

'World watching consolidation of democracy in Bangladesh'

By Staff Correspondent

The visiting Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeke 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 Morshed.

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 freedom 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.



Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeke 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 the slogan-chanting rally.

She reiterated her charge and narrated how the ruling BNP rigged elections in city corporations, staged Lalbagh massacre and robbed by-elections in Mirpur and Magura by using black money, musclemen, administration and the state-owned media.

"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 dacoity during President Zia's time still maintains its old character of rigging to cling to power.

"Stealing of votes will not continue for long... we will not allow it in future," Hasina said urging the government to accept the demand for a caretaker government.

There is still time to accept the demand. There is nothing to be ashamed of in accepting the people's demand."

She called the people for making all-out success of the countrywide 'road and rail barricade' on September 27 to force the government to resign and realise polls under a caretaker government. "If you remain united, your agitation must succeed. Victory is yours."

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 garages of Ziaur Rahman?"

These are people's tax-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.

Presided over by Syed Abu Naser, the meeting was also addressed by Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Mannan, Zillur Rahman, Amir Hosain Amu, Tofael Ahmed, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Dewan Farid Gazi, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, K M Jahangir MP, Whip Azizur Rahman MP, A N M Shaiful Haq, Abdul Khaleque and Iftekhar Hossain Shamim.

In the evening, addressing local reporters 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.

C'wealth Secy Gen meets Hasina

Commonwealth Secretary General Chief Emeke Anyaoku

yesterday made a courtesy call on Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and exchanged views with her on different issues, including the political situation in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

Hasina, 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, S A M S Kibria, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, MP, and Abul Hasnat Abdullah, MP.

2 JP students

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ment in the Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

Sabuj and Kabir, who are the Chief Co-ordinator and the General Secretary respectively of the city unit to the JP student-wing Chhatra Samaj, were produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) court yesterday and taken on a day's remand.

A special team of detective police arrested Sabuj and Kabir during raids in Motijheel and Magbazar areas Saturday night.

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 Reuters.

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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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."

The Commonwealth thinks that the 1991 elections were free and fair... free and fair elections are possible under the present administration," Anyaoku was quoted as saying.

Jatiya Party leader Moudud Ahmed, reacting to the

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.

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.

"The pace of reforms has to be consistent with the political process of society and weaknesses of the market system that still exists," he maintained.

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

IMF Resident Representative in Dhaka Salaheddine Khenissi was present in the meeting.

Sharif

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and the opposition leader. There are even rumours that the government might arrest Sharif.

Information Minister Khalid Kharal has described Sharif's strike call 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 shopkeepers into pulling down their shutters.

Mumtaz Khashoo, 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.

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.

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.

"Purchase from a country do not constitute business connection with that country," it been expressly excluded from the term business connection a non-resident is not liable to be taxed where his operation is confined only to the purchase of goods through any agent or not."

The MCCI maintains that the interpretation of the existing laws is against taxing the foreign buyers and they should be allowed to operate accordingly, specially for the sake of the garments industry which has the maximum number of buying houses in the country.

Plane carrying Nigerian soccer team crashes: 4 die

ALGIERS, Sept 18: A Nigerian plane with 39 people on board including a Nigerian soccer team crashed in southern Algeria Sunday, killing four people and injuring 24 others, reports AP.

The plane crashed at Taharasset's airport in the Sahara desert about 2,000 kilometres south of Algiers, according to the Algerian Transport Ministry.

An earlier report by Algeria's Channel 3 radio had said 13 were killed and 13 injured.

Anyaoku praises

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government for education especially women education.

Describing the relationship between the 51-member Commonwealth and Bangladesh as a very good one, he said the C'wealth very much valued its mutually beneficial relationship with Bangladesh.

Anyaoku said his current visit was to further foster the relationship between the C'wealth and Bangladesh.

He underscored the need for learning to live and work together with a spirit of mutual cooperation, adjustment and tolerance.

Describing the C'wealth as a very potentially powerful force and vibrant forward looking organisation, he said it promoted democracy and human rights and stepped up its role for the socio-economic development of the member countries.

Replying to a question, he said the C'wealth was involved in 13 elections held in 11 countries including the 1991 election of Bangladesh for smooth transition to democracy.

Anyaoku said he had very good discussions with President Abdur Rahman Biswas, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

Regarding the subjects of the discussions, he said, "very naturally I wanted to see what way they (the Bangladesh leaders) see and think about relationship with the C'wealth."

"With the Prime Minister, as the head of the government, it's natural I discussed and sought her guidance for the next Commonwealth summit to be held in Auckland."

Match factories

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tion R K Chowdhury said. The 22 factories, having an investment of about Tk 250 crore and around 50,000 employees, had been incurring loss for the last five years, he said.

The press conference was also addressed by vice president of the association Moksud Ali, secretary Basiruddin Ahmed and adviser Q G Ahmed.

Explaining why the industry was incurring losses, Moksud Ali said that the number of match factories were more than the country needed.

He said, the annual demand for matches was 1.25 crore gross but the production capacity of the factories was 2.5 crore gross.

The local match industries depend on imported raw materials. The manufacturers pay the 30 per cent duty, 15 per cent VAT, 2.5 per cent advance income tax and 2.5 per cent licence fee for the raw materials. For this, production cost of the local matches are much higher than the imported matches, the association leaders said.

"That is why we demand that either the government withdraw VAT and taxes to bring down production cost or restrict import and smuggling," the association said.

Royal reception

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bilateral relations and regional and international issues of common concern.

Begum Zia, the current SAARC Chairperson, will also discuss with the King the progress of the seven-nation forum's programmes.

Official talks in Thimphu are expected to focus on ways and means for expanding trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

On Thursday morning, Begum Zia will visit the Kyichu Monastery.

A ten-member media team will accompany the Prime Minister to cover the visit.



Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher arrived at the Bombay Airport in India yesterday at the start of a private visit. She was invited by the City Bank and is to give a keynote address as part of the Bank's 'Leadership Series.' — AFP photo

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.

The United States has UN authorisation to restore democracy and end what it calls a "reign of terror".

US planes have dropped millions of leaflets promoting the return of Aristide and US warships can be seen standing off the coastlines.

White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta said the US delegation had not yet reached any agreement "there are discussions but no Agreement," he said on NBC-TV's "meet the press" programme.

But CBS television's Dan Rather, quoting a source he described as extremely well placed on the Haitian side, said in Port-au-Prince he had been told: "You have every rea-

son to be confident that this is going to have a positive outcome."

It was Carter's fourth session with Cedras 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 'democratie oui, Aristide non' (democracy yes, Aristide no).

Lynn Garrison, an advisor to Cedras, 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."

Carter went to the National Palace for his meeting with provisional President Emile Jonassaint before seeing Cedras.

Rly probe body on Ctg incident

CHITTAGONG, Sept 18:

The Railway authorities (Eastern Zone) have set up a four-member committee headed by additional general manager to probe the yesterday's incident, according to Railway sources, reports BSS.

The committee will submit its report within seven days. The Railway authorities today also filed a case with Kotwali police in which it claimed that some unruly students of the Chittagong University damaged vehicles, telephone sets, furniture and other establishments of the railway amounting to Taka 7.10 lakh.

Meanwhile, the arrested four students were taken to police custody today while the rest two were released on bail, police said.

In separate statements, lead counsel Karmachari Sangram Parishad have condemned the incident.

They demanded of the Railway authorities and university administration to punish those responsible for the incident.