

Religions for Peace Bangladesh

Report

RfP Bangladesh Chapter's New Committee Reception and “Building Harmony” Dialogue

The reception of the new committee of the Religions for Peace (RfP) Bangladesh Chapter and the dialogue titled “Building Harmony” took place on Sunday, 10 March 2024, at the Zainul Art Gallery of the District Shilpakala Academy in Chattogram, Bangladesh. The newly appointed Vice-Chancellor (Administration) of University of Chittagong, Professor Dr. M. Sekander Chowdhury, delivered the keynote address as the chief guest. The reception and dialogue, presided over by the newly elected president of RfP Bangladesh, Professor Dr. Sukanta Bhattacharjee, and conducted by Secretary General Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, honored the outgoing committee's Executive President Professor Ranjit Kumar Dey, Secretary General Professor Dr. NHM Abu Bakar, and Treasurer Babu Kanchan Barua.

The event commenced with readings from sacred texts. In the first part of the program, the 27-member new executive committee was formally welcomed. During this segment, welcome speeches were given by the new Executive President Professor Dr. Rasheda Khanom, Treasurer Bishwajit Barua, members Professor Jashim Uddin, Professor Sujan Kanti Bishwas, Research Secretary Dr. Sucharit Basu Niyogi, Joint Secretary Principal Debapriya Barua, and member Jiten Barua, among others. Musical performances were delivered by the organization's executive committee member Professor Mishkatul Momtaj Mumu, while the Organizing Secretary journalist Faruk Taher, presented recitations.

In the second part of the event, a dialogue titled “Building Harmony” took place. The event featured enthusiastic participation from organizational leaders from Dhaka, Chattogram, Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban, and Cox's Bazar. Additionally, Chattogram University teachers Syed Md. Touhidul Islam, Subir Mahajan, cultural worker Nazrul Islam, Shamima Yasmin, Mehrunnessa Afroz, Kamrunahar Chowdhury, Mukta Chakraborty, Babra Gomez, Ana Sampson, Nadim Hossain, Pinky Chakraborty, Intisar Bin Ismail, Sudipta Sikder, Abdul Majid, Md. Imam Hossain, Sadman Sakib, along with other teachers and young peace activists from various educational institutions, also participated.

Speakers at the dialogue discussed how war and conflict in the contemporary world have disrupted peace. Global politics have been influenced by power and interests, and sometimes, religion has been misused as a communal tool in these conflicts. However, in the end, people seek peace. Mutual respect spreads the fragrance of peace, overcoming conflict and unrest. To

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open the path to peace, virtuous people are needed. Therefore, it is essential to cultivate individuals with good hearts to build a peaceful society.

Highlighting the significance of fostering interfaith harmony within education, speakers underscored that formal religious education in Bangladesh notably shapes individuals' perception of their own religion as superior. Within our schools, students are segregated for religious classes, which lack comparative religious studies, thereby depriving students of the chance to explore other faiths. Consequently, children encounter initial separation in religious classes, followed by teachings on the superiority of their own religion, ultimately leaving them unaware of other faiths. This educational framework inadvertently sows the seeds of interreligious bias in young minds.

Notably, RfP has been active in Bangladesh for many years, with significant expansion of activities since 2016. In line with this, a new executive committee was unanimously announced at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of RfP Bangladesh, held at the Chattogram Press Club Collegiate Auditorium on Friday, 22 December 2023.

Captions:

Image 1: Vice-Chancellor (Administration) of University of Chittagong, Professor Dr. M. Sekander Chowdhury, and the executive committee leaders at the reception and “Building Harmony” dialogue organized by RfP Bangladesh Chapter.

Image 2: Participants in the “Building Harmony” dialogue organized by RfP Bangladesh Chapter.

Report sent by:

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