

Europe can learn secularism from Bangladesh

Says British academic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Europe can learn from Bangladesh the idea of secularism, which ensures the freedom to practise any religion, said a British professor of philosophy and theology at a discussion yesterday.

Europe has two perceptions on secularism -- one says those not believing in God are secular and the other says it is those believing in the freedom to practise any religion, said Dr Nicholas Adams of University of Edinburgh, UK.

His remarks came following Dhaka University sociology department Prof KAM Saaduddin's observation that Bangladesh had set an example of communal harmony for the world and secularism here means inclusion of all religions in society.

The discussion, "The New Secular", was organised by DU's Department of World Religions and Culture and the British Council at the DU Faculty of Business Studies.

Dr Adams, a consultant for the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme of the University of Edinburgh, suggested a new type of secularism comprising laws and customs promoting a common life for different religious communities while pursuing the common good.

"We don't need to be secular in the corrosive nineteenth century sense in which religious life is rendered precarious and then edged out of public life and into some gloomy private sphere where only the secret services listen in," he said.

Presenting his keynote speech, Dr Adams, however, said it does not necessarily mean that Bangladesh needs to replicate this idea. "We are not going to export it here," he said.

Prof Saaduddin said Bangladesh's religion-based nationalism ended in 1952 through the Language Movement. Since then, it has practised a nationalism based on Bangla language while keeping to religious practices.

"So, we are simultaneously secular and religious," he said, adding that Bangladesh did not witness the volume of communal riots of the kind its neighbouring countries have.

Addressing as the chief guest, DU philosophy department Prof Dr Aminul Islam said declaring Islam as the state religion while maintaining secularism as a state policy in Bangladesh's constitution is contradictory and not desirable.

Dr Joseph T O'Connell, professor emeritus of University of Toronto, Canada, and Sarwat Reza, resource centre manager of British Council and Dr Kazi Nurul Islam of the world religions department also spoke at the discussion.

AUGUST 21 GRENADE ATTACK Decision on charge framing against Tarique Feb 29

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court fixed February 29 to decide whether it will frame charges against BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman and 51 others accused in the August 21 grenade attack cases.

Judge Shahid Nuruddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 set the date yesterday for passing orders on the discharge petitions submitted by 33 out of the 52 accused.

Among them, former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad are now in jail while Tarique and 18 other accused are absconding.

On the same day, the court will also decide on appointing a state defence lawyer to defend Tarique in his absence.

Abdur Rezak Khan on August 29 last year, submitted a petition seeking permission to represent Tarique as a state defence lawyer.

Both the prosecution and the defence set 25 different dates to carry out the hearing on charge framing against the accused of the cases.

On October 9, 2011, Syed Rezaur Rahman, chief counsel for the two grenade attack cases, proposed the court to frame charges against all 52 accused, alleging that they had meetings at several places, including the Hawa Bhaban, to plot the grisly blasts in 2004.

Following the prosecution proposal, defence counsels submitted discharge petitions to free their clients from all charges of the cases.

Twenty-four people including Awami League leader Ivy Rahman were killed in the grenade attack on an Awami League rally at Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21 in 2004.

In 2008, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted charge sheets against 22 people including former BNP deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu and 21 Huji men including Mufti Abdul Hannan.

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in 12 hours till 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Day and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:57pm today and rises at 6:27am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 31.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 08.7 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in		Humidity in percentage		
	Celsius	Max		Morning	Evening
Dhaka	28.2	14.2	44	32	
Chittagong	30.0	16.4	61	47	
Rajshahi	28.4	10.7	65	49	
Rangpur	26.4	12.3	72	54	
Khulna	28.5	14.4	71	57	
Barisal	29.5	13.0	67	49	



(From left) Dr Ahmed Al Sabir, Rounaq Jahan, AFM Ruhal Haque, AMA Muhith, Amartya Sen, Faruque Ahmed, and Syed Masud Ahmed at the unveiling ceremony of Bangladesh Health Watch Report 2011 at Brac Centre in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 20)

PHOTO: STAR

Bangalees' ability to receive tremendous: Amartya Sen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the eve of the 60th anniversary of Language Martyrs' Day, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen sees Bangla civilisation's ability to be receptive to different sources as tremendous.

"And if it stops being receptive, there is a possibility of doors being shut," he said at a seminar at Nabab Nawab Ali Chowdhury Senate Bhaban of University of Dhaka yesterday.

The seminar was organised as part of the World Bengali Conference, hosted by Bengali International, a London-based organisation. Eminent economist Rehman Sobhan chaired the programme.

Amartya Sen, presenting a paper, "Different Dimensions of Bangla Civilisation", said he still takes delight speaking in Bangla and Bangalees not speaking in their mother tongue

incur their own losses.

"I still love to speak in Bangla. It is part of my life," he said.

Amartya Sen said, "We not only want to get rid of the trap of economic poverty but also want to expand all spheres of Bangla civilisation."

On Bangla civilisation's receptiveness, he said, "The Bangla language did not hesitate to borrow words from different sources like Sanskrit, Pali, French, Arabic, English and other indigenous languages."

"We have reasons to focus on some points on the heritage of the Banglae's way of thinking it is still important today. One of these qualities is Bangalee civilisation's ability to be receptive and be able to adapt."

Bangalees should recognise that different strands of Bangla civilisation came from various sources. "It is also necessary to respect our recep-

tiveness and ability to adapt."

One should accept that receptiveness helps civilisations and cultures flourish. But anything, before being absorbed, should be carefully examined to see if it comes to the good of Bangla civilisation, he said.

Amartya Sen also pointed out the tendency of Bangalees to raise questions. "If we have deviated from those qualities which were once very much recognised, we should try to regain that wealth."

At present there may be reasons for one to feel at a distance from the history of Bengal's economic prosperity. But a collective quest for social, political and literary development must go on alongside the endeavour for economic expansion, he said.

Citing instances from history, he said Adam Smith, the eminent economist of the 18th century, counted Bangladesh as one of the richest

countries of that era. The Portuguese, Dutch, French, British, Danes and many other European peoples were very eager to engage in production and trade with Bangladesh.

But the influence of poverty weighs heavy in the way we think in the present day. But this fact of deprivation is not the biggest truth in Bangalee history, he said.

Amartya Sen said ancient Bangladesh is now divided owing to different political reasons and historical incidents.

"But the foundation of unity among Bangalees is not mainly political. The strength of unity based on literature, poetry, music and thought process is no less than the political factor."

"Added to this are deeper discussions on our social consciousness. But the base of that nearness is not only rooted in politics," he added.

ILLEGAL TRAVELLING Bangladeshi youth returns today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi youth who was captured by the crew of a Singapore bound vessel on February 12 while travelling on it illegally, will be sent back today.

Mohammad Ripon, 24, from Kotwali in Khulna, will arrive at Chittagong Port today by the same vessel, said port sources.

Syed Farhad Uddin Ahmed, secretary of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), said the vessel left New Mooring Container Terminal of Chittagong Port around 11.30am on February 11.

The crew of the vessel noticed Ripon on board the following day and confined him, said Farhad, adding that the ship's captain notified the Singapore port authorities upon reaching there after four days.

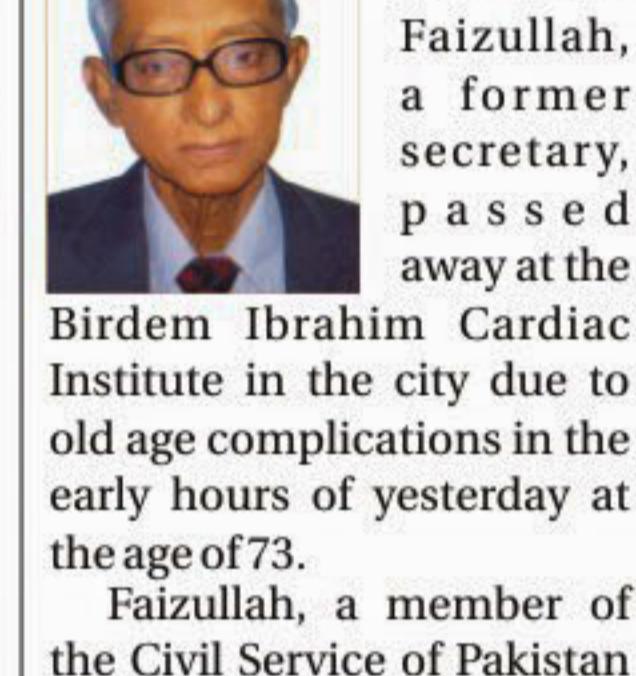
The Singapore port authorities decided to send Ripon back after discussing the matter with the Bangladesh High Commission there, Farhad said.

He said a lot of people, including port workers and staff, use the jetties of Chittagong Port and it is difficult for CPA to monitor them and notice outsiders.

Farhad said they would investigate the matter after Ripon is brought back.

Former secretary Faizullah passes away

METRO DESK



Birdeem Ibrahim Cardiac Institute in the city due to old age complications in the early hours of yesterday at the age of 73.

Faizullah, a member of the Civil Service of Pakistan of 1965, is survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters.

He was buried at his family graveyard Khagan in Savar after second namaz-e-janaza at Baitul Aman Mosque in Dhamondi. His first janaza was held at Birdeem Hospital.

Faizullah was secretary at the social welfare ministry and chairman of Agrani Bank.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Foreign Secretary Mohamed Mijarul Quayes and Dipu Moni at the Correspondents Association Bangladesh expressed condolence at his death.

CM Maruf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet



Photojournalist CM Maruf, also sports secretary of Sylhet Press Club, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at his residence in the city's Chouhatta area early hours yesterday at the age of 43.

He left behind his wife, a daughter and a host of relatives and friends to mourn his death.

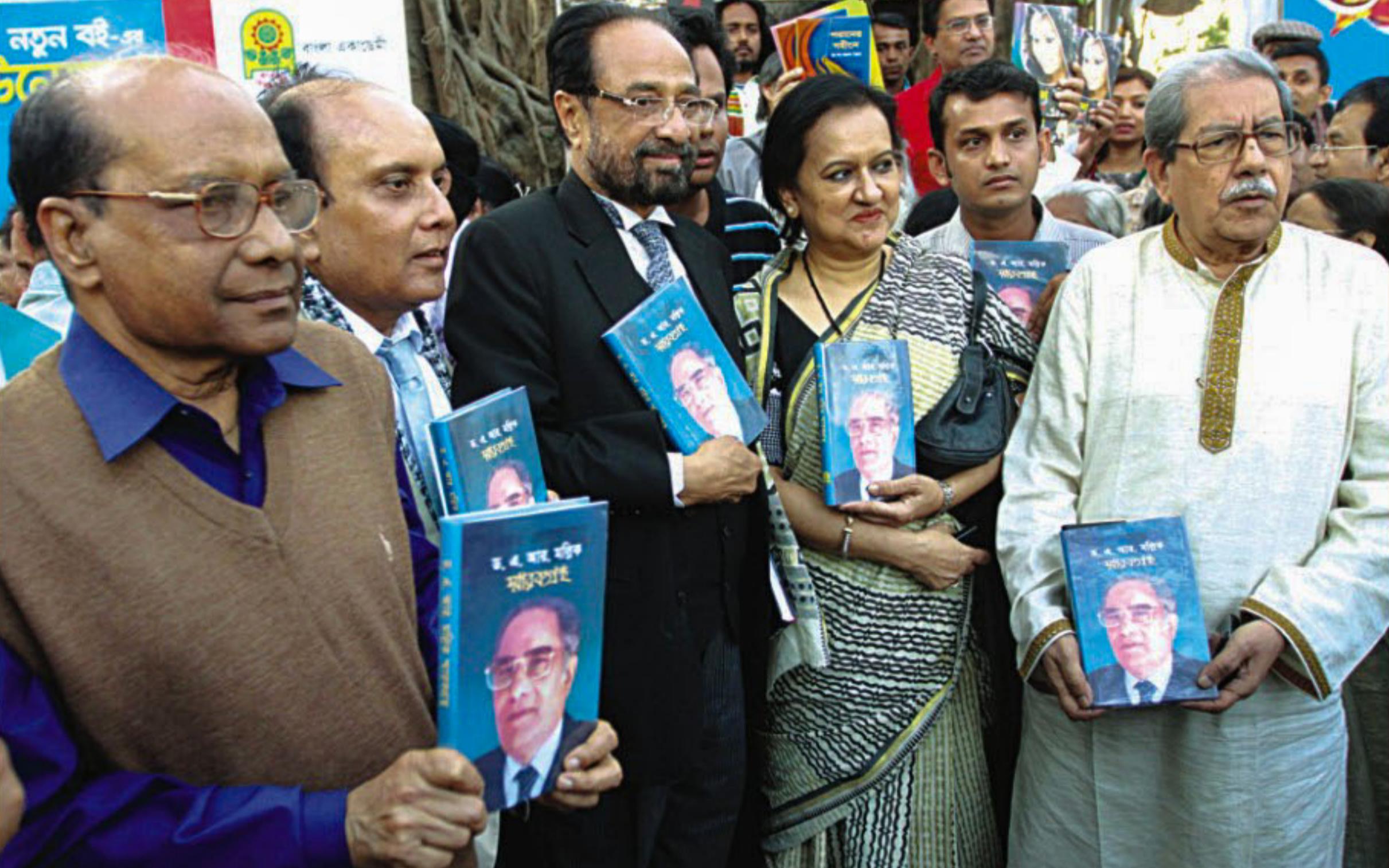
Maruf fell sick after taking dinner returning home from his office at about 2.00am. He was rushed to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where the physicians declared him dead.

Qulhwani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulhwani of Gulnar Huq, wife of late Obaidul Huq, former editor of the Bangladesh Observer, will be held today after Asr prayers at Banani Bazar Jame Mosque.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the programme to pray for the salvation of her departed soul, said a press release.



Bangla Academy Director General Dr Shamsuzzaman Khan, left, Barrister M Amirul Islam, third from left, and Prof Anisuzzaman, right, hold copies of the book, "AR Mallick Smarok Grantha", at its unveiling ceremony at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela yesterday. Also present were Faruk Mallick and Sadya Afreen Mallick.

PHOTO: STAR

Boi Mela takes Ekushey mood

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

As elsewhere across the country, the Bangla Academy is all set to observe International Mother Language Day, with thousands of people likely to crowd the book fair on the historic daytoday.

Publication houses have equipped their stalls with as many new books as they can while law enforcers have beefed up security in and around the academy for the safe movement of visitors.

More than 3,500 policemen and 600 Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members will keep law and order at the Central Shaheed Minar and its surroundings today, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police sources.

On this occasion, the fair will remain open from 8:00am to 10:00pm today.

As the clock struck 12:01 today, thousands of barefoot people humming "Amar Bhaiyer Rokte Rangano Ekushey February..." paid homage to the supreme sacrifices of the

Language Movement martyrs.

It was on this very day in 1952 that the language heroes embraced martyrdom to establish Bangla as the state language.

For a working day yesterday, a day ahead of the Ekushey February (21st February), the crowd at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela was comparatively big.

The fair also witnessed the presence of a number of distinguished people. Alongside browsing around bookstalls and collecting books, many of them were seen unveiling newbooks.

Bangla Academy Chairman Prof Anisuzzaman, Director General Shamsuzzaman Khan, and Barrister M Amirul Islam unveiled a volume, "AR Mallick Smarok Grantha", edited by National Prof Salahuddin Ahmed, Prof Anisuzzaman, and Dr Atful Hye Sibyl. Maksodul Hoque Khan is associate editor.

Another book, "24 Jon Bhasha Samgrami Jibonkatha", authored by Rita Bhowmik, was unveiled by

language hero Abdul Matin.

Ferdousi Priyobhashini unveiled "Ashruheen Asrupat", a book by journalist Nadeem Qadir.

Poet Al Mahmud and noted human rights activist Sultana Karmal also visited the fair.

As on other days, a discussion was held. Yesterday, the theme was "40 years of independence of Bangladesh: conditions to build a strong state in the spirit of the Liberation War and Language Movement: curbing militancy and holding trial of war criminals".

Journalist Shahriar Kabir presented the keynote paper while former army chief Lt Gen (retd) Harun-ur-Rashid, Dhaka University Teachers' Association president Dr Md Anwar Hossain, journalist Syed Badrul Ahsan and poet Shamim Azad, among others, took part in the discussion.

At the beginning of the programme, a minute's silence was observed, to show respect