

The Humanist Newsletter
- among friends of the new universal humanism in Asia
Vol II, Number 21 - October 2008

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Dear friends,

In this issue we publish the press release dispatched by the Humanist Movement that incorporates the sentiments of the letter of congratulations and hope that we sent to the new prime minister of Nepal, Prachanda and his government.

We also express the sentiments, nay laments, of our Humanist Movement concerning the recent Delhi bombings.

On page four we begin our list of conflicts and issues in the Asia-Pacific region with two entries, one on Kashmir and another on Pakistan. These are initial drafts and we welcoming your input for further annotations and comments.

Thereafter follows our supportive letter to the people of Bolivia in the midst of their great difficulties with the rich-province secessionists.

It is with great delight that we can also share the proceedings at the August Dhaka Forum. Firstly, our letters of congratulations and then, a synthesis of the all-important Tables of Discussion.

Our final report is from Bihar where our Indian humanist friends are at work. In the report they tell how we differentiate ourselves from the usual humanitarian work in that we do not hold works of charity as our central theme - we really intend getting at the core of problems. Whether in Bangladesh floods, the Tsunami, and now this river overflow problem, friend Atul writes about our style of work that helps in a special way.

Peace, Force and Joy
Tony

No to Nuclear Weapons
Yes to Nuclear disarmament
Yes to general disarmament
All troops off foreign soils

DON'T FORGET THIS TOP PRIORITY CAMPAIGN

<http://www.nucleardisarmamentnow.org/>

Afghanistan

Stop press note concerning Afghanistan.

- The commander of the British army there has informed the world - and he speaks for many militarists in that 'theatre of war' - the coalition forces cannot have a decisive win over the Taliban. Dialogue has to be started - and a political solution mooted.

That should have been the approach when the Taliban was the legitimate government instead of their undermining and ousting by the US and its western allies

Press Release

Subject: Humanists Congratulate Nepal's Prachanda

Date: 15 September, 2008

With our slogan of "Nothing Above the Human Being; No Human being below another" the Humanist Movement, Asia-Pacific, wishes Nepal's new prime minister and his Maoist Party every success following their recent election as the governing party.

Humanist Ms. Tulsi Sigdel, Nepal spokesperson for the organisation, handed in the letter to the office of Shri Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Prachanda, Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal in Kathmandu, Nepal,

While the congratulatory letter held to a positive and supportive tone it did note the declaration by the Nepal Maoists that insists they are not "dogmatic communists" and they are to keep to a socialist stance on all affairs - we welcome that and would like to add, hopefully tempered with humanism.

In offering our support we want to make it very clear that the development path needs to be one travelled that is couched in an approach of active nonviolence which is far from any pacifist stance but one building human solidarity as progress is made in sharing with equity all that your nation holds dear especially its mountains, rivers and forests.

Your political platform includes land reform. This is a most difficult matter to resolve without alienating those so fortunate to hold rather more tracts of land than they probably deserved to hold, however, it will be far better if you can bring those families on board in your endeavours.

Trust has to be built.

It is worthwhile to note that our Latin American humanist counterparts are giving strong support to Evo Morales and his constitutional changes for Bolivia, including the rejection of war.

About 80% of Nepal's population depends on farming and the change you are proposing will make a huge difference. The change needs effecting in a kindly way. People have to understand the context of the change to be a willing yet patient part of the process.

We speak in this manner because we recognize your party is about to change affairs fundamentally as yours in not just 'another political party'. Your history of struggle tells that. However, as when climbing Sagarmatha - Everest - it's the descent not the ascent that brings additional dangers.

The primary humanist principles of nondiscrimination and non-violence are sure guides in implementing your policies of reform.

As spokesperson for our Asia-Pacific organisations I also want to offer the people of Nepal our co-operation in any matter that lies within the domain of our humanist social-political activities.

We well understand that the healing of the nation is a priority and this means integrating the Maoist Army with the National Army. Also, we welcome the government's declaration that they will take responsibility for determining the situation of missing persons, mostly male members of families taken without any consent by both army groups. A gross violation of human rights. Wives and mothers need to know their family member's status and whereabouts in every last case.

Nepal's peoples want a permanent peace and want to help build the economy. For that, stability and security are first requirements - financial investors need those conditions as well.

Nepal is exemplary in its forestry conservation though political instability due to the conflict has had a negative impact in that area. The lower riparian countries want to co-operate with Nepal - though India has been the recalcitrant one - and that bodes well for appropriate scale hydro-electric schemes as permanent income earners.

Regarding an industrial base - farming. The treasures locked into herbal medicines can be

harvested as an economic means creating export oriented employment instead of attempting the kind of cheap-labour industrialisation followed by many Asian countries. These have left the work force at the mercy of the multi-nationals; those sophisticated scavengers that pick the best deals and leave the rest, resulting in entire sectors of industry reeling and leaving widespread social problems in their wake. No to lawless and tax-free Export Processing Zones.

Tourism will undoubtedly develop as a major foreign currency earner but only if Nepal is the safe haven it was when first discovered by the world via Hippy pilgrimages.

Your country, with its cultural and religious diversity and over 60 ethnic minorities plus fabulous mountain terrain and the huge variation in climates from tropical to alpine takes Nepal into the province of the real Shangri La. We want to share a pertinent adage of ours: "Love the reality you build".

Sincerely,

Sudhir Gandotra

Spokesperson – Asia-Pacific Region.

New Delhi, India.

Email: sudhir @ ahumanistforum.org

web: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/asianforum/>

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Twitter - tonyhen

go to twitter.com - sign on and follow tonyhen - simple

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The Delhi Bombings

India - Humanist Party statement

Dear Friends,

This situation demands a response from us, giving to people a Humanist point of view on the violence that is increasing by the day.

Sudhir

One more senseless violent serial-bomb-blast incident took place Delhi, 13 September 2008.

This act again demonstrates how violent this society has become, how much in-tolerance has gripped human life and how we all have to live in an unsafe and insecure environment of fear caused by this violence.

The usual official response came immediately: typical statements by typical politicians and others; ie., a race to announce compensation to victims - a compensation that will not reach them as seen from earlier experiences; a race to make useless and pointless statements against violence; a race to find scapegoats among the particular opponents, unknown foreign hands, unknown terrorists; a race to announce un-precedented security steps at various sensitive points.

But, nothing concrete that will change this violent situation or remove or even reduce the tensions, or causes or discriminations or type of violence that has resulted in this secondary appearing primary violence.

Who is bothered to find the reasons behind this violence?

Who is working to locate the root of this violence?

Who is ready to take responsibility in society and work to overcome violence?

Isn't it clear that the whole society is being run as a violent race to nowhere based on the goals of Money and Power; this seen in widespread discrimination that is causing frustrations, anger, displacements, unemployment, malnutrition, hunger and what not... while people work to build a society that looks great when referring to the latest models of cars, shopping malls, cinema halls, imported cosmetics and clothing and what not.

We are blinding ourselves to the root causes of violence in our society.

We are just not bothered about the cancer that has taken deep-root in society and simultaneously within ourselves.

We are only concerned about the visible wounds on the surface and seek bandages for the moment, leaving unattended the deep wound within.

We are part of a society that is running after money and power continuously and there is speculation in every field has further maddened this race to nowhere, assuming that more money will overcome the problems - but that bomb on the next street-corner may prove to be the end to all those dreams. That's how it happened to so many unfortunates in all these tragedies that have taken place with alarmingly increasing frequency and a seeming impunity from the law.

Do we really want peace in our lives?

Do we really want peace in our society?

If yes, then we each and all must work for it. We cannot leave it to anyone else, least of all the political-social-cultural-religious (anti) leaders of today.

Each one of us needs to wake up, get up and begin taking charge of society.

Each one of us needs to work to overcome violence from within our selves - the fears, insecurity, frustration, enmity, resentment, anxiety, restlessness - and violence from society - in the form of hunger, unemployment, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, speculation by banks and financial institutions.

Without each one of us contributing to this noble task of re-building ourselves and our society, nothing can be predicted except increasing violence.

Even if we do little, we must do it.

Remember what Mahatma Gandhi, Vivekananda, Subhash Bose, Ambedkar and many others said about a better future for all.

We must remember that and take heed and begin now.

However, to the contrary, we need not do anything and can continue living just like we are now, if we do not wish a better future for ourselves and our coming generations.

The Humanist Party of India calls on all citizens of India to wake up and begin participating actively to build a non-violent India that was the dream given to us by the Father of our Nation - Mahatma Gandhi.

Let's bring Gandhi down from the walls and stamps and into our heart and try to feel what he said with his exemplary life. "An eye for an eye, will make everyone blind."

Let's begin a new era of peace and life and build a society where everyone can be involved as an equal and important partner in building society.

Sudhir - Spokesperson, India HP

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“Love the Reality You Build” - Silo

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Asia - Conflicts and Issues

We begin our list with Kashmir and Pakistan, welcoming your input.

Kashmir

The two Kashmirs (minus Northern Areas) to have a common Assembly which has the powers to legislate on all issues other than those which infringe on the sovereignty of Pakistan or India or adversely affect the rights of the majority Muslims or minority Hindus. A joint council of India and Pakistan to have the power to arbitrate on such issues.

Pakistan

1. Abolish feudalism. Make the tillers of agricultural land the owners of the piece of land he-she is working on. Japan abolished feudalism in 1946. Consequently Japanese peasants (prior to 1946 they

were serfs like the serfs of Pakistan) increased agriculture production, and gained the purchasing power to buy industrial goods manufactured in Japanese factories. Capitalism in Japan progressed at a great speed. Feudal Pakistan, where 70% of the population is engaged in agriculture, imports wheat, sugar, edible oil and dairy products and other basic food items in ever increasing quantity. Even cotton, which is worked in Pakistan's textile mills, is imported. Cotton Exchange building in Karachi is now deserted.

2. Eradicate illiteracy. In 1987 the then prime Minister Mohammed Khan Junejo (from Sindh) established the Department of NEW LIGHT (Nai Roshni) which established cost-free literacy centres for adults and kids, boys and girls, throughout Pakistan. Alas, the next Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, (also from Sindh) closed down in 1979 the Department of NEW LIGHT. But Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto issued a special postal stamps commemorating the International Literacy Year 1979 as proclaimed by the UN General Assembly.

In the villages of Pakistan the illiteracy among the women is 100%. Illiterate and unemployed and unemployable young men are the main source of the terrorists who recruit our youth for these anti-social activities. Literacy centres, schools and vocational training centres for both boys and girls in sufficient numbers would fight the menace of suicide bombings and other terrorist activities.

We are confident, Pakistan's foreign friends (especially the USA) would not oppose these two measures by President Zardari and Prime Minister Gilani of Pakistan. How can the USA oppose the abolition of feudalism in Pakistan when the USA ordered in 1946 its abolition in Japan? Today's Japan is not supporting terrorists!

An awareness programme is needed so the people realise that the existing rate of population increase is a social problem and needs planning for remedy looking at urbanization, better education, a paradigm change in social values are needed to combat this intransigent problem. The Chinese model offers the best example. If that seems impracticable, the Indonesian or Malaysian models can be emulated.

Overemphasis on religion is a sensitive issue with lots of vested interests. Nothing short of a charismatic leader like Mustafa Kamal can even speak about this issue. Half measures would do no good. To begin with the school syllabus must be rationalized. A textbook of Urdu language should not be a panegyric of ARAB heroes who have nothing to do with Urdu language or Pakistan.

Extreme positions taken by institutions like Jamat-i-Islami have brought to bear the most obscurantist interpretations of Islam such as Maududi's opposition to birth control and his failure to differentiate between usury and interest. Kalashnikov and suicide bombers have substituted the progressive debate and rational thought processes, a badly designed veil (Burqa) has been imposed on Muslim women

Education needs a major shift in the syllabus, a de-emphasis on religious propaganda, and a rationalising of the blasphemy law.

The cry for tall and bold leaders in the form of Messiahs - the Mehdi - needs to be countered with the cry for political parties that are legalised to be accountably part of the political scene and that have clear platforms and stands - an organised team represented through a spokesperson (even if called The President) is what's needed - not an all-powerful figure, a figurehead.

Of primary concern today is a resolution of all the complex problems with the eastern and western neighbours. The problem of Kashmir can be looked at in light of the model of Northern Ireland. Both India and Pakistan countries need to recognize the sovereignty of each over the territories they presently exercise suzerainty and control.

The two Kashmirs (minus Northern Areas) can have a common Assembly which has the powers to legislate on all issues other than those which infringe on the sovereignty of Pakistan or India or adversely affect the rights of the majority Muslims or minority Hindus. A joint council of India and Pakistan can have the power to arbitrate on such issues.

Pakistan should sign nuclear non proliferation treaty and give second thought to commercialised use its nuclear facilities at Kahuta. The present stock pile of nuclear weapons needs to be step-by-step reduced to nil. Really, it's a lot safer to be outside the Nuclear Club.

Pakistan should pursue a long term goal of forming a confederation with India and Afghanistan to the betterment of all countries security and stability - thus prosperity.

Pakistan to embark on the construction of the Bhasha and Kalabagh Dams on the Indus but by carefully bringing in such changes in the initial concepts of these dams that would make them acceptable and attractive to all federating units at the top level by having the assent of those people broaching the dams physically and most likely to be adversely affected.

Pakistan to adopt a policy of free trade that includes free movement of people and free intellectual exchanges with all its neighbouring states with which it shares common borders.

The region is full of potential hydro-electric development, gas and oil. We should take note of these treasures.

End note: *We are indebted to the forthright and insightful writings of H.D Bangash for these basic premises which have modified according to our own criteria.*

ADVERT

The writing *Walking Hong Kong to the Water* - subtitled - a Hong Kong Humanist's story, is now available on CD. HK\$40.

Download text only for free.

<http://home.pacific.net.hk/~tonyhen/WHKW1.html>

After your payment we will be notified by PayPal.

Don't forget to send an email telling your postal address so we can post the CD.

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World March for Peace and Non-Violence

"So that the voices of millions who yearn for peace can be heard as they call for the end of war and all forms of violence."

Begins New Zealand October 2, 2009

concludes in the South American Andes Mountains, January 2, 2010.

Initiating institution - World Without Wars, and without violence

International co-ordinator Rafael de la Rubia

[rafael @ marchamundial.org](mailto:rafael@marchamundial.org)

www.marchamundial.org

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To: Embassy of the Republic of Bolivia,
Ambassador: H.E. Mr. Augusto Arguedas Del Carpio,
Chancery: 2-3-2 TaYuan Office Building, Beijing, China

September 26, 2008

Open Letter to the Bolivian People

Greetings from the members of the Humanist Movement in Hong Kong, SAR, China.

Today we want to show our solidarity with you the people of Bolivia - sisters and brothers who share our ideals and dreams, as our Latin American fellows. Indeed, the winds of the methodology of active non-violence and peaceful means are beginning to blow strongly. A sure sign that people everywhere are tiring of the violence.

Dear fellows, you have chosen the path of non--violence to make the journey from your most precious aspirations and dreams to an intuited reality - a new, beautiful and beloved reality, not only for yourselves, but for all humanity.

It is clear, Bolivia, that you are a dignified and generous people who do not wish to achieve your goals at the cost of the suffering of anyone, as is so often done, and was done to you. Yet, you are also a people who are fully conscious that you can and must manifest your sensitivity, your spirituality, your point of view in the world, and that you can and must seek happiness as a people and - above all - as members of the human race.

There is not much else that we can say to you, Bolivia, that you don't already know. We can only thank you for manifestly swelling the ranks of those who attend, in the depths of their hearts and in the heights of their consciousness, to that wisdom that points toward true liberation - a liberation that will incur no negative debt to anyone. And we can tell you that you are not alone, that this is a sentiment that will continue to manifest with greater and greater diversity, all across the length and breadth of this planet because the time has come.

The human being of the future will know that non-violence is the way to live and to act toward others, thanks to the example that you are giving us today, people of Bolivia.

And so for all of you, we ask for unyielding Peace, Force and Joy!

The Humanist Movement of Hong Kong, SAR, China

Tony Henderson

Chairman, Humanist Association of Hong Kong

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European Humanist Forum
The Strength of Nonviolence
Milan, October 17th-18th-19th, 2008
Palalido and University of Milan - Bicocca

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August 22, 2008

Congratulations on the organising of this Second Bangladesh Humanist Forum

Dear friends,

As spokesperson for the Humanist Movement for the Asia-Pacific Region I send you my hearty congratulations on the organising of this Second Bangladesh Humanist Forum, in Dhaka.

The First Bangladesh Humanist Forum, held in July 2006, was a successful launch into what was a new departure for us, forums of interchange, where other organisations and interested individuals could connect with us and share in our universally worthwhile endeavours.

The objective is the same today as previously though now there can be a deeper probe into all affairs of the human being as our shared experiences at last year's Mumbai Asia-Pacific Humanist Forum inspired all of us and clarified our common directions.

Your objective is - Humanize Bangladesh. It is up to you all present today to fathom the roots of the problems, to work out the details how to go ahead and what approach to take in the humanizing process per issue. This is indeed important for the future of your country and other neighbouring Asian countries.

I wish you all excellent work in your discussions and interchanges on local issues and know you will do so in your uniquely Humanist and Bangladeshi way.

Humanism for our future.

Peace, Force and Joy

Sudhir Gandotra

Spokesperson, Asia-Pacific Region, Humanist Movement

August 22, 2008

Congratulations on holding the Second Bangladesh Humanist Forum

Dear friends,

The Humanist Association of Hong Kong sends lots of joyous energy to you all on this important occasion of the Second Bangladesh Humanist Forum, Dhaka.

Your country is starting into a new phase, politically, and it is a time of great sensitivity among the people who all want positive change, stability, security, and protection to enable each and all to engage themselves in developing a future that offers the possibilities of a quality human life.

They want jobs, they want safe transport systems, they want affordable education, they want

food security - no doubt these topics will figure in your discussions today.

In times like these there is great fluidity and receptivity among the population so make sure you make loud declarations of your findings. Let the people know - your press and media is very lively - what's needed from the humanist point of view.

Fear not to tell your best aspirations for your country. Inform the decision makers - both those in the present situation and those waiting in the wings - and local community leaders wherever you live of your opinions. Start the dialogue with strong reference to non-discrimination in every field of endeavour and non-violence in all affairs.

I wish you all great work in your interchanges.

Peace, Force and Joy

Tony Henderson,

Chairman, Humanist Association of Hong Kong

Tables of Discussion

Dear Friends,

We had a very nice forum on the 24th August where the discussions on our national conflicts were done in significant detail.

There were nine issue Tables altogether. In the Table work, the participants looked to determine the national conflicts and find out their solutions, not from a bird's eye view, but deeply from their own experience and even from philosophical aspects.

Here follows is a synthesis of the entitled tables.

Peace, Force and Joy - Pasha

<http://www.bangladeshhumanistforum.org/>

Present Situation and Active Non-violence

(Coordinator: Md. Nazrul Islam Jashim, Email: nazrulhm @ yahoo. com)

We want the present situation to be very peaceful with the existence of Active Nonviolence.

Regarding this issue we found conflicts -

- in the family,
- among classes
- among religions
- in the economy

By creating public awareness we can handle the conflicts in the present situation well. We have to let others understand the crisis of the present situation and work with non-violence.

Leaving selfishness and greed, we have to work for the greater benefit, the benefit of 'my' surroundings, Working for the development of society including the backward sectors of the country, we can certainly grow with non-violence and cooperation.

Women Empowerment and Equal Rights

(Coordinator: Mrs. Asthma Zahed)

Women are affected by the various conflicts existing in our society. Some particular ones are being benefited by those conflicts - mainly males.

Over population, poverty, illiteracy, fundamentalism, political injustice, socio economic imbalances are the main factors behind these conflicts in Bangladesh. We need to bring a balance of power between man and woman. Women must have equal rights to man and must have opportunities to access and experience power of decision making in and around family affairs.

Changing Climate & Ecology

(Coordinator: Pasha, Email: mejanurrahman @ yahoo.com)

Climate change is strongly related to ecology. In the present world, radically changing climate and ecology are common phenomena. At the Table of changing climate and ecologies many cases were discussed and their causes and effects too.

- In society and therefore, in the country, climate change give rise to problems day by day,
- Under the negative effects of these changes, people of all sectors have fallen into danger. They remain with nothing but suffering,
- Some capitalist and developed countries and their companies get the fruit of those works that go to amplify the effects of climatic changes, and on the other hand the poor get the unavoidable consequences,
- Caused by the monopolistic system and pollution of the environment, the poor country folk lose their lands, crops and even living places.
- The biodiversity of any place is as a consequence disturbed if any major change takes place in the environment.

Changing climate is a threat to Bangladesh. The country may lose the geographical favours it has and the local ecology may be affected terribly. That will cause catastrophe in the country as well as in the region.

Our recommendation is to bring in alternatives and to take vigilant steps by increasing public awareness, minimizing use of fossil fuel, and keeping to the patterns of nature as she is. We shall convey our message to the government and by the government to the other countries

Democracy & Good Governance

(Coordinator: Mr. Shamsul Haq Basunia, Email: shamsulbasunia @ yahoo.com)

Real democracy is essential for maintaining peace and brotherhood in a country. In Bangladesh democracy can be restored by establishing accountability and justice under the government after a free and impartial election. Again, after the election, the opposition parties and civil society have to play constructive roles with responsibility and the government should work with transparency.

Fundamental and humanitarian services should be ensured for the backward groups in our community regardless of their opinions and beliefs. Anti-corruption Commission, the Truth Commission, the Parliament and the law and administration of the country should hold transparent positions.

If things go so, Democracy and Good Governance can be established. The present democracy is the rule of a minority sector. People will experience good governance if real democracy is well established.

Food Security

(Coordinator: Mr. Saeed, Email: saeedbnmustafa @ yahoo.co. in)

Food crisis is one of the major problems in the world and in Bangladesh it is severe. Food security has become a crisis at the national level and at the individual level as well. The day labourers and poor families practically face total lack of food security. In fact, an artificial crisis makes the threat to food security more than any natural crisis.

Some corrupt and ambitious businessmen get benefits by creating a food crisis in the market. That is the cause of the present problem, Ordinary, day-to-day problems that bring about this effect are insufficient cultivable lands, natural calamities, and over frequent cultivation on the same land. These are the factors reducing the production of food and thus give rise to the threat to food security but one that is manageable.

The farmers should be provided with subsidies , sufficient seed and fertilizers, insecticides, loans, irrigation facilities and all other farming facilities as they need.

It is important to ensure adequate supply of food in the market at affordable cost. A dynamic and well-managed market can help bring about food security.

Drug-free Youth

(Coordinator: Mr. Zahed Chowdhury Lipu , Email: lipu70bd @ yahoo. com)

Narcotic drug use among young people has spread at an alarming rate creating a bad situation. Many prospects for a happy life for young people are on the wane. Attracted by a faster life style typical of westernized cultures, but also badly chosen company, an evil vogue is spreading among young people and they are becoming drug affected. Frustration, loose ties with family members, ready availability of cheap drugs, all go toward making people take drugs.

It should be the first concern of the family to prevent the young generation from being spoilt by drugs.

Educational institutions can play important roles to build a nation free of drugs. Social movements against drugs should be established. More restrictions and laws against the drug business should be in place. Conscious and moral values can prevent the young from drug addiction. There must be easy employment opportunities and plenty of liberating entertainment facilities so that the young people do not get bored with a restricted life.

It is high time we stood against all kinds of dreadful drugs saying "NO TO DRUGS" to save our future, our young citizens.

Health For All

Most people are not aware of their one fundamental need, health. Moreover, they are deprived of health care because of a lack of hospitals, doctors, medicines etc.

The socio-economic infrastructure or system, corruption and mismanagement make this social injustice severe.

So, transparency and accountability must be ensured to overcome this problem and lead to the affording of good health for all.

Education

(Coordinator: Mr. Mukta, Email: muktaisht @ yahoo. com)

Not only in this a fundamental need, education enhances the country in every aspect. In Bangladesh, education is still not a matter of choosing and learning, rather it is a way of getting jobs.

There is discriminations in education. The education sector is always a big concern, but not cared for much in real terms. This great sector is corrupted in many ways and commercialized. The public educational institutions should follow a standard so that the students can cope with the current world without additional complications.

Educational instruction is controlled by politicians. Student politics and campus violence disturbs smooth education. So, the students, teachers and the guardians need to be conscious good education. Administrative structures for education should be reshaped. Educational programs and educational institutions should be brought out of their commercial chains.

Cultural Diversity

(Coordinator: Mr. Shamsuddoha)

In this era of globalization cultural diversity is a common phenomenon. But in Bangladesh , it is sometimes seen that social prejudice, religious fundamentalism, and political strife hinders cultural diversity, and some influential so-called leaders take advantages.

Ignorance, lack of values, narrow outlook are the elements that drive us backwards.

We need people with ethics, cultural values and a broad viewpoint who can help establish and maintain surroundings full of with cultural diversity.

We have to shake the society by exchanging ideas and showing traditional activities to strengthen our cultural diversity.

World March For Peace and Non-Violence

Dear friends,

I'd like to clarify that the INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION option on the World March website is open to everyone - to all of us and our friends who are interested – not only to celebrities.

So we're inviting all humanists, all collaborators, and all organizations and individuals to be aware of this possibility and to visit the website, fill out the participation form, and make their testimony in support of the World March.

As you may know, the English version of the website is now up and running:

<http://www.worldmarch.info/en/adhesion/adhesion-personal-eng>

A big hug

Rafa

INDIA - BIHAR FLOODS DISASTER IS NOT 'A' FLOOD

It is not a flood. It is a change of course by the river. This means that water may recede, but there is no way the villages can be resettled. And the affected numbers are what?

Worse than Tsunami, Latur and Gujarat earthquake. The real tragedy is that the graveness does not seem to have been fully realised. The disaster took place on August 18, but for weeks thereafter the nation and the media remained excited with Olympics, the Nano and Nuclear Deal.

Nearly a million affected people have lost everything. Their houses, farms, crops, belonging and what not? Overnight they were on the street and turned pauper.

If at all there is a discussion, it is about the blame game, accusing that the mishap could have been avoided. Visit the site and you would wonder whether mishap of this magnitude could have ever been controlled?

At the site of the rupture what you see is unbelievable. The breach is not of a few metres, it is of kilometres. In the picture here you can see one end of the breach where I stood to take the picture. The green line you see is the other end of the breach. The gap seems to be more than few kilometres. To bridge it back is going to be a Herculean task.

I never knew that the Kosi is such a mighty river. The quantum of water seems more like an ocean than a river. Seeing water spread around for miles I was dumbstruck, failing to understand how one river could have so much water.

Million affected and more than three weeks already over, what is the status of the relief operations? Pathetic can be the only word. All the operations together, measure up to only of a fraction of the immense needs. Army and navy help did come. But relatively in very small numbers.

Disaster Management Cells did act, but not within hours, only after more than ten days and that also on a tiny scale. Government machinery is working, but the efficiency and effectiveness is far below desirable standard. NGOs have rushed to the scene. Name a relief agency and you will find them in action there.

Well intentioned people of goodwill are sending support from various parts of the country. Enormous work is being done. Yet, everything taken together, the scale is minuscule compared to the needs. And even within that, the worst is the lack of coordination and serious implementation issues.

Oxfam has decided to distribute 15 kg rice to inhabitants of a camp. But the issue is how will they collect it? They have no utensil or bags. And who will provide them with bags? Worst is where will they store it ?

Another NGO is rushing to the scene with bags of grains. But how are they going to distribute it. Rare are the cases of registration of the affected people in the camp and systematic distribution of relief. More often than not, relief material is thrown from the trucks and might is right rules in collecting same. There are fights and snatching for the supplies and the agencies believe they have 'distributed' the material

In a typical relief camp all we see is a piece of land on which the affected people were transported by the army. What has been given to them so far?

Few metres of plastic sheet with which they have made the shelter. Small quantity of 'CHURA' a local rice product. Khichdi from Government kitchen with dal for the name sake, yellow colour in place of turmeric and more water than rice.

Most of the relief trucks come to the first point of 'Saharsa' and gets unloaded there. At that point one gets the sight of plenty. Go little interior and majority of the relief has not reached there.

A good many bogus camps have come up consisting of people who are from other parts of the state who have camped here only to take the relief.

A small quantity of the relief 'distributed' has started re-appearing in the market on sale.

Each relief agency has its agenda and lengthy decision making process. There is little co-ordination amongst them and lack of sensitivity to the changing needs of everyday.

Large number of cases of diarrhea are reported and there is very little medical help available.

There is no way they can go back to their villages in near future. In fact their plastic sheet shelter is going to provide little protection with the onslaught of chilling winter.

What are we doing from Humanist Movement?

Our members from Madhubani, in Bihar have deputised teams and have taken charge of running two camps - Kattaiah and Bhimnagar each housing around 8,000 affected people.

Mrs. Manju Jha from Madhubani is in-charge and has been at the site for more than two weeks now. We have set up a temporary office in Raghapur and set up distribution centres in each camp. We have completed the survey and issued cards to each affected people. We are co-ordinating help from relief agencies and managing the distribution.

Our supporters from Patna organized to buy the items which are needed but are not being offered by any other agency. Thus bleaching powder as disinfectant, dhoti, 'gamcha' or sari for the absolutely needy people, rice, basic medicines, plastic bags, etc. have been bought and distributed. These camps are very near Nepal border and are almost hundred kilometres inside from the first point of Saharsa.

A team of volunteers has been camping there and provision is made for their food, stay and travel. There is a strong need of doctors and with co-operation of Vivekanand Hospital, Latur, a team of doctors are on the way to the camps with their mobile hospital.

We will continue to buy and provide immediately whatever is the missing link, needed but not provided by any other agencies.

HUMANIST WORK AS DIFFERENT FROM ONLY HUMANITARIAN WORK

The affected people are sitting the whole day awaiting relief and doing nothing. We intend to get them involved in helping others. Our message to them is very clear. We will help you provided you also work, help yourselves as well as others. We will work with them in maintaining hygiene and cleaning the areas where water has receded. We will encourage them to form teams of self-help. We will encourage them to take charge and work with them shoulder to shoulder to rebuild their lives. As our work in Tsunami affected areas, our association with them will not be over in weeks or months. Now we are part of the community and our relations are built for years to come.

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Stay in touch, join one of our Forums, participate!

Local: <http://groups.google.com/group/HongKongNodeAsiaPacificForum?hl=en>

Very local: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LantauForum/>

Asia-Pacific: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/asianforum/>

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The Humanist Association of Hong Kong newsletter

Want to receive this newsletter among friends of the new universalist humanism regularly? Email to Tony:

tonyhen @ humanist.org.hk

Further information

Full membership of the Humanist Movement means a commitment to actively help in spreading the new humanist message under the general head of Humanize the Earth and participate in the Financial Collect (twice a year, Jan-June)

In Bangladesh US\$1.00

In Hong Kong HK\$150 (US\$20)

In the Philippines US\$6.0

Adherent members (Friends) of the Humanist Movement do not need to participate in the Collect, you can collaborate and support in any way you wish.

These amounts are payable in December and June, twice a year. In this way we are independent and

need not accept donations for our administration costs - whereas, the Humanist Association of Hong Kong for example can be supported by external funds (membership fee HK\$50 a year, due January - no charge for HM members).

Note: the Humanist Movement and its organisms are Humanist without necessarily being Humanitarian - that is, we are not a charity.

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