

Violence in name of religion poses threat to society

Says Prof Rehman Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Violence in the name of religion, which the then Pakistani rulers tried to promote in order to mask their anti-democratic rule, is once again emerging as a threat to society, eminent economist Prof Rehman Sobhan said yesterday.

premises in the city. "So far, we had to tolerate ambitious politicians who were cynical in their abuse of religion for political gain without themselves having any commitment to religions in their personal or political practices. This phase has now ended and the ideological zealots, armed with bombs, have now emerged in our national arena," he said.

Rehman said. He said the spirit of the liberation war is adequately captured in the four principles which have guided the constitution -- democracy, nationalism, secularism and socialism meaning social justice.

of injustice in political system itself originates in the injustices in the economic order, which have been accentuated by the policy regimes put in place over the last two decades.

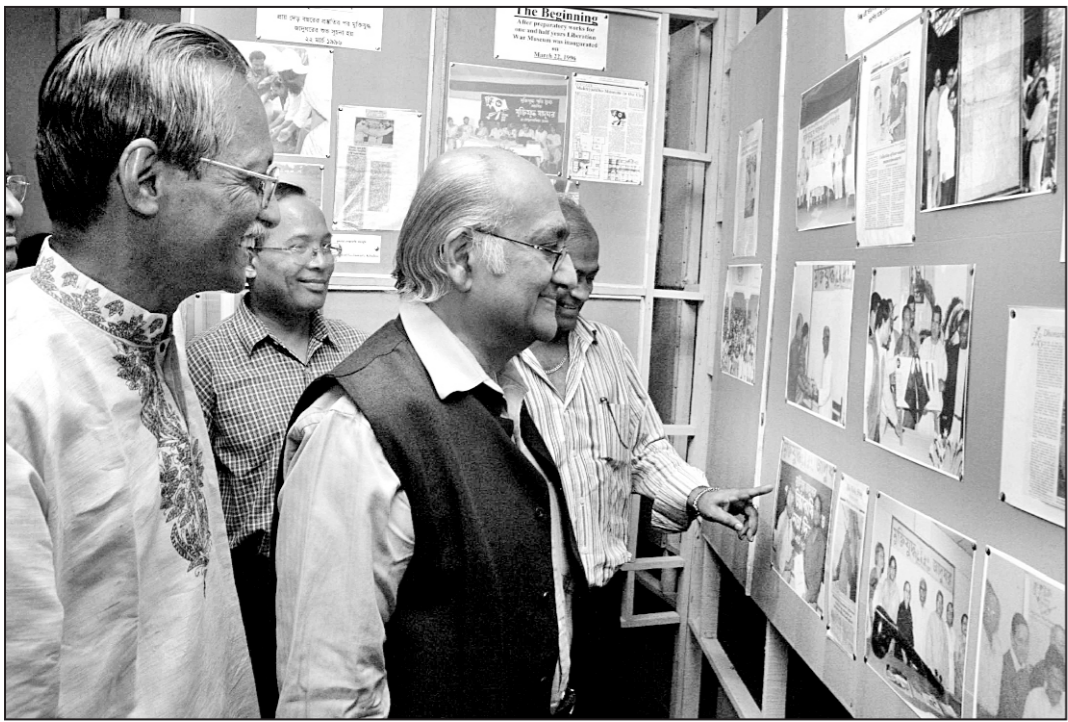


PHOTO: STAR

Eminent economist Prof Rehman Sobhan visits an exhibition titled '10 years of Liberation War Museum' on the museum premises in the city yesterday.

'Nation needs more sacrifice for economic freedom'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a book launching ceremony yesterday said the liberation war is a continuous process and the process will go on until we achieve economic, political and social freedom.

Expatriate shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An expatriate youth was gunned down at Mirpur under Pallabi Police Station in the city yesterday. The victim was identified as Kalimuddin, an expatriate living in London. He hailed from Sylhet.

Prevention Act'. Kalimuddin was arrested following the filing of the case and was in jail. He was released on bail on March 9.

Couple rescued two hrs after abduction in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A gang of armed people led by a ward commissioner of Sylhet City Corporation kidnapped a man and his wife from the house of a former adviser to the caretaker government in the city's Housing Estate area on Tuesday night.

Online ED service launched for air passengers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Immigration Department of Zia International Airport yesterday launched an online embarkation and disembarkation (ED) service, first of its kind in the world.

Police, however, rescued the couple from a house at Ambarkhana Bazar in the city within two hours of the abduction and arrested five people.

Police said a gang of ten led by Ward Commissioner Abdul Quadir Shomsu reached the house belonging to Imamuddin Ahmed Chowdhury, former secretary and adviser to the caretaker government, by two autorickshaws at about 11:30pm and picked up Abdul Majid and his wife Fatema.

Muggers stab ASP in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of muggers yesterday stabbed an additional superintendent of police (ASP) in the city. Police said Mahbubur Rahman, 37, ASP of Chittagong City Special Branch, reached Dhaka at around 4:30am and got off the bus at Kakrail circle to go to Ramna Police Officers' mess.

Tk 700cr IDA support for reforms in education

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh will get around 100 million US dollars, equivalent to Tk 700 crore, as credit support from the International Development Agency (IDA) for carrying out reform measures in the education sector.

BOMB THREAT Security beefed up in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Security measures have been stepped up in Khulna metropolitan city following threats of bomb attacks by Islamic militants on key installations on the occasion of Independence Day on March 26.

Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Hazrat Pirzada Obaidullah Khan, a Peer of Khananagar Darbar Sharif of Khukni in Sirajganj and father of Nesar Ahmed, Staff Reporter of the Bangladesh Observer, passed away due to old age complications at Shamoria Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 81.



PHOTO: STAR

Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha LK Advani calls on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at Maurya Sheraton Hotel suite in New Delhi yesterday.

'Stop grabbing of land of indigenous people'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous leaders yesterday urged the government to stop illegal grabbing of their land across the country and to recognise their traditional land rights.

Reading out a written statement, General Secretary of Adivashi Forum Sanjeeb Drong demanded punishment of the culprits involved with the March 5 attack in Andar Manik landless village in Gazipur and to distribute the land among the landless people living there since 1981.

Indian dams on 52 rivers lead to water crisis: Bhuiyan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India has constructed dams on 52 common rivers, leading to environmental disasters and serious water crisis in Bangladesh, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said yesterday.

"Bangladesh is crisscrossed by 230 rivers. Of them, 54 rivers have originated from India. The Indian government has already built dams on 52 rivers," he told reporters after attending a seminar marking the World Water Day 2006.

Chief Engineer of Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) M Khurshed Alam and Superintending Engineer of DPHE Amanullah-Al-Mahmood also spoke.

Matin Chy won't contest next election

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Abdul Matin Chowdhury, a member of BNP standing committee and minister without portfolio, yesterday announced that he would not contest the next parliament election from Narayanganj constituency-1.

At a meeting with upazila and union parishad leaders of Rupganj at his official residence at Mintu Road in the capital. Matin Chowdhury also announced his nephew's name as a replacement candidate.

Moniruzzaman Chowdhury Khokon is the president of Rupganj upazila unit of BNP.

Dissatisfactions erupted instantly among the local leaders following the announcement.

Supporters of other aspiring candidates Taimur Alam Khondaker, Kazi Moniruzzaman and Kazi Nuruzzaman Khan expressed their resentment at the meeting.

In presence of the minister, they were locked in a scuffle with those of Khokon before police brought the situation under control.

Supporters of three leaders also chanted slogans against Matin Chowdhury's decision terming it monarchical and undemocratic.

When contacted, Kazi Moniruzzaman said it is quite undemocratic that a standing committee member declares his successor.

Khokon, however, said nomination of a candidate does not depend on the declaration of a minister, rather the party high-ups will decide it.

CTG KALPALOKE PROJECT 400 get plots

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) yesterday announced the names of allottees of plots under its Kalpaloke Residential Area Development Project (1st phase) more than eight and a half years after the project was initiated back in June 1997.

The authority allotted plots of the housing project to 400 applicants, out of 1047, who made application with an average deposit of Tk 1.5 lakh each as security money within November 17, 2002.

There are a total of 403 plots under the project, but three plots could not be allotted because of three cases, which forced suspension of the allotment process for around a year.

Of the 400 plots, 204 were given to the applicants of ten categories through a lottery the CDA used for the first time to ensure transparency, impartiality and accountability in the allotment process.

The remaining 196 plots were allotted to the applicants of another ten categories through marking and genuine & deserving system.

The lottery was held at a function at the CDA Hall with Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas as the chief guest.



Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hafiz Motiur Rahman, a visually impaired person, has appealed to generous people to help him buy a Braille Perkins Machine so that he can earn a living for his family.

Motiur, who hails from Fakrabad village in Jhinaigati, Sherpur, lost his eyesight at the age of only four after an attack of pox.

He ended up in an orphanage centre after his mother died in 1974. His father was killed by the Pakistani army during the War of Liberation.

With the help of a foreign woman, he had studied in blind schools in Dhaka and Khulna. He learnt Arabic, Bengali and English.

But Motiur with his wife and a 10-year-old son is now struggling for survival as he has recently lost his home to river erosion.

Now he wants to buy a Braille Perkins Machine which he will use to write and explain verses of Holy Quran, thus earning a living. The machine costs \$32 US dollars.

He appeals all to extend a helping hand to save his family.

Contributions can be sent to Hafiz Motiur Rahman, Account No: 3963, Sonali Bank, Jhinaigati Branch, Sherpur- 2120. Mobile phone No. -0173506378.

DHAKA TODAY logo and header.

Roundtable

The Daily Star and Save the Children USA organise a roundtable discussion on 'School Health and Nutrition'. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre, Gulshan-1. Time: 9:30am.

Venue: Public Library Auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Talk

Asiatic Society of Bangladesh organises a talk on 'Tagore's Thought on Education' with Prof Kathleen M O'Connell of University of Toronto as keynote speaker. Venue: Seminar of the Society. Time: 4:30pm.

Discussion on exchange rate

Economic Reporters' Forum will hold a discussion on 'Floating Exchange Rate Management: How Does It Work for Bangladesh?' with Bangladesh Bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

Discussion on independence

Bangladesh-Bharat Sampriti Parishad will hold a discussion to mark the Independence Day. Venue: Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Discussion

Family Planning Association of Bangladesh organises a discussion to mark the International Women's Day. Venue: Kamalapur Buddhist Monastery auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

Community Development Library will hold a discussion on a book titled 'Ei deshe ekdin juddha hoyechhilo' (Once there has been a war in this country) by Mohiuddin Ahmad. Venue: Library auditorium, Dhanmondi. Time: 5:00pm.

Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Muktijuddhe Nou Ovjani' (Naval Operation in the War of Liberation) by Naval Commando Md Khalilur Rahman will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Seminar

The Monthly Etihash Onnesha organises a seminar on 'The role of external world in the War of Liberation'.

Blue for Peace

Family of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria will stage a silent sit-in as part of their Blue for Peace Programme demanding trial of the killers of former minister. Venue: East gate of the High Court. Time: 4:30pm.

Irrigation strained as water table drops

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percent irrigated croplands in Pabna have become critical for STW operation, followed by 75 percent in Comilla, 60 percent in Kushtia and Naogaon, 55 percent in Mymensingh and Cox's Bazar, 50 percent in Jyoypurhat, 49 percent in Chittagong, 45 percent in Bogra and Rajbari and 30 percent in Jhenidah, Netrakona, Gazipur and Narayanganj.

Authority (BMDA), said, "Similar problem exists in case of the Teesta, Surma, Kushiayara rivers, where the upstream authorities in India control the flow. Withdrawal of water in dry season makes the river water availability very much insecure for irrigation. On the other hand, the reduction of river water during dry season in the branches of Ganges/Padma allows the salinity line to move upstream. All these problems of major surface water sources have resulted in a growing dependence on underground aquifers as the source of water for irrigation in dry season."

Experts pointed out that agriculture, being the mainstay of the country's economy, is still being able to cater to the growing need for food production at par with population growth rate, largely because of phenomenal growth in irrigated rice -- Boro -- during dry season. Boro accounts for 55 percent of the country's rice output while the rest comes from Aus and Aman.

"Groundwater table in 23,392,00 hectares command area has gone down to a critical level where over 3 lakh STWs are becoming inoperative posing a looming danger for thousands of farmers in irrigating almost 9 lakh hectares of croplands," said Eftekharul.

Expansion of low-cost STWs at private level (owned by farmers themselves in most cases) has virtually revolutionised the growth of food output. And now that STW-based minor irrigation is at stake due to fall water table, the prospect of further rise in rice production appears bleak, they warned.

The country incurred a loss of Tk 3,000 crore in lost productivity as the areas' potential rice output of 44 lakh tonnes dropped to 11 lakh tonnes last year because of the acute irrigation problem due to fast depleting water table, he said.

According to 2005 irrigation survey report of the government, over 10 million farmers have an overwhelming dependence on STWs in irrigating almost 70 percent of the 47.8 lakh hectares of irrigated croplands in the last Rabi season while the public-sector schemes provided irrigation for the rest 30 percent.

The groundwater zoning map shows that a record high of 78

"As an immediate bailout measure, policy directives are required for halving the number of STWs in operation in critical zones, as identified by the groundwater zoning map, and the farmers there need to be advised for switching over from rice farming to less-irrigation intensive crops like wheat, potato and maize," noted Eftekharul.

A recently published official document said, "Regulation of water flow in the Ganges at Farakka point by India has caused a reduction of dry season flow. Decreased flow in the Padma and its distributaries has affected the pump irrigation."

The Minor Irrigation Survey Report of 2005, published jointly by the BADC, Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and Barind Multipurpose Development