoting more urgent action to combat climate change has been UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who has been urging countries to take actions more urgently than they have done so far. However, beyond urging governments to take action, the UN chief can take one important action himself, which is to appoint a special envoy for addressing loss and damage from human-induced climate change. The main role for the special envoy would be to bridge the gap between the UNFCCC and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), which brings together the humanitarian actors who deal with the impacts as they occur. Also, the envoy would be able to link global-level actions with actions at national and even local levels through agencies as well as international civil society groups.

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ফ্যাক্স নং- সি এস/সেক্রেট-ঢাকা/২০২২/১০০১

তারিখঃ ০৬/০৯/২০২২খ্রিঃ

“বার্ষিক দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি” (২০২২-২০২৩)

১.	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়, স্বাস্থ্য সেবা বিভাগ, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।
২.	সংগ্রাহক সত্তা	বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ক্লিনিক, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।
৩.	সংগ্রাহক সত্তার নাম	সিভিল সার্জন, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ক্লিনিক, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।
৪.	কাজের নাম	কোড নং-৩২৫২১০৫, খাত-এম.এস.আর., (ঔষধ) সামগ্রী ক্রয়।
৫.	দরপত্র আহ্বানের সূত্র ও তারিখ	ফ্যাক্স নং- সি এস/সেক্রেট-ঢাকা/২০২২-২০২৩/১০০১, তারিখ- ০৬/০৯/২০২২খ্রিঃ.
৬.	সংগ্রহ পদ্ধতি	দরপত্র এবং দারুণিক প্রাক্কলিত ব্যয় উন্মুক্ত পদ্ধতি (ওপেন)
৭.	বাজেট ও টাকার উৎস	রাজস্ব খাত।
৮.	দরপত্র সিভিটিল বিক্রয়ের তারিখ ও স্থান	সিভিল সার্জনের কার্যালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ক্লিনিক, ঢাকা। ০৮/০৯/২০২২খ্রিঃ হইতে ১৪/০৯/২০২২খ্রিঃ পর্যন্ত
৯.	দরপত্র সিভিটিল দাখিলের তারিখ ও সময়	২৫/০৯/২০২২খ্রিঃ দুপুর ১১.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১০.	দরপত্র সিভিটিল খোলাশের তারিখ ও সময়	২৫/০৯/২০২২খ্রিঃ দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকায় দরপত্র খোলা হইবে। সর্বশেষ দরপত্র দাতা অথবা তাহার বৈধ প্রতিনিধি ঐ সময় উপস্থিত থাকিতে পারিবেন।
১১.	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর নাম, পদবী, ঠিকানা ও ফোন	ডাঃ সিরাজুম্ম মুনীর, সিভিল সার্জন, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ক্লিনিক, ঢাকা। ফোন-৯৫১১০৫৮।
১২.	দরপত্র সিভিটিল খোলাশের স্থান	সিভিল সার্জনের কার্যালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ক্লিনিক, ঢাকা। (সিভিল সার্জনের কক্ষ)
১৩.	দরপত্র দাখিলকারীর (সিভিটিল ক্রয়কারীর) যোগ্যতা	সরকার অনুমোদিত প্রকৃত ঔষধ প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিম্নোক্ত শর্তপূর্ণ সাপেক্ষেঃ ১। দরপত্র দাতাকে অবশ্যই বৈধ ঔষধ প্রস্তুতকারক প্রতিষ্ঠান হইতে হইবে এবং প্রতিষ্ঠানের নৈম লাইসেন্স থাকতে হইবে। ২। দরপত্র দাতাকে অবশ্যই গত (২০২০-২০২১ অথবা ২০২১-২০২২খ্রিঃ) অর্থ বৎসরের সরকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানে ঔষধ সরবরাহের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকিতে হইবে। ৩। দরপত্র দাখিলকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের গড় বার্ষিক বিক্রয়ের পরিমাণ কমপক্ষে ১০০ (একশত কোটি) টাকা হইতে হইবে এবং ঐ মর্মে মূলক কর্তৃপক্ষের নিকট হইতে প্রত্যয়ন পত্র থাকিতে হইবে। ৪। দরপত্র দাখিলকৃত প্রতিষ্ঠান কর্তৃক তাদের উৎপাদিত ঔষধপত্র কমপক্ষে বর্ষিঃবিশ্বের ০৫ (পাঁচ) টি দেশে সরবরাহ করিয়াছেন ঐ মর্মে প্রত্যয়ন পত্র থাকিতে হইবে।
১৪.	দরপত্র সিভিটিলের মূল্য অফেরৎযোগ্য	(১) ঔষধপত্র-৭৫০/- (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ টাকা) দরপত্র বাবদ উদ্দেশিত টাকা ট্রেজারী চালানোর মাধ্যমে সরকারী কোষাগারে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক/সোনালী ব্যাংক, কোড নং-১-২৭১১-০০০০-২৩৬৬-এ জমাদান পূর্বক মূলকপি এবং সিভিল সার্জন বরাবর তাহাদের নিজস্ব প্যাচে একটি আবেদনপত্র সহ সিভিল সার্জনের কার্যালয়, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ক্লিনিক, ঢাকার ক্যাপ শাখায় জমা দিয়ে সিভিটিল সঞ্জ্ঞহ করিতে হইবে।
১৫.	দরপত্রের সংশ্লিষ্ট আর্নেস্ট মানি/পে-অর্ডার জমা দিতে হইবে (যাফা ফেরত যোগ্য)।	দরপত্রের সাথে যেকোনো তফসিলি ব্যাংক হইতে সিভিল সার্জন, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ক্লিনিক, ঢাকার অনুকূলে ৩,০১,৪৭৬/- (তিন লক্ষ এক হাজার চারশত ছিয়ান্ন) টাকার।

বিশেষ শর্তাবলীঃ

ক) নিম্নাঙ্ককারী/দরপত্র মূল্যায়ন কমিটি কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে। কমিটির সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলিয়া বিবেচিত হইবে।

খ) আলোচ্য দরপত্র The public Procurement Rules-2008এর Open Tendering Method মোতাবেক পরিচালিত হবে।

গ) দরপত্র কমিটি সর্বনিম্ন দরদাতার দরপত্র গ্রহণে বাধ্য নহে।

ঘ) দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী দরপত্র দাখিলকারীর যোগ্যতা (সিভিটিল ক্রয়কারীর যোগ্যতা) সিভিটিলে বিস্তারিত বর্ণিত আছে।

৬.৯.২২

(ডাঃ সিরাজুম্ম মুনীর)

সিভিল সার্জন

বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয় ক্লিনিক, ঢাকা।

ফোননং- ৯৫১১০৫৮

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