Abstract | CLC 2024 | Stream: Vulnerability in the Automated State | Jobair Alam

**Title:** Equality and Human Rights of the Minorities in an Automated State: Does their Vulnerability Require to Rewrite the ‘Social Contract’ in the Global South?

**Abstract:** The impact of automation is enormous, entrenching existing inequalities and widening others. Securing equality and human rights of the minorities in an automated state significantly relies upon ensuring their full access to digital government through successful engagement with complex digital bureaucracy. Taking instances from Bangladesh, this paper investigates how the government responded to ensure such access to the minorities (floating people, slum dwellers, Biharis, and sex workers) in the post-pandemic landscape. Based on the review of three specific rights of such minorities including the right to health, education, and access to information, it is argued that the government’s (in)actions are mostly reflective of disregarding their societal needs in an increasingly digital environment, which goes against the former’s constitutional and international human rights obligations. It argues that the unequal treatment of such minorities conflicts with social contract theory, and thus, the promise of the social contract between the government of Bangladesh and the governed (e.g., minorities) has not been respected. It then explores the feasibility of rewriting the social contract backed up by NGOs and civil society in parallel with the government, who could help to ensure equality and human rights of these minorities by addressing both exogenous and endogenous factors. It concludes that providing services to secure legitimate rights through automation have the effect of expanding the inequality in the society between the minority and ‘others’ if no additional measures are taken for the former. The significance of this paper lies in exploring the nuances associated with vulnerabilities in the automation of state services, and their ramifications on enhancing the (in)ability of the minorities to exercise rights before public authorities and participate in public life on equal terms.