

'World watching consolidation of democracy in Bangladesh'

By Staff Correspondent

The visiting Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeka Anyaoku has said Bangladesh's friends around the world watch with hope the process of consolidation of democracy in this country.

"Bangladesh's many friends around the world, particularly in the Commonwealth, have watched with hope and expectation the process of consolidation of the democratic dispensation in this country. Much has happened to vindicate that hope. The admiration has also been tinged with concern about how its newly restored democratic process can be sustained," he said.

Anyaoku was speaking at a seminar on 'democracy and its responsibilities' at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) in the city yesterday. Organised by the BISS, the seminar was chaired by Barrister A M H Moshred.

The Commonwealth Secretary General said democracy is not a single step but an entire process which required the

support and cooperation of both the government and the opposition.

"It is my hope that political forces in this country will seek and find accommodation through dialogue," he said. "The Commonwealth, for its part, remains ready to put at their disposal its not inconsiderable experience towards that end."

Anyaoku said that the Commonwealth was proud of being associated with Bangladesh's transition three years ago to multi-party democracy.

He recalled that the Commonwealth observer group described the February 1991 election as "a triumph for the people of Bangladesh." According to its report, the election was "as much a celebration of democracy as a political contest," he noted.

The Commonwealth Secretary General said the crucial point in democracy is that the will of the people should be freely expressed within the democratic framework.

He identified four essential

ingredients of democracy — first, the participation of the adult population in the selection and removal of the government through free and fair elections. Second freedom of association and expression including freedom of the press. Third, the transparency of the process of governance and fourth, the rule of law with guarantees for equality under law.

"But the culture of democracy is wider than the formal mechanism which underpins it," he said. "Culture embraces a set of understanding and attitude that are influenced by values and tolerance...."

In the absence of a democratic culture, free and fair elections have led in some countries to "the tyranny of the majority," he said quoting John Stuart Mill.

He stressed an intrinsic relationship between democracy and good governance.

Diplomats, Foreign Ministry officials and foreign affairs experts attended the seminar. Anyaoku also replied to questions from the audience.

MCCI for tax exemption

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the Income Tax Rules, 1985, waives taxation of the foreign buyers. Section 18 (2) (a) provides that "any income accruing or arising whether directly or indirectly through or from any business connections in Bangladesh shall be deemed to accrue or arise in Bangladesh."

This implies that if any non-resident person has business connection in Bangladesh, he will be subjected to assessment of tax on income attributable to his business operation in the country.

The National Board of Revenue holds the services rendered by liaison offices as business connection, but the world's "business connection" have not been defined in the statute.

In rule 34, there is a guideline that income from business will be determined on the basis of percentage of turnover accruing or arising in Bangladesh for the purpose of determination of income from operations in Bangladesh.

The MCCI views that the rule refers to the turnover or receipts accruing or arising in Bangladesh for the purpose of determination of income from operations in Bangladesh.

The MCCI says in its write-up that the interpretation of Rule 34 means that the foreign buyers do not come under the ambit of taxation because they do not have sales in Bangladesh nor do they have any receipts in Bangladesh.

PM urges OIC states

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the collection of funds from member states," the Prime Minister told the function.

Congratulating the convocation, the Prime Minister said,

"I believe you will contribute the knowledge and expertise gathered at the ICTVTR for the welfare of your country and your people."

She hoped that they would dedicate their knowledge and skill for the greater interest of Islamic Ummah and fulfil the hopes and aspirations of the Muslim world.

The Prime Minister said she had proposed in the last convocation that this centre be renamed as 'Islamic Institute of Technology' and expressed her gratitude for accepting it at the joint meeting of the ICTVTR general assembly and the Islamic Commission for Economic, Social and Cultural Affairs.

She hoped a final decision would be taken at the next meeting of the OIC Foreign Ministers.

Director General of the ICTVTR Prof A M Patwari also spoke on the occasion. A message from OIC Secretary General Dr Hamid Alabd was read out by Prof Shamsuddin Ahmed.

Earlier, wearing the convocation robe, Begum Zia took part in the academic procession. Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, Labour and Manpower Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, Chairman of the Governing Board of the ICTVTR and Egyptian Ambassador in Dhaka Mohamed Kamal Elmilgy and Saudi Ambassador Abdurrahman Omar Baray also took part in the procession.

Heads of respective departments presented the graduates before the Director General of the ICTVTR for conferring degrees. Begum Zia gave certificates to the convokes.

A total of 72 students were conferred upon degrees in the convocation.

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Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeka Anyaoku called on Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina at her Minto Road residence yesterday.

Hasina at Sylhet rally

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continue in power. But we will not allow them playing drakes and ducks with the people's right to vote and choose their own government," Hasina told

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money, the Awami League chief said calling them (people) to take account of the wealth of the BNP ministers and their relatives before and after their assumption of power.

Hasina extended support to the demand for a separate administrative division for Sylhet and demanded steps to protect Sylhet from the river erosion.

"People's right to vote and their lives and property are not safe under the BNP," the Awami League chief said, adding that after 'massive rigging and terrorism' in Magura, people did not turn up to cast their votes in Bogra by-election under this government.

She alleged that only 7-10 votes were cast in Bogra by-election boycotted by the Opposition but the BNP stuffed ballot boxes to show an inflated figure of turn out.

The BNP which had introduced vote daityo at the Circuit House, Hasina said present political stalemate can only be resolved if the BNP government accepts the demand for a neutral caretaker government to hold future national elections.

Hasina cautioned that the BNP will have to face the same fate of Ershad if it tries to hold parliamentary election ignoring the Opposition demand for a caretaker government.

The Awami League chief said her party will not take part in election with BNP in power.

She told a questioner that the Opposition would join a dialogue if the government agreed to hold talks on specific agenda of a neutral caretaker government by creating a congenial atmosphere for dialogue.

She accused the BNP ministers and leaders of having

amassed huge illegal wealth by looting public money. How could they become owners of crores of taka after showing broken suitcases and torn

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C'wealth Secy Gen meets Hasina

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leader was brought by the BNP government to speak in its favour since he echoed the ruling party's view on the issue of free and fair elections. "He just spoke getting a briefing from the government on the issue," the Organising Secretary of the Awami League said.

"How could he express his opinion on an issue over which the nation is facing a political crisis and an agitation by the opposition parties is on."

"Being the secretary general of an international forum like the Commonwealth, Anyaoku should have consulted the opposition parties and others concerned before commenting on the local political issue," Nasim said. "He also ought to have kept in mind the position he is holding before speaking for the government."

Anyaoku, also president of the Awami League, apprised him of her current movement for neutral caretaker government to hold next general elections.

Party sources said the Commonwealth Secretary General recalled his meeting with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Ottawa in September 1973 during the Commonwealth summit. He mentioned how he was overwhelmed by the charismatic personality and generosity of the late leader.

Anyaoku, the sources said, expressed his surprise at the report which appeared in the local press on his meeting with the Prime Minister regarding future election in Bangladesh.

Present in the meeting at Hasina's 29 Minto Road official residence were Tofael Ahmed, MP, SAMS Kibria, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, MP, and Abul Hasan Abdulla, MP.

Twenty-two people, including 10 Muslim militants, were killed in separate clashes overnight in the northern Indian state of Kashmir, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, reports AFP.

A Kashmir government spokesman said that one of those slain was an 'agent' of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence who was shot by specially-trained commandos in the state's summer capital of Srinagar today.

He said the Indian troops who carried out the operation belong to a taskforce deployed recently to tackle guerrillas in Kashmir towns that have become bastions of the Muslim rebels.

Hand-picked personnel in the taskforce have already caught four of the most wanted Muslim guerrillas.

PTI said four Muslim militants and seven civilians died on Saturday night when residents of northern Bagukote tried to stop an attack by some 40 rebels.

The mission expressed its satisfaction over a remarkable macro-economic stability that Bangladesh has achieved as evident from an all-time low rate of inflation and a large amount of foreign exchange reserve of the country.

During the meeting, the finance minister gave a thorough resume of the successes of various reform measures so far implemented and those currently under process in the country.

Saifur Rahman also apprised the delegation of his government's utmost priority to the development of rural sector including fisheries and live-stock.

IMF Resident Representative in Dhaka Shahid Khatun was present in the meeting.

Information Minister Khalid Khatun has described Sharif's strike as a desperate move to escape a probe into the allegations against him.

Observers said the government and opposition were attempting to win the support of the business community. But many cities are tense after Sharif vowed that his PML activists would foil any government attempt to make shops open on Tuesday.

Leaders of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Saturday warned that they would not allow the opposition to force shop keepers into pulling down their shutters.

Munirul Khatun, acting PPP chief in Punjab province, Sharif's powerbase, asked party workers to "help traders" if they were forced to close.

Bhutto chaired a high level meeting attended by all provincial chief ministers and a statement by the Punjab government later said the opposition wanted to disrupt law and order and that the authorities would sternly deal with any violence.

The Midnight File

Kurdish rebels kill 40 Turkish soldiers

ANKARA, Sept 18: Kurdish guerrillas killed 40 soldiers in a single attack in southeast Turkey, a newspaper close to the rebels said today. Security officials in the region could not confirm the report. The government often accuses the rebels of greatly exaggerating security forces' casualties, reports Reuter.

Kidnap threat: Americans in S Arabia cautioned

RIYADH, Sept 18: The US embassy has advised American citizens in Saudi Arabia to take "sensible precautions" after a previously unknown group allegedly threatened them with kidnappings and bombings. The embassy circular was sent out Thursday, according to several recipients, interviewed Sunday on condition of anonymity, reports AP.

Anyaoku's remarks

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C'wealth Secretary General's comment said: "We always welcome distinguished persons like Anyaoku to visit Bangladesh but they should not make any statement on our internal politics without knowing the views of the other side."

Moudud said "His views may create a wrong impression in the public mind that such visitors take side with the government and by doing so, if they do at all, they lose credibility."

Talking to The Daily Star last night, the JP leader expressed his doubt about the authenticity of the reports on the remarks of the C'wealth leader and said, "It may be a government-sponsored report based on official briefing."

Jamaat-e-Islami secretary general Matur Rahman Nizami, talking to The Daily Star, wondered how a guest from outside the country could give suggestions on an internal political issue.

"A strong government needs no certificate from outside the country," Nizami said. "This government now requires support and blessings from outside forces because it is now nowhere."

The Jamaat leader said such acts were disgraceful for an independent country.

"We are well informed of the realities here and hence recommendations by any outside individual or organisation on internal issues are not desirable," he said.

IMF suggests

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when they called on Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at his office yesterday.

The delegation is now in the capital to discuss post-ESAF (Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility) programme with the government, as Bangladesh has completed the Fund-prescribed ESAF measures.

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Positive signs in Haiti

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an imminent US invasion.

The United States is poised

to invade with a massive force including two aircraft carriers and an eventual 20,000 troops if the leaders do not agree to step down and allow a peaceful restoration of Aristide, deposed in a 1991 coup.

It was Carter's fourth session with Cedars since he arrived from the United States on Saturday, a total of nearly nine hours of talks.

Several hundred Haitians kept up a colourful demonstration outside military headquarters with music and chants of "democratic ou, Aristide non" (democracy yes, Aristide no).

Lynn Garrison, an advisor to Cedars and the Haitian military, struck a positive note in an interview with CNN television in Port-au-Prince, saying: "unfortunately, President Clinton has neglected to send a delegation like this in the past... had they sent someone down to start a dialogue months ago we might be avoiding a needless and bloody occupation."