

Madam Chairperson, Distinguished speakers, Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Rana Desgupta, I am lawyer by profession, I am the general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Council, an organisation for the establishment of human rights of religious minorities in Bangladesh. Madam Chairman, thank you for asking me to speak at this important forum on minorities and effective participation in economic life.

Madam Chairman, India was partitioned in 1947 on the basis of the communal two nation theory which generated dense cloud of communalism in Islamic Republic of Pakistan, having two provinces, East Pakistan and West Pakistan. There was mass transfer of populations between India and Pakistan. British colonial rule ended in 1947 and west Pakistan colonial rule ended in 1971 through the war of liberation of Bangladesh. About 10 million people including 8 million religious minorities especially Hindus sought refuge in India during this liberation war continuing for about 9 months. During the last 50 years from 1951 to 2001, the comparatively lower growth rate of the religious minorities especially Hindus in this area indicates a state of migration to India until today. Hindu population came down to 9.2% in 2001 from 23% in 1951.

Madam Chairman, many reasons for such outward migration are listed as; low rate of representation in government offices, insignificant representation in the parliament, communal atrocities, creation of obstruction in performing religious rights, destruction of religious places, homesteads, commercial establishments, extortion of money, threat to leave the country, existence of discriminatory laws and rules, violation of human rights, XX, confiscation of the properties of the minorities under the so called enemy of the vested property act, a dead law as declared by the supreme court of Bangladesh. Looting of properties of them and setting fire on homesteads and commercial establishments. Two amendments to the constitution, 5th & 8th establishing an Islamic character to the constitution and economic deprivation.

Madam Chairman, we have identified all the problems as constitutional, economical, political, and educational, cultural and social. Outward migration of religious minorities has direct and indirect affect over the economy of the country in about 11 areas, some as which may be listed as; brain drain, draining of resources participate, backward shift in prosperity due to religious fundamentalism, isolation from flow of internationalism, non-participation of minorities in nation building tasks, low inflow of foreign exchange, underutilisation of the resources of the minorities.

Madam Chairman, here are some recommendations;

1. Immediate end to the discrimination
2. Fair share of positions,
3. Guarantee of security

Thank you.