FATE OF HINDUS AND OTHER MINORITIES IN BANGLADESH WILL DETERMINE
THE FUTURE OF EXISTENCE OF WEST BENGAL

Respected Chairperson
First let me express our sincere thanks to BHBCUC USA for organizing this very important and timely conference. BHBCUC USA and their leaders Ratan Barua, Nabendu Dutta, Sitangshu Guha, Thomas Dulu Roy and others are doing a great work by providing the only network for the people who are working for the minorities of Bangladesh. BHBCUC USA’s Newsletter is the only document where you can have a monthly update of BD scenario. By organizing this conference they have added another feather on their cap. CAAMB congratulates them.

Friends,
After the results of elections of five municipalities it is now a nearly foregone conclusion that Khaleda-Jamait-Hejajat combine is in a favourable position to win the next year’s election in Bangladesh. There is already a huge confusion about conducting the election as there is a demand for a caretaker government by the opposition group. Though the fate of the forthcoming election is anybody’s guess but for the minorities it is all the same. Already a spate of 60 hours strikes have started to cripple Bangladesh and violence has broken up in different parts of the country. The minority Hindus are already feeling the heat. There have been already a number of incidents of attacks on Hindus. Though no one claims the responsibility – even the pro-Islamists section says that it is done by AL to provoke the Hindu reaction. But it is known to all that the return of Khaleda-Jamait-Hejajat combine has ominous implications on the future of Bangladesh. Most important of them are the future of Hindus and other minorities of Bangladesh. One should remember Khaleda Zia celebrated her last win in 2001 with rampant attack on life and properties of Hindus. Hundreds of Hindu women were raped and molested resulting exodus of thousands of Hindus to India. Probably the same fate is awaiting the Hindus and other minorities after the next election. Even the outspoken Bangladeshi intellectuals like Shahriar Kabir, Muntasir Mamun and others are also worried about the coming future.

Let me introduce CAAMB (Campaign Against Atrocities on Minorities in Bangladesh) to the audience here. We are an agglomeration of people of Kolkata, India, involved in human rights activities, culture and other social actions campaigning on the issue of atrocities on minorities in Bangladesh. It was formed in 2003 as an aftermath of massive atrocities on the minorities after BNP won 2001 Bangladesh Election. Thousands of the refugees entered India. But no human rights organization in West Bengal uttered a single word. CAAMB was formed to break this silence in the name of pseudo-secularism. We feel unless the resistance comes from West Bengal, there will not be much change at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. We are working for last 10 years and have been able to sensitize the people about the issue of minorities in Bangladesh. We work in close associations with a number of refugee organizations who, due to our continuous effort, have started to raise their voices about the minority issues in Bangladesh.

Friends, a number of speakers have already told and more will be told about the worse situation of the minorities in Bangladesh. I refrain myself from repeating some of the same reports. I would rather like to highlight the link between the existence of West Bengal and the issue of Bangladesh election and fate of the Hindu and other minorities.

West Bengal is not simply western part of Bengal. It is an idea and a concept of a non-Islamic space for the Bengalis. The city of Kolkata, home of thousands of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan/ Bangladesh, well known for rallying together to voice their opinion on the events in South Africa, Vietnam, Iraq and many other faraway places, had never bothered to protest against the violence, torture, eviction faced by the Hindus, Buddhists, Christians in East Pakistan / Bangladesh. For last four decades the Marxists and then Trinamul Congress (TMC) are
practicing appeasement of Islamic fundamentalists in West Bengal. The government is establishing hundreds of Madrasas for Muslim while no other religious community has any religious education system in India. While the Marxist government prepared the base for Islamic upcoming, TMC has amplified it manifold. The Islamists in West Bengal have driven away Taslima Nasrin and they now can attack an Hindu village, burn Hindu houses, molest Hindus women without any fear of state interventions. Worst is that Bengali newspapers refuse to publish these events and all Hindu religious organisations like Ramakrishna Mission, Bharat Sevashram, Lokenath-Anukul etc groups remain silent. Massive infiltration of Muslims from Bangladesh has already subverted the religious demography of West Bengal, it is marching to be a Muslim majority state. On 30 March 2013, the Muslims of West Bengal had a huge meeting of about 20 thousands in Kolkata against Shahbagh Movement in Bangladesh and in support of the Jamaat leaders convicted of crime against humanity. While similar protest rally in support of Shahbagh was stopped by the Government of Mamata Bennerjee.

So if Islamic fundamentalists win the election in Bangladesh and other parties like AL remain unbothered about the fate of the minorities, it will increase Islamic militancy in whole of Bangladesh and Eastern India. Assam and West Bengal will be much affected, threatening the existence of these states as secular pluralistic entities. It is time to act jointly all organisations throughout the world to stop Islamisation of the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent.

Hindus and other minorities have to chalk out a road map cum strategy right now for their survival with honor and safety under Khaleda-Jamait-Hefajat combine regime or any similar government. I suggest the following steps for deliberation during the International Convention:

1. Creating a strong Minority Commission in Bangladesh. We have to create an International pressure for creating such a body by AL government now.
2. Majority community (read Muslims) of the block (or a designated area around the incident) must pay heavy fine for any attack on Hindus/minorities. You may be aware that this provision exists in law in India since British period. Minority Commission must investigate all such incidents and publish results in newspapers and web.
3. Police Officers and Senior most Administrative Officers should be held responsible for attack on Hindus/minorities in their respective areas.
4. Compensation of loss of property must be paid by a special body within 30 days of the incident to help the rebuild the life and profession.
5. Attack on Hindu/minority religious places should be treated in the same way as insult on Islam or its Prophet.
6. An UN observer team (as exists in many countries) must be stationed to oversee the activities of ruling parties.
7. A number of international meetings, deputations need to be organized to sensitize international community to take up the issue of the Hindu-Buddhist-Christians in Bangladesh.
8. To propose economic sanction on Bangladesh if the minority rights are not protected.

CAAMB thanks all the participants, organizers and the audience for this excellent conference.
Dr. Mohit Ray, Convener CAAMB, Visiting Faculty Jadavpur University, Writer, Environment Consultant and Human Rights Campaigner.
Contact: caambkolkata@hotmail.com Ph: 91 7278535143; http://caambkolkata.webnode.com/