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I.T. Manager Md. Ruhul Amin

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Violence against women

and worse consequences

PARVEZ BABUL

The time is hostile, mobility is fraught with dangers and difficulties, the lives are insecure and the total situation is in disfavour of most of the girls and women in Bangladesh and India. Same situation exists in other countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Considering the incidents of violence against women, genital mutilation, rape and gang-rape, rape in war time are creating big problems in many countries. There are hundreds of examples of sexual assault, eve teasing/ stalking and violence against girls and women in my hand and in your knowledge too to mention. In Bangladesh, for example, only in January, 2013, according to a report of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a total of 446 women faced violence across the country. Of them, 125 were raped, 30 were gang-raped, 14 were killed after rape and 14 faced sexual harassment. A total of 12 domestic workers also were the victims of repression. In fact, the rate of violence against women is alarmingly high and terribly crossed the numbers of previous records. We must put an end to these life-threatening problems of girls and women and the unacceptable consequences.

The existing systems and loopholes in law are encourviolence aging against women. So, we, together with men and women must end the culture of silence. We demand implementation of the laws in real sense and the government must take action through parliament as the state's initiatives. We need to build a system or culture of family, educational institution, transportation, work place, society and state where women move and live with dignity and honour without fear and hesitation. We want such a country where women are honoured/ respected and well-defended/ protected equally as men. Patterns of violence

Many of you knew late Nasreen Huq. She was a rights activist in Bangladesh, former Country Director of Action Aid, and a proactive member of naripokkho. She was also my colleague. Once, I saw a woman was crying keeping her head at the knee of Nasreen Huq. After the departure of that woman,

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what I heard from Nasreen T Hug, was unbelievable! That woman was a service-holder. from a well-off family, close friend of Nasreen Huq, Dhanmondi, resides at Dhaka. The husband of that woman beats her very often mercilessly, tried to kill her and then kept her forcibly in the room of their pet dog! After the husband went out of home, the domestic help opened the door of the dog's room, then the woman came out of the dog's room and directly reached the office of Nasreen Huq. The fact is, the husband demanded a heavy amount of money from that woman and beats her due to refusal. Her husband took money from his wife several times earlier and misused it spending in odds areas. The reason of recalling this one of the hundreds of sad incidents in women's lives is to share with you the pattern of violence against women in upper class of society. What happened in the lower class? Lower class families do not have dogs; husbands beat and kill their wives through different ways as the middle and upper class do. Interestingly, the guilty/ perpetrators do not get punishment, because somehow law favours them (men). And it is the irony of fate of the women that justice delayed, justice denied! The report, title: Sexual



international human that rights law prohibits the subordination of people on the basis of not only race, ethnicity, religion, and political views, but also gender. That is, it prohibits forcing women to assume a submissive, secondary status, and similarly rejects a 'complementary' role for women as a substimental health consequences of intimate partner violence, including fear, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts.

The report recommended that more research is needed to understand risk factors associated with violence Surveys against women. should follow international

rejection, grievous injury, and sometimes death, on their victims - who are overwhelmingly female'. Similarly, we can recall the against women in Latin war time rape incidents that happened in Bangladesh in 1971 by the enemies of our independent. About half a million women were raped during our Liberation War of Bangladesh. Many women were brutally killed after rape and gang-rape, many women committed suicide! Can we not demand justice for that heinous, barbaric violence against our mothers and sisters of Bangladesh? Human Rights Watch 2013 mentioned that while Bangladesh has a strong set of laws to tackle violence against women, the implementation remains poor. Violence against women, including rape, dowry-related assaults, and other forms of domestic violence such as acid attacks, sexual harassment, and illegal punishments in the name of 'fatwas' continue. The report added

tute for gender equality.

I got another report last titled: 'Violence week, America and the Caribbean: A comparative analysis of population-based data from 12 countries'. Large proportions of women in Latin America and the Caribbean report sexual violence in their lifetime, perpetrated mostly by men known to them. The report noted that over the past 30 years, the international community has increasingly recognised violence against women as a public health problem, a violation of human rights, and a barrier to economic development. These findings support a large body of global evidence that intimate partner violence is a public health problem with serious consequences for women's physical health, including physical injury, disability, and chronic pain. This comparative analysis also documented widespread emotional and

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ethical and safety recommendations for researching violence against women. Role of media

Historical and impressive role of print, electronic and social media of home and abroad in mainstreaming gender, preventing violence against women and protecting the interest of the victims must be recognised. As a fourth state, media has been facing many problems and threats, but yet informing us details what is going on where, why, who are the helpless victims, and beastlike perpetrators, when the incidents happened and how? Media is meeting up the curiosity of the readers through objective, in-depth news, features, thoughtful articles and editorials. Considering all these issues, we must say that media has more scope to cover more items on social mobilisation to gender mainstreaming and gender equality, women's human rights and empowerment, violence against girls and women.

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tion after the August tragedy

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Wholesome nationalistic fervour may come to the aid of our country and society at the present time, when values are fast deteriorating; things are getting cheaply politicized; intolerance, militancy and fundamentalism are ruling the roost, and the nation's future is falling headlong into the abyss of all-out decay. Only the spirit of the Language Movement can rescue the land submerged in the stagnant pools of reactions, superstitions, orthodoxy, fanaticism and obscurantism. Ekushey can provide us with a terrain fairly livable. And for this, it is imperative to awaken people to the spirit of Ekushey by introducing them to its friends and enemies. But, how to differentiate between the friends and enemies of the Language the enemies was a gigantic Movement? It is pretty tough to separate the sheep from the goats, because opportunistic people often chop and change. They take many different hues that suit them down to the ground. The anti-liberation forces of 1971 are seen many times to sing different tunes and the pseudo freedom fighters to jump the queue, pushing aside the real ones. Even then, the friends and enemies of Ekushey ought to be singled out for the motivation of the younger generation. The arch enemies of Ekushey

were the petty neo-colonial

rulers who chanced upon the right to rule erstwhile East Pakistan following the division of India (1947). In the first instance, they tried to seize the right to our language by imposing another Urdu, which was not our mother tongue. This was a vile attempt the likes of which had not been done even by the British colonial rulers or other alien rulers in the past. The Pakistan rulers also tried to rob us of our literary and cultural heritage by corrupting it with the help of their local lackeys. These subservient local agents who danced to the tune of their godfathers in the saddle and worked against the popular interest in regard to our cultural heritage are also the enemies of Ekushey. Although the whole plan of bungle, and Bengalı remained the state language of Bangladesh, the enemies of Ekushey have not been vanquished. They tried to avenge themselves on the Bengali in 1971, but to no avail. The freedom-loving people of Bangladesh were

Ekushey ideals. The deliberate restoration of the beaten anti-liberation forces power, political conspiracies, coups, killings, army interventions, poll rigging are a complete antithesis to the ideals of our great Liberation War and Ekushey as well. So, the people involved in these nefarious deeds are the enemies of our Independence and of Ekushey as well. They are a direct deterrent to the development of the Ekushey spirit, and the advancement of Bengali life and culture through a secular democratic process, which was the chief already imbued with the spirobjective of our Liberation it of Ekushey, i.e., the spirit War. These people and their of defiance, and won the batpresent and future followers tle against the foes. But the are the enemies of Ekushey, foes are as if immune to ruin. who have been working As the spirit of Ekushey is an against our national interest unflagging energy of prosince the weird birth of gressivism, so are its enemies Pakistan. We should be well an undying force of reaction.

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And hence, they once again

General Secretary IndustriALL Global Union Jyurki Raina and BGMEA Shafiul Islam president Mohiuddin also spoke on the occasion.

of Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Munnujan Sufian and State Minister for LGRD and Advocate Cooperatives



The greatest historic occasion of the Bengali people is the Liberation War; the biggest achievement by them is the victory of December (1971); and the strongest cultural heritage they have is the Bengali nationalism. Million drops of blood, billions of tears, immeasurable sobs and sighs, grieves and grievances, boundless sorrows and sufferings - all turning into an indomitable mettle- have given birth to what we call our Swadhinata, our beloved Independence. Our independence is, as poet Shamsur Rahman puts it, 'the immortal poetry and imperishable song by Rabindranath Tagore' created from a unique mix of weal and woe, pleasure and pain, delight and despair experienced by a people over the ages. And again, the historic event which laid the foundations of our independence is easily the great Ekushey, the Language Movement of 1952. It was

the maiden attempt of a chain of movements for ultimate independence carried out by the Bengalis over a period of about two decades against the Pakistan neocolonial regime. A strong flow of resistance flamed up within the minds of the Bengali folks in question of the dignity of their mother tongue breaking all chains of neocolonial subjection. The popular demand for the Bengali language as the state language was consequently brought to fruition with a nation state. This is a matchless event in human history. 21st February is now the Mother International Language Day. As the May Day is celebrated throughout the world in commemoration of the historic event of 1st May 1886, so is observed the February Day (21st February) in remembrance of our immortal Ekushey. What else can be of more honour than this?

Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Labour Ministry Secretary Michael Shipper and BKMEA president AKM Selim Osman were, among others, present.

aware, and our future genera-

tion, very careful, of them.

Ekushey is the mother of our independence, the lifeblood of Bengali nationalism, and the eternal source of inspiration for our nation in the face of overwhelming national odds. It is the spontaneous outburst of a powerful collective emotion, the quintessence of a patriotic people, the marrow of their cultural bones, and the guiding principle of national existence. With regard to Ekushey all are artists, all are nationalists, and all are politicians who love it. Untidy words can produce the best poetry of Ekushey; irregular melodies can compose the best songs of Ekushey; jumble of bricks or stones can make the best sculptures of Ekushey. The politics of self-respect is the politics of Ekushey. The awareness of autonomy is its paramount spirit. Ekushey is the name of an original feeling ot the Bengali, which is ingrained in their flesh and blood, bones and marrows, lives and deaths. So, in all our needs and preparations, in all our constructions and deconstructions, ensuring the spirit of Ekushey is our national obligation. The talent and industry emanating from this

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wholesome nationalistic fervour may come to the aid of our country and society at the present time, when values are fast deteriorating; things are getting cheaply politicized; intolerance, militancy and fundamentalism are ruling the roost, and the nation's future is falling headlong into the abyss of all-out decay. Only the spirit of the Language Movement can rescue the land submerged in the stagnant pools of reactions, superstitions, orthodoxy, fanaticism and obscurantism. Ekushey can provide us with a terrain fairly livable. And for this, it is imperative to awaken people to the spirit of Ekushey by introducing them to its friends and enemies. But, how to differentiate between the friends and enethe Language mies of Movement? It is pretty tough to separate the sheep from the goats, because opportunistic people often chop and change. They take many different hues that suit them down to the ground. The anti-liberation forces of 1971 are seen many times to sing different tunes and the pseudo freedom fighters to jump the queue, pushing aside the real ones. Even then, the friends and enemies of Ekushey ought to be singled out for the motivation of the younger generation. The arch enemies of Ekushey were the petty neo-colonial And hence, they once again tion, very careful, of them.

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assume a phoenix resurrection after the August tragedy (1975), the most dastardly assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The enemies of Ekushey are the enemies of the Independence of Bangladesh. Though the Liberation War is won, we are not yet rid of the enemies. They have appeared and reappeared in various guises against our independence, and our national progress. They have gained the upper hand, and are posing serious threats to Ekushey ideals. The deliberate restoration of the beaten anti-liberation forces to power, political conspiracies, coups, killings, army interventions, poll rigging are a complete antithesis to the ideals of our great Liberation War and Ekushey as well. So, the people involved in these nefarious deeds are the enemies of our Independence and of Ekushey as well. They are a direct deterrent to the development of the Ekushey spirit, and the advancement of Bengali life and culture through a secular democratic process, which was the chief objective of our Liberation War. These people and their present and future followers are the enemies of Ekushey, who have been working against our national interest since the weird birth of Pakistan. We should be well aware, and our future genera-

Bhutan King's visit to Bangladesh: **Cementing Bilateral Partnership** Barrister Harun ur Rashid

Bhutan, a country of 700,000 people, lies to the north of Bangladesh and is separated by 30 km of India's territory. Bhutan was the first country to recognise Bangladesh on 7th December, 1971 after India's recognition

on 6th December 1971. His Majesty King Jigme Khesar N a m g y e l Wangchuck became the Fifth King on December 14, 2006 and was crowned on November 6, 2008 at a public coronation ceremony in an auspicious year that marked 100 years of Monarchy in Bhutan.

He has been one of the world's youngest heads of state. He graduated from Magdalen College, Oxford, where he completed the Foreign Service Programme and International Relations.

Khesar Wangchuck and the Queen Jetsun Pema arrived in Bangladesh on 14th February for a five-day visit. The people of Bangladesh heartily welcome their visit. It is not the King's first visit



King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck with his queen Jetsun Pema.

to the country. The King recalled that he had visited Bangladesh only once as a young boy. The King visited the country from March 24 to 29th, 2011 and he was the Guest of Honour at the cele-

tion of the Third King and people of Bhutan to the War of Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

The young King began his reign overseeing the democratization of his country In March 2008, Bhutan became a constitutional monarchy and the King relinquished his absolute powers. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan was adopted on 18

> July 2008, by the first elected parliament. . He signed a new treaty of friendship with February India in 2007, replacing the treaty of 1949. As early as April,

1972, both countries expressed desires to establish close relations. The first official commercial contact between Bhutan and Bangladesh began in late 70s and in 1978

Bangladesh trade delegation paid a visit to discuss the prospect of bilateral trade between the two countries (A Trade Agreement was concluded in September, 1980). In early 1973, formal diplo-

In October 2011, the King, who was 31, married a commoner 21-year-old student Jetsun Pema.

The Fifth King of Bhutan

brations of the 40th anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence Day. His presence was a fitting tribute and recognition of the contribu-

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matic ties between Bangladesh and Bhutan were established. Bangladesh opened its diplo-

matic mission in January,

1980 headed by a resident Ambassador. Likewise Bhutan reciprocated the diplomatic gesture by appointing an Ambassador in Bangladesh in the same year. It is noted that Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited Bhutan in November 2009 and it was her first to any SAARC country after her assumption of office as the head of the government on 6th January 2009, reflecting the importance Bangladesh has always attached relations to Bhutan. The four-day visit to Bangladesh of Bhutan's elected Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigme Yoser Thinley in December 2011 is significant in many ways. During the Bhutan's Prime Minister's visit, two agreements were signed-an agreement on cultural exchange and Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation on health sector.

Prime Minister Thinley assured that his country would extend cooperation to meet the power deficit of Bangladesh (Bhutan has the potential to produce economically viable hydro-power of 23,000MW and it has initiated to develop its potential). He thanked Bangladesh government for the offer to use

Chittagong and Mongla ports. The use of the ports would yield huge savings for Bhutan and it is reported that India in principle agreed to allow its territory for transit to Bangladesh. On trade the two countries

have enormous opportunities and the bilateral trade could be raised to \$100 million from the current figure of \$30 million.

Bangladesh imports from Bhutan mainly boulders, dolomite, gypsum, dust coal, slate, graphite, timber and fruit products (jelly and jam) and exports to Bhutan include consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, jute products, newsprint, chemicals, detergents, light machinery.

Bhutan's Seed Corporation signed an agreement in February 2000 with a nongovernment organisation (BRAC) in Bangladesh to supply onion and radish seeds. Bhutan airlines operate between the two countries and people- to- people contact has increased considerably.

Since 1971, Bhutan has championed a new approach to development, which measures prosperity through formal principles of gross national happiness (GNH). Based on Buddhist principles, the Bhutanese version of GNH emphasises a set of social and economic interventions that evaluate social change in terms of the collective happiness of people.

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The GNH concept is now ¶ firmly entrenched into Bhutan's national policies with four main objectives: investing in people; living in harmony with tradition and nature; effective and good governance; and developing a dynamic economy as the foundations for a vibrant democracy.

Last year the UN adopted Bhutan's call for a holistic approach to development, a move endorsed by 68 countries. A UN panel is now considering ways that Bhutan's GNH model can be replicated across the globe.

Both nations are members of SAARC and are keen to develop the regional forum into a dynamic and vibrant Bhutan held the one. SAARC Summit in 2010. Both countries are Least-Developed Countries and have common approach to economic related policies in the multi-national forums. Both joined the Non-Aligned Movement in 1973. Both are parties to the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The visit of Bhutan's King and Queen will further infuse dynamism to the bilateral

relations and raised the relationship to a higher trajectory in all sectors. Barrister Harun ur Rashid,

Former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Water under no bridge

Shayan S. Khan and A.K.M. Moinuddin

From its origins in the Western Himalayas, the mighty Ganges charts a complex, intricately-braided path eastwards, touching the lives of as many as 400 million people in two countries before it empties into the Bay of Bengal. Known as the Padma in Bangladesh, which it enters at Shibpur in Chapainawabganj with its flow significantly hindered since India's construction of the Farakka Barrage, it is a storied river in this part of the world, finding mention in the most ancient scripts of Hindu mythology. And now to all those stories of the Rigveda, as well as of the countless kingdoms and nations that have sprouted along its banks, the government of Bangladesh has somehow contrived to add a saga of its own - full of elaborate twists and turns, treachery, or the threat of it at least, around every corner, and a grand conspiracy at the heart of it all. There's a starring role for the World Bank, playing the antagonist. This week finally witnessed the closing act to this long, drawn-out tale, by the end of which not a few reputations had been dragged through the mud in pursuit of personal gain from the largest infrastructure project in the country's history. Noone will pretend this conclusion was ideal for any of the parties involved - be it the Sheikh Hasina administration, or the World Bank. To put it frankly, the entire episode has been a waste of time. "A sense of emptiness is prevailing over the Padma Bridge...the result is zero even after four years...the government embarrassed herself much," DrIftekharuzzaman, executive director of the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said. He also said it will not be a wise decision to go for alternative so quickly on political

Who is a human rights activist? The person who earns an honest living and spends a part of her / his earning for the cause of suffering humanity at large, always stand firm beside a person in distress, respectful to the law of the land and speaks out in favour of peace without fear of possible persecution is worthy of calling Human Rights Activist.

- Bangladesh Human Rights Commission

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consideration instead of analysing its economic aspects and possible outcome of alternative funding. The Awami League-led Grand Coalition government has now entered the last year of its 5-year term. Having made this long and oftdreamt of bridge the cornerstone of its election manifesto, it's hard to think of anything that could stand as a more potent symbol of success, or it's opposite, as the electorate weighs its options over the course of the coming twelve months. The political imperative of at least getting the construction underway is conceded by Finance Minister A.M.A. Muhith in his letter to the President of the World Bank, officially withdrawing the request for funding from the government's end. The Washingtonbased lender released a statement the very next day that seemed to accept the withdrawal request, while hoping for a resolution to the criminal inquiry into corruption charges brought by it against government officials. The Muhith letter also assures the World Bank of the continuation of the investigation by Anti-Corruption the Commission. Although it remains clear to everyone Hossain that Abul Chowdhury, the former Communications Minister, against whom the most serious charges were raised as

part of a conspiracy of cor-

ruption.