

Weak politics makes Bangladesh victim of globalisation

Prof. Rehman Sobhan at BIDS public lecture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a political structure where the state is captive to a section of predatory interests, Bangladesh is likely to drift along in the era of globalisation as its victim rather than beneficiary.

Renowned economist Prof Rehman Sobhan made the observation while delivering a public lecture organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) at its conference room as part of its millennium celebration programme. The topic of Prof Sobhan's lecture was 'The Evolving Political Economy of Bangladesh in the Age of Globalisation'.

"In the days ahead we need to recognise that unless Bangladesh undergoes a process of political structural adjustment we will not be able to carry the socio-economic transformation needed to either eradicate poverty or cope with the challenges of globalisation," he said.

"If we continue to drift aimlessly along the global highway, the chances of roadside casualties remain quite high," he commented.

Prof Sobhan analysed the country's political structure, its beneficiaries and how they are increasingly utilising the state for their commercial interests.

He said the country's social formations have become highly fluid over the last two decades with the tendency for parochial, particularistic or even individualised actions for 'sectional or private gains rather than aggrandisement of a class'.

"This tendency itself derives from the disarticulated nature of the state, which represents no class, beyond serving the appetites of a large number of individuals driven neither by ideology nor by collective purpose and nor even by an overriding commitment to a political party."

In such a scenario, he thought, "The state is seen to be progressively weakening itself to a point where it is degenerating into functional anarchy and has virtually lost its capacity to implement most public policies."

He also argued that there is an emerging tension between the fractions who exercise power in contemporary Bangladesh and those who are contributing to the positive dimensions of development and change.

"This contradiction owes to the fact that the social forces which are today making positive contribution to Bangladesh's development remains politically un-represented and are thus largely excluded from being able to influence the policies and governance of the state," he observed.

Against this backdrop, he said, "Contemporary democratic politics must be seen as an instrumental process for extracting rent from society and the state". The politicians have developed an identity of a 'rentier class', he said.

Prof Sobhan, however, said there are many individual politicians who remain immune from 'rent-seeking proclivities'. "But such political elements are an endangered species whose voice within their party is being silenced by the forces of predation."

Focussing on the changing power structure in the country, he said it

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British minister lauds gov't's administrative measures

BSS, Dhaka

Visiting UK State Minister for International Development Hillary Benn has described as an "important development" the steps undertaken by the new government to make the country's civil administration efficient, accountable, transparent and right-sized.

The appreciation came when Benn made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.

Benn said the measures undertaken by the government for improvement of administrative competence would initiate a new culture in the administration-people relationship and in development.

He described the October 1 election as free and fair and appreciated the new government's measures for revitalisation of the

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and visiting UK State Minister for International Development Hillary Benn discuss bilateral issues at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Terrorist acts Home Ministry asks Laxmipur DC, SP to explain

BSS, Dhaka

The Home Ministry has ordered the deputy commissioner (DC) and police super (SP) of Laxmipur to explain why they have failed to take actions against the culprits involved in a brutal murder and a tender snatching incident, an official hand-out said yesterday.

The ministry accused the district administration and the police super of "negligence of duties," saying they did not inform the government or take actions against the terrorists in time.

The terrorists murdered degree examinee Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury (Biplob) on January 10. In another incident on January 13 the terrorists snatched away tender schedules from Laxmipur Municipality office.

The handout said following the murder, police did not arrest the culprits or lodge a case under the relevant section of the Criminal Procedure Code.

It alleged that police also did not arrest any of the 20 reported terrorists named in the case following the violence at the municipality office.

Faridpur bypolls AL candidate withdraws from race

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League candidate Begum Saleha Mosharraf by-election in Faridpur-4 constituency yesterday withdrew from the race to be held on January 17.

Addressing a press conference at Faridpur Press Club in the afternoon, she alleged no election atmosphere is prevailing in Faridpur-4 constituency comprising Sadarpur and Charbhadrasan upazilas.

The seat fell vacant when Abdur Razzak MP of AL vacated it retaining another seat won by him on Oct 1 election.

AL candidate advocate Mosharraf Hossain won this seat in 1991, 1996 and Abdur Razzak won it in 2001.

Separation of judiciary: Govt seeks extension of SC deadline

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday sought three months' extension of the January 15 deadline, set by the Supreme Court earlier, for separation of the judiciary from the executive.

A government attorney filed a prayer in this regard to Justice Md Ruhul Amin, a judge of the Appellate Division, at his chamber. Justice Amin said hearing of the prayer will take place before a full bench.

However the hearing schedule is yet to be given.

The Supreme Court in 1999 gave a directive to the government to separate the judiciary within eight weeks. The time was extended several times.



PHOTO: STAR

Chairperson of BRAC Fazle Hassan Abed (3rd from R) inaugurates a four-day Contemporary Asian Art Workshop organised jointly by Bengal Foundation and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy at BRAC Centre, Rajendrapur on Monday. Also seen in the picture (R-L) Prof Anisuzzaman, Chairman of Bengal Foundation Abdul Khair, Asma Abbasi and Artists Shafiuddin Ahmed, Jatin Das (in Panama cap) and Mahmudul Haq.

A rare gathering of Asian artists

Contemporary Asian Art Workshop organised jointly by Bengal Foundation and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy at BRAC Centre creates space for creative interaction.

ZIAUL KARIM

The wonderful setting of BRAC Centre interlaced with gardens and ponds, home to 72 artists and critics from January 14-17, has virtually turned into a canvas where artists from as many as 16 countries have begun to share their experiences and compare notes, comprehend their commonalities as well as differences.

"It is time we understood our neighbours. It is also time we put up resistance to the aggression of MacDonaldisation and turned our eyes to our own cultural resources to construct a new art language," said Arpana Caur, one of the most fecund women artists in contemporary Indian art. Caur has brought in an unfinished canvas on Baul theme that she intends to complete during the workshop.

Reticent and the only living artist, who pioneered art movement in Bangladesh back in the 1950s, septuagenarian Safiuddin Ahmed seemed spellbound by the reinvigorating ambience. He strolled down the memory lane. Artist Nasim Ahmed Nadvi and critic Moynuddin Khaled did not let this rare opportunity slip through their fingers. Moynuddin began to inquire about his early etching on Shantal women and then how he gradually discovered his own signature style.

Sunil Das, known as ghora or horse Sunil for his

wonderful drawings of horse, said, "I wait for mood to take me in. Once that happens nobody exists between the canvas and me. I can be lonely even in the midst of a hundred people."

As one reached the workshop venue in Rajendrapur, only 28km off the capital, one could immediately feel that the place invokes creative imagination. Iranian artist Krista Nassi who found this workshop revitalising said, "I will be a different artist after this workshop."

The prequel to the formal opening of this landmark workshop on Monday was a performance by the country's leading Tagore song exponent Rezwana Banya's musical troupe Surer Dhara. The mood of the four-day workshop was perfectly set by the song Anandaloke Mangalaloke Birajo Satyasundaro.

Chairperson of BRAC Fazle Hassan Abed inaugurated the workshop, while artists Safiuddin Ahmed and Professor Anisuzzaman were present as special guests.

The opening ceremony was also addressed by Director General of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Mustafa Zaman Abbasi and Director of Bengal Foundation Luva Nahid Choudhury gave the welcome speech explaining the raison d'être of the foundation and its goals and aspirations.

This four-day meeting of creative minds ends tomorrow.

Strike by Indian truckers stalls export-import thru' Benapole

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Import-export through Benapole landport remained suspended since Monday due to a strike called by Indian truck drivers and workers.

As a result, more than two hundred trucks laden with different kinds of goods are lying stranded on both sides of border.

The strike began on Monday for an indefinite period when BDR allegedly imposed some restrictions on transportation and movement of Indian truck workers.

Customs sources said the government is incurring financial loss of over Taka 3 crore per day due to the strike.

BDR introduced a system last year for Indian truck drivers and workers to fetch food and water from across the border by showing token. From Sunday this token system was withdrawn by BDR which angered Indian truckers, sources said.

The customs sources quoting police personnel of the district of 24 Parganas said BDR imposed the restrictions to harass Indian truck drives and workers.

Restrictions have been imposed by BDR in order to stop smuggling and curb cross-border crimes, said a reliable source quoting BDR.

Two succumb to bullet, stab injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two young men succumbed to the bullet and stab injuries they had sustained earlier while the body of another man was recovered in the city yesterday.

Bimal Chandra Sarkar, 22, son of Subash Chandra Sarkar, died at a Dhanmondi hospital in the early hours of yesterday a week after being shot by muggers.

A gang of muggers shot Bimal in the head while they were being chased by a mob on January 7 at

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High-level review meeting told 100-day programme has achieved its goal

UNB, Dhaka

A high-level review meeting yesterday found the government's 100-day programme moving steadily toward its cherished goal.

"The 100-day programme announced by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has achieved its goal. We'll have to continue this trend of success," said Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, the PM's Principal Secretary, who chaired the meeting at the PM Office.

Reviewing ministry-wise programmes, the meeting observed that a number of programmes beyond the PM's announcement were also implemented within the 100-day period.

Officials of different ministries and departments appraised the meeting of the progress of imple-

mentation of their respective programmes. These are as follows:

Home Ministry: Ten out of 12 programmes have been implemented and demarcation of Bandar thana in Chittagong has been completed. The national anti-terrorism convention will be held within the deadline at political level.

Law Ministry: All the three programmes have been completed. The cabinet approved a proposal to scrap the Public Safety Act. Repeal of the Special Powers Act is in final stage. A new law is being framed to complete the trial of acid-throwing cases within three months.

Establishment Ministry: Timing for government offices has been changed. Two separate ministries on Liberation War Affairs and Expatriate Welfare have been created. Policies are being formu-

lated for merit-based promotion. The process of cancelling all previous unjust orders in the administration is in the final stage.

Shipping Ministry: Steps have been taken to remove irregularities and indiscipline in Chittagong and Mongla ports. No strike or container congestion took place in the ports during last 100 days. One truck terminal was established in Chittagong Port and another is being set up.

Civil Aviation Ministry: Measures have been taken to remove irregularities and passenger harassment in the airport, car parking system has been improved and security strengthened. Administrative action has been taken against CBA men.

Finance Ministry: Steps have been taken to find out reasons for

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AL vows to resist 'repression' on party workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) leaders yesterday expressed grave concern over what they called government sponsored repression on opposition leaders and activists throughout the country and pledged to resist this.

Taking the opportunity of a 'brute majority' in parliament, the BNP-led coalition has been continuing such acts against the opposition and the people since its assumption of power in October last year, they alleged at a press conference at the party's Dhamnondi office.

An AL fact-finding committee comprising MPs which visited Hapania village in Chandpur that came under attacks allegedly by BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami activists on December 20, organised the press conference. The committee placed a report on its findings.

Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid who led the team to Hapania on January 11, AL Presidium members Tofail Ahmed and Abdul Jaili, Publicity Secretary Abdul Mannan, and team members Dr Mohammad Abdur Razzak MP and local AL leader Shamsul Huq Bhuiyan were present at the press briefing.

The team also included Promod Mankin MP and Jakaria Chowdhury. Tofail alleged that the government has been trying to destroy AL by repression on party activists.

"No body will be able to suppress Awami League through torture and killing. Those who are thinking to eliminate AL through repression are living in a fool's paradise," he said.

The report said "armed terrorist of BNP-Jamaat alliance" launched a barbaric attack on the villagers on December 20, ransack houses, looted property, beat and hacked

people and tortured women and children.

Abdus Shahid said, "The attackers are moving freely but police are not arresting them and not even receiving cases. Rather, they are arresting Awami League workers without any reason. It is total lawlessness".

He claimed that the attackers threw a baby into a pond and indiscriminately attacked women and children. The only crime of the villagers is that they had cast vote for 'boat' (AL's election symbol), he said.

Tofail said, "This situation is prevailing everywhere in the country". The BNP-Jamaat alliance government is "taking revenge" on the commonman. It took a position against the freedom fighters.

He said the situation is worst

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Alam murder: Sons granted ad-interim bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka yesterday granted ad-interim bail to Noor Alam Babul and Jahir Alam Khokon, who were arrested earlier in connection with the murder of their father industrialist Mohammad Alam and three housemaids.

The judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa set bail at Tk 50,000 for each of the arrested with two guarantors. The order will remain valid till January 23.

Advocate Masud Ahmed Talukder and Sanaullah Miah had

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Erratum

In the headline of our story published on the Back Page on January 12, the implementation cost of Barapukuria Coal Mine Project was inadvertently mentioned as \$500m instead of Tk 500 crore. We regret the error.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ANOTHER THREE DAY PITCH! Bangladesh players anxiously looking down on the MA Aziz Stadium pitch while grounds staff roll it yesterday.