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The 6th Nahreen Khan Memorial Lecture held at EWU

The keynote speaker was renowned intellectual and economist, Professor Rehman Sobhan



Photo: Courtesy



Press Release

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The 6th Nahreen Khan Memorial Lecture was held at East West University (EWU) on Wednesday, in the Manzur Elahi Auditorium.

The keynote speaker was renowned intellectual and economist, Professor Rehman Sobhan. His lecture was titled "Constructing A More Just Society in Bangladesh."

In his address, Professor Sobhan highlighted the issue of inequality in Bangladesh, focusing on four key areas: Market injustice, inequitable social opportunity, political injustice, and state injustice. He emphasized that farmers in the country have long been deprived and have remained mired in poverty for generations. He pointed out that middlemen, often operating through syndicates and under the influence of capital, are the ones benefiting significantly from this situation. Additionally, he noted the vast inequalities within the market in terms of information, wealth, and access to credit.

Professor Sobhan also addressed the disparities in education and healthcare, saying that these inequalities are creating two distinct societies in Bangladesh. Those who can afford quality education and healthcare receive it, while the less fortunate are left behind.

He said that the nature of political participation also favors the wealthy; a significant portion of the members of parliament are businessmen, which often leads to a cycle where power is used to further expand their business interests. He argued that, historically, the state has prioritized certain groups, such as businessmen, bureaucrats, and military personnel, resulting in poor individuals not receiving the benefits of state facilities.

Despite the grim situation, Professor Sobhan offered words of hope and several recommendations. He mentioned the efforts of the interim government led by Professor Yunus, who envisions eradicating poverty.

He urged the establishment of national goals to eliminate discrimination, suggesting the creation of equal opportunities for ethnic and religious minorities as well as women. He said that providing private land to the landless could boost production in the country and that giving workers ownership stakes in industrial factories could increase output while reducing unrest.

Furthermore, he recommended allocating at least 5% of the national budget to the education sector and implementing a universal healthcare insurance system through public-private partnerships.

This lecture was organized in memory of the late Nahreen Khan, a former student of East West University and the daughter of the late Dr Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to the caretaker government of Bangladesh.

The program also featured addresses from several notable figures, including Professor Dr Mohammed Farashuddin, Chief Adviser of EWU and former governor of Bangladesh Bank; Professor Dr Shams Rahman, Vice-Chancellor of EWU; Professor Dr Fakrul Alam, a former professor of the Department of English at Dhaka University; and Air Cdre (retd) Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, Treasurer of EWU.

Faculty members, students, EWU officials, and relatives of the late Nahreen Khan were also present at the event.