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Govt could form commission for the marginalised

Rehman Sobhan tells discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent economist Prof Rehman Sobhan yesterday said the interim government could form a separate commission to protect the rights of the disadvantaged or marginalised communities.

"If that is not possible, representatives from those communities and the civil society could establish such a commission. And that commission should put forward its proposals to the interim government," he said.

Sobhan was speaking at a discussion and book launch at the capital's CIRDP auditorium.

The event titled "End Discrimination, Celebrate Partnership with Marginalised Communities" was jointly organised by Brattyayan Resource Centre (BRC), Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD), and Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC).

These organisations have long been working with different marginalised communities, including indigenous communities, tea workers, Harijan, Bede and Rishi communities. Eight books were also launched at the event as part of their ongoing research.

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A visitor observes graffiti and wall art at an exhibition at DrikPath Bhaban in the capital's Panthapath yesterday. The World Bank organised the event that highlighted the vision and the issues the youth considers important for the future of the country.

PHOTO: BSS

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Greaves, Roach frustrate the Tigers as WI go past 400

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

West Indies' overnight batter Justin Greaves and tail-ender Kemar Roach frustrated Bangladesh bowlers as they stitched together a record eighth-wicket stand against the Tigers, helping the hosts to take their first innings score past 400 on Day 2 of their first of two Tests at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua yesterday.

At tea, West Indies reached 415 for eight after 139 overs, with Greaves, who brought up his maiden Test ton, unbeaten on 109 off 195 deliveries, and Jayden Seales not out on one of 12 deliveries.

After pacer Hasan Mahmud removed wicketkeeper-batter Joshua Da Silva and Alzarri Joseph in successive overs early on the day, Greaves and Roach recorded a 140-

DOUBLE-SHIFT SCHOOLS Students losing out on learning hours

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Double shift primary schools deprive the children of up to a third of the student contact hours compared to the schools with just one shift.

Last year, 81 percent of the 65,567 government primary schools took classes divided in shifts: one group attended in the morning and another later in the day.

Student contact hours are the time pupils spend learning in contact with a teacher.

Class 1 and 2 students at the double shift schools had 137 fewer teacher-student contact hours than the children who went to single-shift schools in 2023, according to the Directorate of Primary Education.

Class 3, 4, and 5 students had 515 fewer, or 34 percent less, contact hours at double shift schools.

"Students of double shift schools are facing discrimination," said Prof Hosne Ara Begum, acting director of the Institute of Education and Research (IER) at Dhaka University.

Since they have fewer contact hours, they almost certainly learn less, she said.

Compared to many other countries, the duration of learning time at double shift schools in Bangladesh is short, said Prof Siddiqur Rahman, former director of the IER.

"The curriculum is designed with the

assumption that all students will attend single shift schools," he added.

Farid Ahmed, secretary at the primary education ministry, said the government was gradually transforming the double shift schools to single shift ones.

The government in June announced that it would transform 12,515 double shift government primary schools into single shift from January next year, he added.

DISCRIMINATION

More than 1 crore children go to 65,567 government primary schools across the country, according to the Annual Primary School Census 2023.

Of the schools, only 12,515 were single shift.

The government's 4th Primary Education Development Programme aimed to raise contact hours at single shift schools to 1,000 for classes 1 and 2 and 1,500 hours for classes 3, 4 and 5, said the Annual Sector Performance Report 2021 of the Directorate of Primary Education.

At double shift schools, the target is 800 hours for classes 1 and 2 and 1,000 hours for classes 3, 4 and 5.

The most ambitious target is to lower the number of double shift schools by 50 percent within June 2025.

But the progress has been slow: 14 percent of

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Nat'l consensus needed to tackle Rohingya issue

Says foreign adviser

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh needs to develop a national consensus on solving the Rohingya crisis that has become more complicated by the civil war in Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine State, said Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain.

"We gained much less than what we could have as there was no national consensus on the Rohingya policy," he said, urging the political parties to build the national consensus.

Touhid was addressing a national dialogue on Rohingya policy, organised by the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPIG) of North South University at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) yesterday.

Bangladesh hosts more than one million Rohingya. Since July, more than 50,000 more Myanmar people, including the Rohingya and other ethnic groups, took shelter in Bangladesh amid fierce fighting between the Myanmar junta and rebel group Arakan Army (AA).

The AA now controls a large part

Touhid Hossain

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Poor nations stage walkout at COP29

Small islands and least-developed nations say their climate finance interests were ignored

AFP, Baku

The world's most climate-imperilled nations stormed out of consultations in protest at the deadlocked UN COP29 conference yesterday, as simmering tensions over a hard-fought finance deal erupted into the open.

Diplomats from small island nations threatened by rising seas and impoverished African states angrily walked out of a meeting with summit hosts Azerbaijan over a final deal being thrashed out in a Baku sports stadium.

"We came here to this COP for a fair deal. We feel that we haven't been heard," said Cedric Schuster, the Samoan chairman of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

An unpublished version of the final text circulating in Baku, and seen by AFP, proposes that rich nations raise to \$300 billion a year by 2035 their commitment to poorer countries to fight climate change.

It is up from \$100 billion now provided by wealthy nations under a commitment set to expire.

COP29 hosts Azerbaijan intended to put a final draft before 198 nations for adoption or rejection on Saturday evening, a full day after the marathon summit officially ended.

Sierra Leone's climate minister Jiwah Abdulai, whose country is among the world's poorest, said the draft was "effectively a suicide pact for the rest of the world".

In a statement, Schuster said AOSIS

➔ Chance of success at COP29 'iffy': EU climate chief

➔ EU offers to raise rich countries' climate pledge to \$300b

➔ No climate deal better than 'bad' one: NGOs

and the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have found themselves "continuously insulted by the lack of inclusion" at COP29.

Schuster said that without an inclusive process, "it becomes very difficult for us to continue our involvement here at COP29".

But negotiators from AOSIS, the LDCs and wealthy nations met later with the COP29 presidency.

"We're doing our utmost to build bridges with literally everyone," EU climate commissioner Wopke Hoekstra said in a statement.

"It is not easy," he said. "There is no alternative to do whatever we can."

An earlier offer from rich nations of \$250 billion was slammed as offensively low by developing countries, which have demanded much higher sums to build resilience against

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15 killed in Israeli strike in central Beirut

AFP, Beirut

Lebanon said an Israeli air strike in the heart of Beirut that brought down a residential building and jolted residents across the city killed at least 15 people yesterday.

A Lebanese security source told AFP that the strike had "targeted a leading Hezbollah figure", but a Hezbollah lawmaker denied any official of the Iran-backed group was present.

The attack in the capital was followed by others in the city's southern suburbs after calls by the Israeli military to evacuate.

Israel has not commented on the strike in central Beirut.

Rescue operations were underway in the area yesterday morning, with an excavator removing the rubble of the eight-storey building.

"The strike was so strong it felt like the building was about to fall on our heads," said Samir, 60, who lives in a building facing the one that was destroyed.

He said he fled his home in the middle of the night with his wife and children.

TIS THE SEASON! ... With winter knocking on the door, people have already started thronging street shops to buy warm clothes. The photo was taken from the capital's Farmgate area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SECTARIAN VIOLENCE Fresh clashes kill 32 in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

Around 300 families yesterday fled sectarian violence in northwest Pakistan as fresh sectarian clashes killed another 32 people.

Sporadic fighting between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan has killed around 150 over the past months.

"Approximately 300 families have relocated to Hangu and Peshawar since this morning in search of safety," a senior official told AFP, adding that more families were preparing to leave the province's Kurram district.

Another senior administrative official told AFP on condition of anonymity that "fighting between Shia and Sunni communities continues at multiple locations", with 32 people killed in clashes yesterday, including 14 Sunnis and 18 Shias.

The fresh violence came two days after gunmen opened fire on two separate convoys of Shia Muslims travelling with police escort in Kurram, killing 43 people and with 11 wounded still in critical condition, according to officials.

Shias also attacked several Sunni locations on Friday evening in Kurram, once a semi-autonomous region, where sectarian violence has resulted in hundreds of deaths over the years.

Rehan Muhammad a 33-year-old journalist from the Sunni-majority area of Bagan in Kurram, had to flee his home as clashes worsened.

"Gunfire suddenly erupted on Friday after sunset... I

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