

Rakhain people demand constitutional recognition

Daily New Nation, 2 February 2010

The participants of an impact study seminar in Barisal on Rakhain community stressed on the constitutional recognition of them with separate socio-cultural-ethnic identity for their survival in Barisal coastal region.

The daylong seminar was organized on Sunday by Barisal regional office of Caritas Bangladesh at its auditorium under the three-year long "Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP)" Rishi-Khulna and Rakhaine-Barisal with funding support from Scours Catholic-Caritas France and the European Commission since February 2007.

The study looked into the socio-economic conditions, access to natural resources and government organisations, land rights, food security and Medicare facilities of the Rakhain people, said the organisers. They analysed the crises of the indigenous people in the context of colonial history, impact of globalisation, constitutional recognition of Rakhine community, ignorance and insensibility of the leaders of the community and mainstream, identity crisis, lack of endeavour to reserve the age-old customs and traditions, culture and language and conflict with dominating cultures.

The people of the Rakhine indigenous groups are being undermined gradually as the tribe of the region fighting against dire poverty, bad communication, inner-tribal conflict, lack of education, healthcare, housing, sanitation facilities, harassment and deprivation by greedy land grabbers and administration.

The programme was presided over by Francis Bepary, Caritas Barisal regional director and Khalid Madmud Zaki, personal secretary of Barisal City Corporation Mayor, as the chief guest, Father Nicolas Baroi, Catholic priest, Abdul Bark Molla, Kalapara Latachapli union parishad chairman, Mong Tenthan, Kalapara Rakhain community leader, Anisur Rahman Swapan, New Age Correspondent and Barisal Metropolitan Journalist Union, as special guests, Mezbahuddin Mannu, daily Janakantha Correspondent Kalapara, Khein Maung Hla, Rakhain community leader Taltali addressed the programme.

Myenthen Promila, ICDP R and R project in charge presented the audio-visual presentation for the participants representing Rakhain community, local government, mass media, government and non-government organizations.

Except some of the non-governmental organisations, the indigenous people have little representation either in government, local government or in semi-government organisations, the discussants said.

They also criticised the conventional trend of showcasing indigenous culture in national programmes.

The Rakhain people should be given due recognition rather than making them tourist attractive showpieces, they said. Immediate formation of land commission to stop intrusion into the Rakhine adivasis ancestral lands and harassment through filing of false cases by unscrupulous people need urgently, they called.

Constitutional recognition to Rakhaine people sought

Our Correspondent, Barisal

The Independent

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Jan 31: Participants at an ***impact study seminar on Rakhaine community*** held in Barisal stressed on constitutional recognition with separate socio-cultural-ethnic identity, land commission and integrated community and regional infrastructural development efforts for their survival in Barisal coastal region. The day-long seminar was organised on Sunday by Barisal regional office of Caritas Bangladesh at its auditorium under the three-year long "Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP)". The project on Rishi-Khulna and Rakhaine-Barisal is being funded by the Secours Catholique-Caritas France and the European Commission since February, 2007. The study looked into the socio-economic conditions, access to natural resources and government organisations, land rights, food security and medicare facilities of the indigenous people, said the organisers. They analysed the crises of the indigenous people in the context of colonial history, impact of globalisation, constitutional recognition of Rakhaine community, ignorance and insensibility of the leaders of the community and mainstream, identity crisis, lack of endeavour to reserve the age-old customs and traditions, culture, language and conflict with dominating cultures. The people of the Rakhaine indigenous groups are being undermined gradually as the tribe of the region fighting against dire poverty, bad communication, inner-tribal conflict, lack of education, healthcare, housing, sanitation facilities, harassment and deprivation by greedy land grabbers and administration. The programme was presided over by Francis Bepary, Caritas Barisal regional director. Khalid Madmud Zaki, personal secretary of Barisal City Corporation Mayor, was the chief guest. Father Nicolas Baroi, Catholic priest, Abdul Bark Molla, Kalapara Latachapli union parishad chairman, Mong Tenthan, Kalapara Rakhain community leader, Anisur Rahman Swapan, New Age Correspondent were special guests. Mezbahuddin Mannu, daily Janakantha Correspondent, Kalapara, Khein Maung Hla, Rakhain community leader Taltali also spoke on the occasion. Myenthen Promila presented an audio-visual presentation for the participants representing Rakhaine community. Except some of the non-governmental organisations, the indigenous people have little

representation either in government, local government or in semi-government organisations, the discussants said. They also criticised the conventional trend of showcasing indigenous culture in national programmes.

The indigenous people should be given due recognition rather than making them tourist attraction showpieces, they said. Immediate formation of land commission to stop intrusion into the Rakhaines' ancestral lands and harassment through filing of false cases by unscrupulous people need urgently, they opined. The speakers and participants in group discussions said the Caritas programme succeeded in changing Rakhaine community's lot within a short span of time. However, they also stressed on expansion of modern education based on their own language, elected community leadership, coordination between the GO, NGO, local government and people, creation of professional workshop for alternative livelihood and marketing facilities of their cottage industrial and traditional products, development of infrastructure including communication, power supply, drinking water, sanitation, health care facilities also need for a gross development of the regional Rakhaine community.