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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে "ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার" পূবালী ব্যাংকের সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়



Eminent economist Prof Rehman Sobhan and other distinguished guests cut a cake to mark the 50th anniversary of University Press Limited at a celebratory event held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Freedom to publish will define our democracy

Says Prof Rehman Sobhan at event marking University Press Limited's 50th anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent economist and political analyst Prof Rehman Sobhan yesterday expressed concern over the growing mob culture of book burning and attacks on publications which are deemed inappropriate by certain groups.

"This is a very dangerous culture. It takes us back to Nazi Germany and the book-burning practices of that time. I hope this is not something we will see in this new era, which we hope will be democratic," he said.

He made the remarks at an event marking the 50th anniversary of University Press Limited (UPL), an academic publishing house founded by Mohiuddin Ahmed in 1975. The event was held at The Daily Star Centre.

Prof Sobhan said publishers should be free to publish books representing a wide range of views, without regard to the identity or background of the author.

He said this freedom would indicate whether society has truly moved towards a liberal and democratic order.

Referring to recent incidents, he said

some publishing houses have already faced pressure from what he described as an emerging mob culture that finds certain publications unacceptable.

Prof Sobhan said he and Prof Rounaq Jahan have written several books critical of governments, which were often met with concern about how they would be received.

Publishers should be free to publish books representing a wide range of views, without regard to the identity or background of the author. This freedom would indicate whether society has truly moved towards a liberal and democratic order.

He noted that English-language publishing has sometimes been protected because those in power do not read much, though intelligence agencies occasionally scrutinise books and flag content they consider "inappropriate".

He said this places a responsibility on publishers, who must show courage in

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Farmland loss, youth exodus threatening agriculture: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is drifting away from its agrarian roots as farmland shrinks due to infrastructure projects and young people turn away from farming, speakers said at a conference yesterday.

They called for urgent measures to reverse the trend and protect the environment at the conference titled "Protection of Rivers, Forests, Hills, Agricultural Land, Environment and Natural Resources," held at Parjatan Bhaban in the capital.

The event was jointly organised by the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), and the Water Rights Forum.

In her address, BELA Chief Executive Advocate Taslima Islam said Bangladesh is losing rivers, forests, hills, and farmland every day, with marginalised communities suffering the most.

She said Bangladesh ranked 175th out of 180 countries in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index, compared to 177th in 2022. "This conference must provide guidance on how we can overcome the environmental crisis."

Chief guest Justice Ainun Nahar Siddiqua of the High Court Division said the country's obsession with "two-bigha plots" has led to rivers being filled, hills cut, and forests cleared.

"Without farmland, agriculture cannot survive," she said, calling for a shift in mindset.

She said young people are increasingly turning away from farming, with many risking their lives to migrate abroad. "We are losing our next generation," she said, describing it as the country's biggest bleeding point.

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12 years on, no closure in Gopibagh six murder case

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Abdullah Al Faruk still shivers thinking about the evening that shattered his world.

On December 21, 2013, the then 23-year-old was away from their Gopibagh house in Dhaka when a group of assailants stormed in.

That absence saved his life but left him as the only surviving male member of his family.

Just before Maghrib prayer, unidentified attackers slit the throats of his 65-year-old father, self-proclaimed spiritual leader Lutfar Rahman Faruk; his elder brother Sarwar Islam Faruk, 35; and four of his father's followers — Shahin, Majibur, Monzurul Alam, and Rassel Bhuiyan.

The killers, however, spared Lutfar's wife Salma, four other women, two children, and one relative who were inside the house at that time. Law enforcers later rescued the eight, their hands and legs tied, mouths gagged.

Nearly 12 years have passed since that night of horror. Yet for Abdullah and the families of other victims, the pain has not eased — and the wait for justice continues.

"Year after year goes by, but the investigation hasn't even been completed, let alone the trial. There is no progress at all," Abdullah said, his voice heavy with disappointment. "I hear that one investigating officer comes, then another replaces him. That's how the case has been dragging on."

According to case records, investigators have sought at least 107 dates over the past 12 years to finish their probe. Yet, the investigation remains incomplete. The probe was first conducted by Wari police, then handed to the CTTC unit and, most recently, to the CID.

"My father and brother were murdered. People can hardly imagine how completely a family can be ruined after such an incident. Of course, we want justice. We have also cooperated in every way," he told The Daily Star.

"Our only demand is that the real culprits face the highest

punishment," he said.

At that time, a top Rab official told the media that disputes between religious groups might have been the reason behind the killings, as Lutfar used to describe himself as a "follower of Imam Mahdi" and wrote religious books.

Back then, an additional deputy commissioner (Wari division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said a gang of 10 armed men carried out the murders. "It was a planned murder," he said.

On the day of the killings, Abdullah filed a case with Wari Police Station against 10 to 12 unidentified killers.

According to case records, investigators have sought at least 107 dates over the past 12 years to finish their probe. Yet, the investigation remains incomplete.

The probe was first conducted by Wari police, then handed to the Detective Branch (DB) of DMP. Later, it went to the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit and, most recently, to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Thirteen suspects have been arrested so far.

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CA holds reception for Begum Rokeya Padak winners

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus accorded a reception to the "Begum Rokeya Padak 2025" winners at the State Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka last evening.

Dr Rubhana Rakkib, Nabila Idris, Kalpana Akter and Ritu Parna Chakma won the prestigious award this year.

At the outset of the event, the "Begum Rokeya Padak" recipients expressed concern over the attack on Sharif Osman Hadi, one of the leaders

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Remembering the struggles of 1971 Chhatra Union launches four-day programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra Union's Dhaka University unit launched a four-day special programme yesterday at the Teacher-Student Centre of DU, marking the 1971 Liberation War.

Titled "Rokter Doll", the event opened with four exhibitions and a cultural evening, "Muktir Gaan" (Songs of Liberation). It will run until December 16.

Shimul Kumbhakar, general secretary of

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Fire breaks out at 10-storey Keraniganj building

Brought under control after 12 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Firefighters brought a raging fire under control yesterday nearly 12 hours after it broke out at a 10-storey building in the Ambagicha area of Dhaka's Keraniganj.

No casualties were reported in the incident. However, business owners suffered significant losses as the blaze gutted clothes, garment raw materials, yarn, and jhut (waste fabric) stored in the basement and the market section on the first two floors of the building.

The blaze was reported at 5:37am yesterday and was finally brought under control at 5:03pm by 20 firefighting units, said Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, director (Operation and Maintenance) of the Fire Service and Civil Defence.

He added that 45 people were rescued from the building, while other residents evacuated on their own.

The fire is suspected to have originated in the basement, which served as a warehouse for jhut and garment raw materials and accommodated many shops.

Around noon, shop employees and volunteers were seen retrieving goods from the first and second floors and moving those to the nearby Ambagicha graveyard as the fire was brought under partial control.

"I came soon after the fire broke out at dawn but managed to salvage some goods only after the fire came under control partially around 10:00am," said Md Bashir, a yarn trader from Raju Enterprise.

Abdus Salam, owner of New Salam & Brothers on the ground floor, said, "I had about Tk 27-28 crore worth of goods in the building and Tk 10-12 lakh in cash in the drawer. All of it has likely been gutted."

Bangladesh Army, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and Ansar and VDP personnel were seen on the scene controlling the crowd, while volunteers helped traders salvage some of their goods.

Keraniganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Umar Faruk said a five-member committee has been formed to investigate the incident.

No case was filed over the incident as of last night, said Keraniganj South Police Station officer-in-charge Saiful Alam.



Members of Naripokkho, a rights organisation, hold a candlelight vigil at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka yesterday in memory of those who sacrificed their lives in the 1971 Liberation War.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN