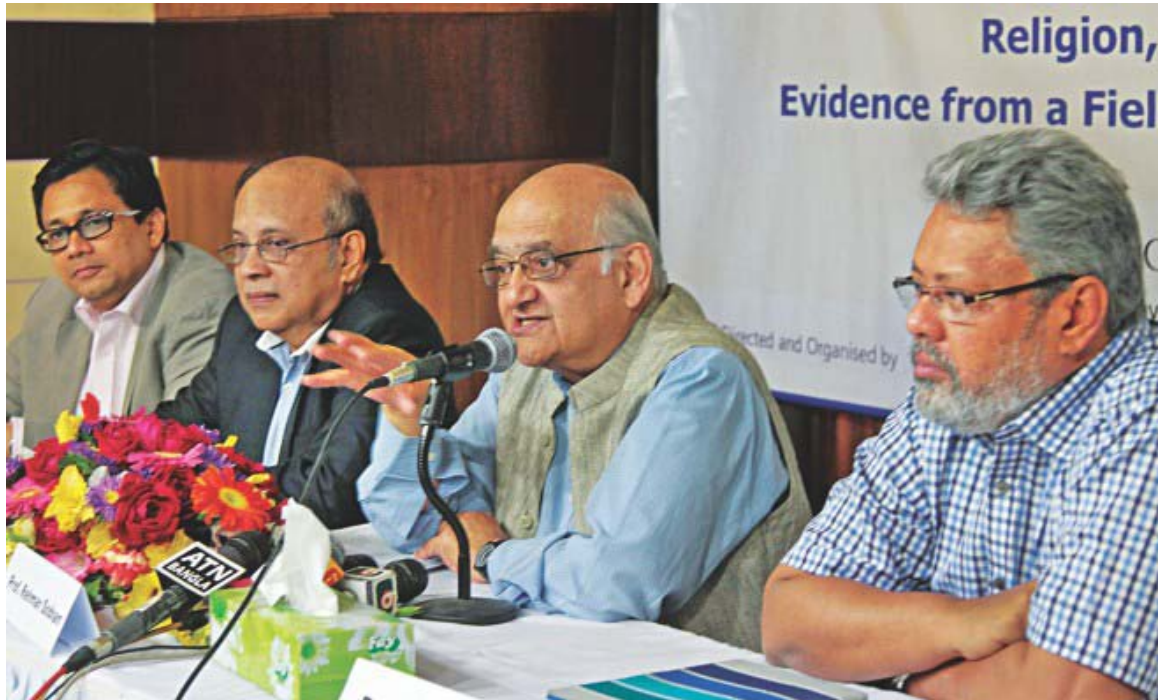


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Religious minorities have no trust in state

Prof Rehman Sobhan tells seminar

Staff Correspondent



Prof Rehman Sobhan speaks at a seminar, "Religion, Minority Status of Trust: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Bangladesh and India", in the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday. On his right are Dr Sultan Hafeez Rahman, executive director, Brac University's Institute of Governance Studies (IGS) and Brac Development Institute (BDI); and Dr Minhaz Mahmud, IGS head of research; and left is Dr Binayak Sen, research director, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies. Photo: Star

Religious minority communities in Bangladesh live with a huge sense of vulnerability, not even trusting the state and if the state cannot be trusted, nobody can be, said Prof Rehman Sobhan yesterday.

"The problem in Bangladesh is that nobody trusts anyone," he said as chief guest at a seminar, "Religion, Minority Status of Trust: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Bangladesh and India", in the capital's The Daily Star Centre.

The UK-based International Growth Centre and Brac University's Institute of Governance Studies (IGS) and Brac Development Institute (BDI) jointly organised the seminar.

IGS Head of Research Dr Minhaz Mahmud gave a presentation on a research he led on around 400 Hindus and Muslims in Bangladesh and India's West Bengal over the seminar's issue. Minorities in their own countries, Hindus in Bangladesh and Muslims in India have more trust on people of their own beliefs, he said, adding that, however, the religious majority communities do have trust on the minorities. The study was conducted to understand the role of religion on the individual's trust behaviour in segments of societies and distrust or lack of trust between religious groups can affect social cohesion, he said.

Dr Minhaz said the trust can be built up by improving government institutions and affirmative action policies to provide security and protection to property rights of the minorities.

However, eminent economist Dr Binayak Sen, research director, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), pointed out that there exists multiple identities among people and they can act differently based on settings and contexts. Functioning government institutions and the rule of law in society are very important in building trust, Dr Sen said.

Freedom fighter Zia Uddin Tarique Ali, who recently visited Pabna where Hindus were attacked, said the religious minorities do not have any trust left on the majority community.

Prof Ajay Roy of Dhaka University and Anwara Begum, a researcher of BIDS, also spoke and Dr Sultan Hafeez Rahman, executive director, IGS-BDI, delivered the concluding remarks.