POSITION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH'S VISION 2041: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS



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by Mehedi Shams ID 2017-03-66-034 September, 2022 **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that content of this thesis 'Position of Human Rights in Bangladesh's

Vision 2041: A Critical Analysis' submitted by me in fulfillment of the course LAW

406- Supervised Dissertation represents my own work and has not been previously

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Sd./

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AI	Amnesty International
DSA	Digital Security Act
EU	European Union
GA	General Assembly
GBV	General Based Violence
GED	General Economic Division
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HCD	High Court Division
HIC	High-Income Country
HPM	Honorable Prime Minister
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labor Organization
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, bisexual and Transgender
NHCR	National Human Rights Commission
RAB	Rapid Action battalion
RoL	Rule of Law
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations

ABSTRACT

Human Rights mean right of life, right to liberty, right to equality and right to dignity of a person that are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh. The General Economic Division (GED) of Bangladesh Planning Commission, Ministry of Planning has prepared the Perspective Plan 2021-2041 to transform the country from a lower-middle income country to an upper-middle income country by 2031 and a high-income country by 2041. In this perspective plan, the policies and programs enshrined in the vision 2041 shall focus on the development strategies. The 'Vision 2041' focuses also on the complete eradication of the absolute poverty, so that the country could step into the threshold of the higher middle-income status by 2031 and would transform itself into a developed nation by 2041.

The institutional basis of this plan is fourfold—good governance, democratization, decentralization and capacity building of the people of Bangladesh. The issue of fundamental rights is the most relevant for the inclusive economic development of the country. But the perspective plan shows nothing of human rights issues of the citizenry of Bangladesh, not to speak of the promotion of human rights of the people as a whole irrespective of caste, creed and religion. In Vision 2041, there is no specific way of protecting and promoting the human rights of the citizens. Whereas human rights abuses have been a perennial concern to all since implementation is lagging and state officials involved in gross violations of human rights enjoy impunity. If it is so, growth and development will remain a far cry if there is a systematic violation of human rights by the executive organs of the state. But the perspective plan did not tell anything about the human rights.

The perspective plan 2021-2041 contains few lines about the judiciary saying that there is an eternal search for independent, separate, effective, efficient, just, impartial, corruption free, apolitical and victim-friendly judiciary in Bangladesh. But the challenges are case overload, quality of people, poor incentive, litigating public, poor legal education and capacity. Strict enforcement of human rights law in all spheres of life, quick response to any human rights violation to bring the offender to justice, capacity building, legislative support, augmentation of human, material and logistics with digital devices may help to promote the status of human rights. But the perspective plan does not elucidate any aspects which are integral to the inclusive growth of a country like Bangladesh.

CHAPTER-1

1. 1 INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a independent sovereign State. Its independent was achieved through nine months of bloodshed and armed liberation war on December, 1971. After the historical speech of 7th March of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the bangle nation was excited for independence. Soon after formal declaration of Murch 26, 1971 the mass people participated into armed liberation war. Our grate independence was achieved through 9 mounts armed liberation war. Basically, the good journey of basic human rights of bangle nation started after independence¹ of Bangladesh. The liberation war led by the father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman aimed at liberating from the grip of Pakistani rule and exploitation.

After liberation, the Constitution of Bangladesh was written in a very short time to govern the newly independent State. "Pleading that, Bangladesh shall be a fundamental aim of the state to realize though the Democratic process a socialist society, free from a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equally and justice, political economic and social, will be secured for all citizen². The Bangladesh Constitution, written in 153 articles, and enshrines fundamental rights in a very clear manner. In the part III, Article 26-47 contains provisions related to fundamental rights and enforcement of fundamental rights³. In Bangladesh the constitution was suspended in several times by imposing military rule and the human rights of the citizens were suspended⁴. Nowadays, under the democratic rule the country is moving forward to the progress in the terms of social and economic sectors as well as in the field of human rights.

The perspective Plan 2021-2041 is the roadmap for the implementation of goals and objectives of development through the establishment, democratization, administrative decentralization and capacity building of the citizens of the country⁵ Vision 2041 has

¹ The constitution of the people Republic of Bangladesh, preamble, para 1

² The constitution of the people Republic of Bangladesh, preamble, para 3

³ The Bangladesh constitution, Part iii, Article 26-47, Page 8-14

⁴ Martial Law in 1976 and 1982,

⁵ Perspective plan of Bangladesh 2021-2041; The Massage of the HPM, para 3

been formulated with the aim of developing Bangladesh to upper-middle status by 2031 and becoming a high country by 2041. Its 12 chapters provide guidance on almost all aspect of the economic development strategies. But how much attention is paid to the fundamental rights of citizens.

Fundamental Rights are the most discussed tropic in the world. Various advocacy activities are being held in favor of fundamental rights in the national and international spheres. Workshops, seminars and symposiums are being held for the upheld for human rights. The human rights are being facing various difficulties and obstacles in different country. It is true that, "Bangladesh is a country with severely bad image of human rights. Though all the government has adequately passed necessary legislation for the protection of human rights, but the reality has not been changed. The main reason for continuous violation of human rights is always the state machinery itself has integrated for the violation or is has kept it aloof.

Now, we need to evaluate along with the progress of economic development, how much fundamental rights of the citizens have been up held and enshrined in the perspective plan-Vision 2021 of Bangladesh.

1.2. RESEARCHQUESTION

This study initiates the following research question:

"What is the position of human rights in the perspective plan 'Vision 2041 of Bangladesh'?

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

Based on the reach question, the objectives of the study are the following:

- (a) To explore the standard of human rights in the national laws of Bangladesh.
- (b) To examine the position of human rights in the Perspective plan of Vision 2041 keeping in view of the national and international standards.
- (c) To make specific recommendations for promotion in the development plan of Bangladesh.

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⁶ Arif Khan, International Law and human rights p. 402

1.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary and secondary sources of data.

1.5. LIMITATION

There is an extreme paucity of materials on human rights issues in the perspective plan of Bangladesh. Since the study has been completed within a short period of time, no field study or interview or group discussion has been conducted.

CHAPTER-2:

DEFINATION AND NATURE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The idea of human rights descended from the philosophical idea of natural rights; some recognized know difference between two and regard both as labels for the same thing, while others choose to keep the terms separate to eliminate association with some features traditionally associated with natural rights⁷. In Bangladesh, "Human Rights means right of life, right to liberty, right to equality and right to dignity of a person guaranteed by the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and such other human rights that are declared in different international human rights instruments notified by the People's Republic of Bangladesh are enforceable by the existing courts of Bangladesh⁸. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person⁹.

Fundamental rights are a group of rights that have been recognized by a high degree of protection from encroachment. These rights are had been found under due process of Law. The right to development and inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural, political development and freedoms can be fully realized. Human Rights are a set of principles concerned with equality and fairness. They recognize our freedom to make choices about our lives and to develop our potential as human being. They are about living a life free from fear, harassment or discrimination. "Universal Rights" include civil and political rights. Civil rights include the ensuring of people's physical and mental integrity, life and safety. On the other hand, political rights include natural justice (procedural fairness) in law 10.

Nowadays, human rights refer to a wide variety of values and capabilities reflecting the diversity of human circumstances and history. They are conceived of as universal, applying to all human being everywhere and as fundamental, referring to essential or basic human needs. The idea of basic rights originated from the need to protect the individual against the (arbitrary) use of state power.

⁷ Peter Jones, Rights, Palgrave Macmillan, 1994 P.73

⁸ Section 2 (f) of the National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009

⁹ Article 3, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

¹⁰ en. Wikipdia.org; civil and political rights

Human rights in this category are generally referred to as "fundamental freedoms". As human rights are viewed as a precondition for leading a dignified human existence, they serve as a guide unity and touch-stone for legislation.

CHAPTER-3:

HISTRORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Human Rights have been developing since the dawn of human civilization. Actually, the International Slavery Convention 1926, International labor Organization (ILO) 1919, The Charter of United Nations (UN), 1945 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)- enforced towards the concept of Human Rights. Since UDHR adoption by the UN General Assembly the Universal Declaration of human rights has had a wide impact through-out the world influencing national constitutions on various specific rights. It is true that the schedule of rights and freedoms contained in the declaration was very much before the framers of the Indian constitution1949, when they drafted Part III and part IV of their Constitution, providing for the justifiable Fundamental Rights and non- justifiable Directive Principles of State policy. It will be seen that all the rights mentioned in the declaration have found place in the Indian Constitution either in the form of substantive fundamental rights guaranteed and or as Principles of State Policy.

In 1951, Great Britain, which has an unwritten Constitution and has all along resisted the adoption of a Bill of Rights, ratified the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950. The European Convention, adopted orders the auspices of the Council of Europe are nothing but a replica of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and supersedes the vogue generalities of rights that character the Declaration 1948.

The Pakistan constitution of 1956 contained a better drafted Chapters or fundamental human rights and the country where empowered to enforce these rights through them with jurisdiction. In the Pakistan Constitution of 1962, the fundamental rights were reduced to the non- justifiable, Principles of law making. Actually, after getting liberation in 1947 to till now the history of Pakistan human rights is not satisfactory for the military intervention. But in different times must of the autocrat government of Pakistan enacted some laws regarding human rights friendly such as the Muslim Family Law ordinance 1961 etc. The influence of the Indian and Pakistan Constitution is evident on Bangladesh, Constitution of 1972. We find that all most the whole declaration of Human Rights has been incorporated in the Part II and Part III in the form of fundamental Principle of State Policy and Fundamental Rights respectively making the rights justifiable in the courts.

CHAPTER-4:

HUMAN RIGHTS IN BANGLADESH CONSTITUTION

The preamble of the Constitution of Bangladesh of 1972 Pledges to establish a society securing fundamental human rights and freedoms for all citizen. The man and women who fought the war of liberation in Bangladesh and established an independent country have been guaranteed those fundamental freedoms through the written constitution¹¹. Article5 of the Universal declaration of Human Rights, 1948 provides that "No one Shall be Subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Similar provision has been inserted in the clause 5 of Article 35.

The constitution of Bangladesh was formulated with due provision of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Articles 26 to 47 of the Constitution of Bangladesh enshrine fundamental rights. Among which the most frequently violated article is; 31-right to protection of law, 32- right to life, 33- safe guard as to arrest and detention, 39-freedom of thought and conscience and freedom of speech etc. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, explain indicators of the violation human rights. Witch are the cruelty, torture, threatened, of life, liberty and security of a person and denial of effective judicial remedy of victims 12

Despite of the constitutional guarantee of Bangladesh, the basic rights citizens are being neglected in many ways. Due to the lake of good governance in the State, the equal rights of all in the eyes of the law as stated in Article 131 of constitution are not seen to apply equally all cases. This is especially applicable to opposition party leaders and activates and critics of the government activities in different opinions. At the same time, various repressive laws such as Special Powers Act, 1974, Digital Security Act, 2018 etc. are being violated the important fundamental rights such as unlawful arrest, freedom of thoughts and speech, The Constitution of Bangladesh is considered to be the protection of the fundamental rights of the citizens, the fundamental rights have been clearly included in the constitution. But 20 years of

¹¹ The constitution of the people Republic of Bangladesh, Preamble P.1

development roadmap have not clarified the human rights in that ways in the perspective plan 2021.

It is true that, the protection of the fundamental rights of the citizens and economic development of the State are inextricably linked with each other. One of these is meaningless without the others. However, no initiative has been taken and to protect these important fundamental human rights in the Perspective Plan, 2041 of Bangladesh.

CHAPTER-5:

THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE PERSPECTIVE PLAN: VISION 2021-2041

The General Economic Division (GED) of Bangladesh planning Commission, Ministry of planning has been prepared the perspective plan 2021-2041 on March 2020. Vision 2021-2041 is development strategy of the country with directions for sectors in the development including education, health, food, housing, environment, ICT and agriculture, industry, trade etc. At the same time human resource development through establishment of good governance, democratization, decentralization and capacity building has been outline.

Perspective plan 2021-2041 envisages transition of the country from lower middle income to upper middle income by 2031 and to high income country by 2041 12. It also talks about achieving SDG's by 2030 through graduation from LDC status by 2024. It sets a target of poverty alleviation along with improving per-capita income to USD 12,500 as a developed country. Though these, the target of poverty alleviation has been determined for this reason, importance has been given imposed on sustainable agriculture for food security, rural development, industrialization, export-diversification, employment and sustainable power and energy generation. At the same time, Creation and innovation economy and scientific research, building transport and communication infrastructure, managing the urban transition, environment and blue economy has been given importance.

The 20 years Vision 2041 is already passed more than 2 years. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, conflicting global political and economic situation, the natural disaster etc.. There is still no sign of the torch reaching developed country by 2041. On the contrary, lack of good governance every sectors of the government, corruption and nepotism, lack of fair democratic political environment, rampant inflation and unbridled rise in commodity prices, violation of social justice and fundamental rights etc are the major obstacles to raise to the status of a developed country. It is essential to remove these obstacles in the implementation of 2021 roadmap. Although there are

¹² The Universal Declarations of Human Rights, 1948, Article 3,5,8

several inconsistences with the reality of perspective plan Vision 2021-2041, there is no denying its importance as a long term development strategy.

CHAPTER-6:

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VISION 2041 OF BANGLADSH

6.1 The 'Vision 2041' was formulated to provide an impetus to the development of Bangladesh. Virtually, it is an extension of the 'Vision' 2021 adopted by the government of Bangladesh. The 'Vision 2041' focuses on the complete eradication of the absolute poverty so that the country could step into the threshold of the higher middle-income status by 2031. It is also presumed that the perspective plan of Bangladesh 'Vision 2041' might inevitably leads to the pinnacle of glory and success of becoming a developed nation by 2041. The Perspective Plan 2021-2041 has been prepared by General economic division of the Ministry of Planning with some specific goals and objectives, which described as the roadmap of the development strategies. As twenty years development strategy, the Vision 2021-2041 has a grate importance in the history of development plans of Bangladesh. Its four subjects are given the most priority. These are good governance, democratization decentralization and capacity building of the citizens. If it is possible implement them, the mass people of Bangladesh will be benefited. Vision 2021-2041's biggest dream is to transition to a developed country by 2041. But the basis of good governance on which this development supposed to be established how much is of a strong democracy and how much is it prepared in the proposal of decentralization.

It's true that, the issue of fundamental rights is also integrally involved in the interest of economic development of the country. Moreover, in perspective plan-vision 2041 of Bangladesh does not adequately reflect the fundamental rights of citizens. A critical analysis of the present position of human rights in Bangladesh's Vision 2041 given below.

6.2. Out of four, good Governance is one of the most important pillars of the perspective plan, 2041. But unfortunately, Bangladesh is the 147 least corrupt Nation out of 180 countries, according to the 2001 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International (TI). The public sectors conducted by the government are the most corrupted sector of the country¹³.

¹³ Transparency Internationals 2021 corruption perception index

The Government of Bangladesh (GoB)does not provide anything meaningful step which may controlled corruption. It is very much harmful to implement the perspective plan 2041. Similarly, the Vision2041 does not provide a clear vision or direction to get out of this vicious cycle of corruption in the near future. Therefore, it is difficult to say how successful vision 2041 will be in realizing the dream of establishing and developing human rights in near future.

- **6.3.** One of the most important pillars of the transmission of development is democracy. In today's world, democracy and human rights and economic development considered as one of the prerequisites of another. But in fact, the lack of sincerity of the government in establishing real democracy is observed. The vote rigging in the last two national elections of Bangladesh and the inadequacy of level playing field in the political practices of the opposition parties are the best example of this issue. Even though democratization is shown out of the pillars, there are no clear direction about the practice and development of democracy and the path of transition in the perspective plan 2041 of Bangladesh.
- one-way traffic. Here, the multi-party democracy of the state and the participation of the people of all parties have not been taken into consideration. Constructive criticism and well thought out views from a strong opposition party are essential to highlight the weaknesses of various development programs of the government. To ensure transparency and accountability in the formulation and implementation of government mega projects for the public interest, there is a need for more studies and clear guidelines for their implementation. In terms of fair national and local elections, practice of democracy at every level, freedom of speech of citizens, opportunity for constructive criticism about development program adopted by the government etc. vision 2041 appears to be very one sided. These issues were essential to upheld the fundamental rights of citizen of the country. These major weaknesses of Vision 2041 have not been entertained to achievement the mid-term and long-term desired development goals by 2031 and 2041 respectively.

- **6.5.** In Chapter 5 of the perspective plan (PP) Vision 2041 mentions the Human Development through quality education? Hear about 4.7 million children age 5-14 are working in various hazardous child labours in Bangladesh¹⁴. But there are no focus of dropout children, who are involved in hazardous works. The Perspective Plan 2041 did not consider the future development plans would be meaningless, unless ensured education and proper development of children engaged in hazardous labour. The perspective plan did not address this sensitive issue at all.
- 6.6 Government of Bangladesh enacted the Digital Security Act 2018 with the aim of to ensure the country's security from digital crimes. But unfortunately, the Digital Security Act (DSA) of 2018 misused and is being to targeted dissent and political opponents by the government and law enforcing agencies. It is true that, development, transparency and freedom of speech are the most relevant to human rights. In order to properly implement of the perspective plan 2041, the activities of every level of the government must be transparent, corruption free and accountable. Constructive criticism of the government development activities by media and strong opposition parties should be allowed. So far, government and law-enforcement agencies have misuse DSA to control the public opinion regarding government activities. That's why, day by day the prevalence of corruption increasing and the implementation the target of perspective plan is likely to be hindered. No measures to prevent mismanagement of government development activities, nepotism and corruption etc. have been taken the perspective plan 2041.
- 6.7 The document contains few lines about the judiciary and the rule of law which have been sketchy without any directive to strengthen the institution. It recognizes the imperative of the judiciary and the rule of law in the caravan of development. It is true that, today world wide the roll of independent judiciary is very important in establishing the fundamental rights of the people. In the countries, where there is no justice, the question of fundamental rights is meaningless. As a result, the family of the victims who seeking justice is becoming extremely poor day by day and fundamental rights are being violated in Bangladesh. But know action or direction has been mentioned to deal with the challenges in the perspective plan 2021-2041.

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¹⁴ Bangladesh child data country brief, International Labor Organization (ILO), P.4

- 6.8 The Supreme Court of Bangladesh is recognized as the guardian of constitution. To establishing the rule of law the contribution of the supreme is very important. However, the appointment of the Judges of the Supreme Court and excessive political interference in various sensitive issues has questioned the independence of the judiciary. The Perspective Plan do not provide specific directions or focus for establishing an independent judiciary, which can promote the human rights of the citizen.
- 6.9 The lengthy process of investigation and court proceeding are the causes dissatisfaction with the financial and wastage of time of the victim and the justice seeker. More over extra-judicial killing, detention or remand, tortured and delay in name of investigation of police cases, breaks the human rights and economic back bone of the victim family. These have a negative impact on the total economic development activities of country. But all these important issues regarding fundamental rights and justice have not been given importance in the perspective plan vision 2041 of Bangladesh.
- **6.10** Strict enforcement of human rights law in all spheres of life, quick response to any human rights violation to bring the offender to justice, capacity building, and legislative support, augmentation of human, material and logistic with digital device may help to promote the status of human rights. But the perspective plan does not elucidate any aspects which are integral to the inclusive growth of a country like Bangladesh.

CHAPTER-7:

7.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Bangladesh perspective plan 2021-2041 is mile-stone in the transition from a developing country to a developed country. There is no doubt that the implementation Vision 2041 is a major challenge. To move every sectors forwarded in development, good governance, democratization, decentralization and capacity building of citizens are needed first. Our development activities are faced with various challenges. So, it is very important to take effective steps to meet these challenges. Moreover the study makes the flowing recommendations to promote the fundamental right of citizen.

- Perspective planners of the document shall be proactively compassionate to accommodate pragmatic approach with robust strategic process, approach and directives of institutionalization especially the organs of criminal justice system in order to include, maintain, promote the human rights standard.
- Any violation of human rights, forced disappearance, counter killing by law
 enforcement agencies shall be intervened instantly such as enquiry by an
 independent commission or body and appropriate action shall be taken based
 on the result of the enquiry.
- Vision 2041, could outline strategies and define modalities of human rights issues as enshrined in the Constitution of Bangladesh. All institutions of the criminal justice system shall be functionally strengthened by capacity building, legislative support, and augmentation of human rights, material and logistic support with digital device to achieve the development goal of 'Vision 2041.
- The National Human Rights Commission shall be given the free access to investigate the case of violation of human rights issue and the government shall be obliged to act upon the finding or recommendation of it.

- For the sake of good governance, democracy and economic development activity, the protection of human rights should be given the most importance so it is required to clarify the human rights in the perspective plan of Bangladesh Vision 2041.
- The people shall be sensitized to the issues of human rights and its violation so that people come forward if there is any violation and seek to redress it in a laid down institutional framework.
- All national and international human rights organizations shall be given easy
 access to free flow of information in connection with human rights issues.
 Their concerns shall be resolved through an established norms and modalities
 through transparent and overt activities by the agencies of the government.

7.2 CONCLUSION

The Government of Bangladesh formulated the perspective plan Vision 2041 for economic development of the country. The 'Perspective Plan' is the master document which envisaged for leading the country to the zenith of development goal in 2041. It is indeed formulated in compliance with the traditional notion of development. It encompasses a set of economic development indices that can arguably create enabling conditions for the fulfillment of many economic and social rights.

The 'Perspective Plan' is the master document which envisaged for leading the country to the zenith of development goal in 2041. It is indeed formulated in compliance with the traditional notion of development. It encompasses a set of economic development indices that can arguably create enabling conditions for the fulfillment of many economic and social rights. But the 'Perspective Plan' fails to appreciate the much needed elements of human rights to achieve the development goal. Nowadays Now a day, development thinkers have been forced to include a broader definition of development that includes people's civil and political rights. In other words, they have strong preference for accommodating human rights agenda with a strategic prescription of implementation in the development basket. In fact, formulators of 'Perspective Plan' have based on the narrow definition of development.

But the 'Perspective Plan' fails to appreciate the much-needed elements of human rights to achieve the development goal. Nowadays, development thinkers have been forced to include a broader definition of development that includes people's civil and political rights. In other words, they have strong preference for accommodating human rights agenda with a strategic prescription of implementation in the development basket. In fact, formulators of 'Perspective Plan' have based on the narrow definition of development.

There is no doubt that Perspective Plan 2041 is a good initiative in terms of social and economic development. However, if the fundamental rights of people cannot be upheld, development will not be meaningful only by economic planning. Therefore, human rights issues should be clarified in the perspective plan. Ensuring the constitutional obligation to protect desirable human rights, the government, law enforcement agencies, civil society and national and international human rights organizations should be more active or careful in establishing the rule of law and social justice. Otherwise, it will be difficult to establish human rights regardless of the Perspective Plan.

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