METROPOLÎTAN/NEWS

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

"Pakistan's experience should have taught us that when ambitious politicians and generals deliberately manipulate religious beliefs to capture power and perpetuate their anti-democratic rule, sooner or later, ideologically motivated fundamentalists will use the same slogans for imposing their beliefs on the people by terror rather than the ballot box,"

Prof Rehman was delivering a lecture on 'Recapturing the spirit of the Liberation War' on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Liberation War Museum on its 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.

Vacuous references about moderate Islam will do little to reverse this tendency towards ideologically inspired terror, he

'This trend can only be effectively challenged if the mainstream political parties collectively decide that whilst people should be free to pursue their religious beliefs, this cannot be opportunistically manipulated for political gain, which divides the country into political categories of believers and unbelievers," Prof

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

The incorporation of socialism into the constitution was a recognition of the debt of honour owed to the deprived majority, he said.

But mass poverty has been perpetuated in 35 years since the iberation while "we have recreated a highly inequitable, deeply unjust society, which has graduated from the two economies which characterised Pakistan, into two societies which characterise contemporary Bangladesh." Prof Rehman added.

'Such societies, founded on weak social legitimacy, tend to be more prone to crime, violence and possible social breakdown." he said, adding that the manifestations

tation and intolerance where the party elected to office functions with complete disregard to the democratic rights of the opposition. "As a result, three successive parliaments have been rendered

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

nity from the law are distributed very

inequitably, the values of a market

driven system tends to aggravate

inequalities and injustice, said the

policy agendas and to restructure

the institutions, which perpetuate

such injustice. Policy and allocative

regimes have to be put in place

which prioritise the ending of pov-

erty by emphasising justice and

inclusion so as to give a stake to the

less privileged in Bangladesh's

development process," Prof

a democratic order built on confron-

He said the country has spawned

Rehman said

"We now need to rethink both our

globally renowned economist.

Where power, access and immu-

virtually dysfunctional and have totally failed to discharge their primary mandate of keeping the executive accountable to the will of the voters through their elected representatives." he pointed out.

Bangladesh has degenerated into a rich man's game where both women and the financially deprived have been effectively disenfranchised, he

"The dominance of money has ensured that issues of principle, policy and public service are no longer the motivating force for participating in politics. Rather politics has become an extension of business and money has become

Trustees of the museum Rabiul Hussain, Dr Sarwar Ali and Mofidul Hoque also spoke at the inaugural session of the anniversary programme followed by a cultura

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 cess will go on until we achieve eco-

nomic, political and social freedom. They also said the nation has to sacrifice more blood in order to attain overall freedom and to safeguard the

They were speaking at the launchng ceremony of a book titled "Ami MuktiJoddha Bolchhi (Words from a freedom fighter)" written by Abeer Ahad, chairman of Muktijoddha

Samannoy Parishad. Jotsna Publishers organised the function at Moni Singha-Farhad Smriti Trust conference room at Purana

Paltan in the city. Awami League Presidium Member Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir in his speech

at the ceremony said this book would resist all ill motives of those who want to change the real history of the coun-The book will also help the new

generation learn the true history of the liberation war as the author of the book was a freedom fighter and wrote the book from his real life experiences, he

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddiq said, "We have achieved political freedom but the economic, political and social freedom have not been achieved even after 35 years of the liberation war."

Major General (retd) KM Safiullah presided over the ceremony where Abeer Ahad. Shah Muhammad Abu Zafar MP. Politician Meibah Uddin Faruk, former student leader Abul Kalam Azad Patwari. Muktiioddha Ainiibi Parishad President Advocate Shamsul Alam Dudu, former joint secretary Nuruzzaman Bhuiyan and freedom fighter Golam Mahmud Mamun spoke.

Write-ups invited on slain Ahsan Ullah

Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master MF Smriti Parishad invites write-ups for a souvenir titled 'Ahsan Ullah Master MP: A Pioneer of Honest Politicians' to be published on the occasion of the second death anniversary of the eminent labour leader who was killed by miscreants on May 7, 2004, says a press release.

Interested persons have been requested to send their contributions to 'General Secretary, Shahid Ahsan I Illah Master MP Sriti Parishad, 300/b Khilgaon Taltola, Dhaka 1219 or email at auf57@yahoo.com by April 15.

Expat shot dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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. The criminals riding a motorbike

shot Kalimuddin, 30, while he was taking tea at a stall near Mirpur Section Kalimuddin came out of his

Shewrapara residence at noon receiving a phone call from an unidentified Police recovered a Nokia cellphone

set and Tk 7,800 in cash from behind body of Kalimuddin.

Pallabi police quoting the victim's family said Kalimuddin has two wives. The elder one lives in London and the younger one in Dhaka. Rana Chowdhury, brother of younger wife, threatened to kill him on March 19. police said. Kalimuddin lodged a general diary with Mirpur Police Station in this connection, police added.

Police said younger wife Lucky Chowdhury filed a case against Kalimuddin on September 9 last year with Uttara Police Station under the Women and Children Repression and

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.

The passengers will no longer have to wait in queues to fill in the ED forms; they can rather put in necessary data in advance through this online service, the immigration authority said last evening at the launching ceremony.

The passengers can fill in their ED cards before heading for a journey by simply logging in to www.immigration.gov.bd and clicking the ED card link, which they can even do at the airport's Customer Service Cell.

Upon filling in the form successfully, the passengers will be given an Immigration Service (IS) Code which they will have to submit to the immi-

The IS Code will save labour and time of the immigration officers' manually putting the data into computer and will provide them with all necessary information.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar inaugurated the web-based service sponsored by Standard Chartered Bank but it will be made open for passengers in the first week of next month.

arrested following the filing of the case

on March 9. Victim's family members suspect that second wife's family might have

been involved in the killing, police

and was in jail. He was released on bail

Couple rescued two hrs after abduction in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Agang 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

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

They also beat up the caretaker of the house, Saiful Islam. He is now undergoing treatment at Sylhet MAG

Osmani Medical College and Hospital. Abdul Maiid, a contractor who had heen entrusted with renovation of the house, was staying there with his wife. The reason behind the abduction of the couple could not be known till the filing of

Muggers stab ASP

in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of muggers vesterday stabbed an additional superintendent of police (ASP) in

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

On the way, four muggers stopped his rickshaw and tried to snatch his bag.

At one stage of scuffle, the muggers stabbed the police officer in his hip and left

The passersby rushed him to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital from where he was shifted to police hospital.

Consequently, politics in

the route to electoral office."

Tk 700cr IDA support for reforms in education

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

An agreement to this effect was signed between Bangladesh and IDA at the National Economic Council (NEC) auditorium in the city yesterday, an official handout said.

Additional Secretary of Economic Relations Division Sheikh A K Motahar Hossain and Acting Country Representative of World Bank Anthony Bottrill signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

The fund will be utilised for implementing different programmes for development of a cost-effective and quality education system at the secondary and higher secondary

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 ndependence Day on March 26.

Members of Rapid Action Battalion and the police department have launched combing operations separately in all 31 wards of the city to arrest criminals who are mostly bombers and bomb-makers.

Several check posts have been set up at different entrance and exit points. Suspected persons and vehicles, residential hotels and private hostels are being checked

Obituary

Hazrat Pirzada Obaidullah Khan, a Peer of Khannagar Darbar Sharif of Khukni in Siraigani and father of Nesar Ahmed, Staff Reporter of the Bangladesh Observer, passed away due to old age complications at Shamorita Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 81. He left behind his wife, three sons

and seven daughters.

Dhaka Reporters Unity President M Shafiqul Karim and General Secretary Shahed Choudhury in a statement condoled the death and prayed for peace of the departed soul



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.

They also demanded introduction of permanent settlement system of indigenous land where permanent ownership has not been established vet.

They placed these demands at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday jointly organised by Bangladesh Adivashi Odikhar Andolan, Bangladesh Adivashi Forum. Adivashi Jagoron Samity and Andar

Referring to recent land grabbing

Reading out a written statement 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

the press conference.

General Secretary of Adivashi

Manik Bhumihin Samobaya Samity.

and attacks in Kaliakoire in Gazipur, Parbotipur in Dinajpur, Moulvibazar and Chittagong Hill Tracts area, the leaders said continuous grabbing of indigenous land across the country is leading ethnic minorities to the verge of destruction.

He also urged the government

not to evict the indigenous people in the name of mining coal in Phulbari and to return land to the indigenous people of Gamaridhala in Khagrachhari district where outsiders illegally grabbed indigenous Gono Forum presidium member

Pankaj Bhatyacharia, Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University, the daily Amader Somoy Journalist Anwar Kabir, indigenous leader Jagodish Chandra Barman and Manindra Chandra Barman were present at

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.

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 independence

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

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.

Seminar

The Monthly Etihash Onnesha organises a seminar on 'The role of external world in the War of Liberation'. Venue: Public Library Auditorium. Time:

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 quest. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am

Discussion

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

Publication ceremony

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

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.

Indian dams on 52 rivers lead to water crisis: Bhuiyan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

common rivers, leading to environmental disasters and serious water crisis in Bandladesh, 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.

Mannan Bhuiyan took part in the seminar on 'Water and culture: Where we are' at the IDB Bhaban auditorium in the city.

"A total of 80 rivers and many canals and wetlands have almost dried up because of lack of flow of water or other natural or man-made obstructions," he said while addressng the seminar as the chief guest.

Earlier the people used the river water, but now they do not collect water from the river and canals even in the rainy season as the waste from mills and factories have contaminated the water to a great extent, the minis-

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Ziaul Haque Zia said the government is committed to achieving sanitation for all by 2010, much ahead of the international target of 2025.

Representative of World Health Organisation Dr Duangvadee Sungkhobol said about 1,10,000 under-five children die of diarrhoea every year in Bangladesh.

Prof Al Mahbub Uddin Ahmed of

paper on 'Culture and water use: Bangladesh perspective' Executive Director of NGO Forum SMA Rashid, Paul Edward of Unicef,

Dhaka University presented a keynote

Newspaper holiday Bss, Dhaka

The Newspapers Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) will observe holiday on March 26 on the occasion of Independence and National Day.

However, the NOAB members desirous of bringing out their publications may do so under special arrangement, said a press release

Debu gets life

Top outlaw

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Khulna, yesterday awarded life imprisonment to Debu Prashed Roy alias Debu, operation commander of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), in a murder case.

The court also fined the outlaw Tk

50,000, in default he is to suffer three

more years in jail. Judge Mohammad

Abdus Samad pronounced the judgement at noon and acquitted 21 others as the murder charge brought against them were not proved. According to the prosecution, BNP activist Humayun Kabir Shaikh was gunned down by the NBCP cadres on

May 8, 2003 at Kathaltala Bazar under Dumuria upazila of Khulna district. His wife Zohra Khatoon lodged a FIR (first information report) with Dumuria Police Station as complain-

ant on May 10. Sub-Inspector Wahidul Islam Khan, investigation officer (IO) of the case, pressed charges against 22 NBCF operatives on January 26 last year. The charge of the case was framed on September 29 the same year.

Debu Prashed Roy, also an

accused in 21 more murder cases.

was earlier acquitted in Journalist

Nahor Ali and Shukur Hossain murder

problem exists in case of the Teesta,

Chief Engineer of Department of Public lealth and Engineering (DPHE) M Khurshed Alam and Superintending Engineer of DPHE Amanullah-Al-Maĥmood 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

Moniruzzaman Chowdhury Khokon is the president of Rupganj upazila unit Dissatisfactions erupted instantly

among the local leaders following the

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

In presence of the minister, they were locked in a scuffle with those of Khokon before police brought the situation under Supporters of three leaders also chanted slogans against Matin

Chowdhurv's decision terming it monar

chical and undemocratic.

nigh-ups will decide it.

When contacted, Kazi Moniruzzamar said it is quite undemocratic that a standing committee member declares his succes-

Khokon, however, said nomination of

a candidate does not depend on the

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

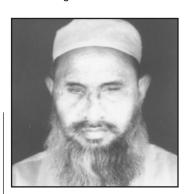
The authority allotted plots of the housing project to 400 applicants, out of 1047, who made application with an average deposition of Tk 1.5 lakh November 17, 2002.

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

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.

village in Jhinaigati, Sherpur, lost his eyesight at the age of only four after an attack of pox. He ended up in an orphanage

Motiur, who hails from Fakrabad

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 10year-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 632 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.

Irrigation strained as water table drops Authority (BMDA), said, "Similar

the map.

data. Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) kept uninterrupted records of as many as 3,700 STWs across the country at an interval of every 15 days for this period.

The groundwater zoning map is

now ready for official launching

sometime this month, BADC sources said. A team led by BADC assistant chief engineer Eftekharul Alam, under the guidance its immediate past member director (minor irriga-

tion) AS Nazim Ahmed, prepared

"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. The country incurred a loss of Tk

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

3,000 crore in lost productivity as

provided irrigation for the rest 30 The groundwater zoning map shows that a record high of 78

percent irrigated croplands in Pabna have become critical for Kushtia and Naogaon, 55 percent in

Besides, farmers are being unable to draw water by STWs in 28 percent of the lands in Sherpur, 20 percent in Jamalpur and Tangail, 18 percent in Natore, 16 percent in Manikgani, 15 percent in Dhaka. Narsingdi and Sirajganj and 10 percent in Rajshahi, hapainawabganj, Kishoreganj and

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

tion 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

STW operation, followed by 75 percent in Comilla, 60 percent in Mymensingh and Cox's Bazar, 50 percent in Joypurhat, 49 percent in Chittagong, 45 percent in Bogra and Rajbari and 30 percent in Jhenidah, Netrakona, Gazipur and Narayangani

Munshiganj. "As an immediate bailout measure, policy directives are required

document said, "Regulation of water flow in the Ganges at Farakka point by India has caused a reduc-

> food output. And now that STWsbased minor irrigation is at stake due to fall water table, the prospect of further rise in rice production appears bleak, they warned.

Surma. Kushivara 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. Expansion of low-cost STWs at private level (owned by farmers themselves in most cases) has virtually revolutionised the growth of