

‘Rid politics of black money, musclemen’

BSS, Dhaka

Black money, non-political persons in politics and ineffectiveness of parliament are the main reasons for intolerance and disagreement in national politics.

This was observed by the participants from both the ruling and the opposition parties at a roundtable in the city yesterday.

They unanimously underscored the need for wiping out black money and musclemen from the political arena to pave the way for growth of healthy politics and democracy in the country.

Participants in the roundtable included Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Minister for Science, Information and Technology Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Jatiya Party (Manju) General Secretary Anwar Hossain Manju, General Secretary of Bangladesh Communist Party Mujahidul Islam Selim, Kabir Hossain MP, Faruque Khan MP, AmCham President Aftabul Islam, President of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

and Industry (MCCI) Tapon Chowdhury, Prof Shamsul Huda and Prof Abu Ahmed.

The Daily Ajker Kagoj organised the roundtable on "Political consensus in crisis and potential" Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam of Dhaka University presented the keynote paper.

Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, also BNP Secretary General underlined the need for accepting elections results by the political leaders for growth of democratic institutions in the country. Use of money and terrorism to eliminate political opponents must be stopped forever, Bhuiyan said.

He regretted that even the country's intellectuals were now divided due to presence of such evil practices. "You do not need to go through any write-up on political issues, as the name of a writer will say what is there in his or her article," he said and urged the media to play a 'more positive role' in creating a national consensus to uphold national interests.

"I do not find any reason, why we can not forge a national consensus to resist the unwanted hands in tender process or on issues like push back and bank loan defaulters," the BNP

Secretary General said.

Moyeen Khan asked political parties to work together for making the Jatiya Sangsad effective, which can be the best forum to forge a national consensus.

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil said there must be a consensus to drive out criminals from the political arena in greater national interest.

Anwar Hossain Manju, also a former minister, said the political parties should accept the election results. "If necessary, the election process can be changed to make the election results acceptable," he said.

Mujahidul Islam Selim said the socio-political system must be overhauled to bring about a positive change, he said.

The business leaders, however, brought forth the economic issues during the discussion and referred to the privatisation process, which should be implemented through a national consensus to give the country a competitive edge in the global market.



PHOTO: STAR

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan addresses a working session on the second day of the weeklong Silver Jubilee Conference of the Commonwealth Journalists Association yesterday.

South Asia a test case for global peace

Morshed tells CJA confce

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Morshed Khan yesterday said South Asia is a vital test case for global peace as the pressing issues like development, poverty alleviation, democracy, human rights and reducing tensions come together in the region.

South Asia's fate directly impinges on the rest of world as one fifth of the world's population live here. "South Asia, therefore, remains a test case for peace and prosperity in the world," he told a seminar on 'South Asia and the Commonwealth' sponsored by the Commonwealth Journalists Association (CJA) at Sonargaon Hotel.

The Foreign Minister, however, was not all pessimistic as he said the expansion of democracy in South Asia, economic reforms and market liberalisation opened wide the door of interaction within the Commonwealth and the world at large.

"South Asia's huge emerging market, its large and capable middle class with good entrepreneurial, technical and scientific skills have opened the way for extensive economic and commercial contacts," he said.

Former Foreign Secretary and ex-SAARC secretary general Ambassador Abul Ahsan was the keynote speaker UNB Chief Editor and Managing Director Enayetullah Khan was among the discussants.

Derek Ingram, the founder-Editor of Gemini, chaired the seminar where delegates posed queries about infusing more dynamism in the Commonwealth and its effective cooperation with SAARC.

Referring to the criticism that Commonwealth is a barren club and historic relic that has lost its relevance, the Foreign Minister said it is an organisation that has actively sought and continued a defining role.

"The Commonwealth is a community of democracies... There is a strong sense of belonging and identity in terms of representative democracy, parliamentary procedures, independence of judiciary, largely free press, non-political civil service and educational curricula. The fabric is still holding together," Khan told the seminar.

Spelling out the themes of the Commonwealth summits in Harare in 1991, Edinburgh in 1997, Durban of South Africa in 1999 and Coolom, Australia, in 2002, the FM said it is a voluntary association of states.

Its decision-making is by consensus. It's real thrust is not duplicating but supplementing the work of other international organisations especially in the areas of strengthening democracy and bringing reforms, not only political but economic as well, he said.

Mayor promises to stop Trimohini pollution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka city Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka has assured the residents of Barogram in Eastern Dhaka that the flow of polluted water into the local rivers and lakes will be stopped.

The Mayor was addressing the third environmental public meeting at Shekherjaiga arranged by Barogram Unnayan Shangstha, a local non-government organisation, yesterday.

The mayor said the prime minister has instructed to solve the pollution problems of the particular area at an inter-ministerial meeting.

He said the government will be setting up a treatment plant near the

Rampura bridge, the entry point of contaminated water through the Balu, Narai and Debbdholai rivers.

Hundreds of people from the villages of Khilgaon, Sabujbag and Demra came to join the public meeting with placards that read 'Stop polluting the water, save our environment'.

The meeting was also shown a plastic bottle full of black water as a sample collected from the rivers and lakes of this locality.

The local speakers said after the first and second public gatherings demanding healthy environment, they had hoped for solutions to their problems. But so far no steps had been taken, they said.

They also pointed out that even a few years back many people earned their living catching fish. These people are distressed today as the water of the lakes and rivers is almost pitch black and stinky.

At the beginning of the meeting Nazrul Islam, a member of Barogram Unnayan Sangstha, read out a memorandum and submitted it to the mayor.

Md. Salahuddin MP, Dr. Badiul Alam, Dr. Kazi Zakir Hossain, Meher E Khoda, Dr. Ayeasha Khatun, Borhan Uddin and Dr. Abu Naser Khan also addressed the meeting while Md. Suruj Mianh chaired it. The meeting was arranged with the help of the Hunger Project.

Shazneen case

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pm on April 23, 1998.

He told the court, "At about 11:15 pm, I along with my wife went there and saw Simeen Hossain, elder sister of the victim, at the main gate of their house. She (Simeen) told my wife that Shazneen was killed. Then we went to Shazneen's bedroom and saw her (Shazneen's) body on the floor in front of the bathroom. Her body bore a number of injury marks and blood spilled on the floor. A deep wound was seen on the left side of her neck. I could not bear such a sight and went out of the room. Later, I saw Shazneen's father Latifur Rahman wailing. I was also crying. But I found 10 to 12 people including carpenter Shaniram lying nearby as if they were asleep despite so much of noise around."

Iqbal went on, "After a few minutes, I came to know that domestic help Shahid was missing. A kitchen knife was also missing. Then I saw that in the dining room, Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, Shafi Chowdhury and Anisuzzaman Khan (not identified) asking two maid servants Minu and Parvin various questions about the incident. Parvin first told them she saw a man sitting on Shazneen's body. Then she said she did not see anything. She also said she saw Shahid fleeing Shazneen's room with a knife."

"At about 2:30 am on April 24, a police team including some female police personnel came to the house and made an inquest report," he said.

Iqbal continued, "On September 27, police took Shahid to Latifur Rahman's house where he narrated the incident in presence of me, Shazneen's parents, her paternal uncle Atiqur Rahman alias Masum, her sister Simeen Hossain and Yeasmin Morshed. Shahid told us that Hasan and Badal hired Humayun, Shaniram, Parvin and

him to go for raping and killing Shazneen.

"Shahid said Humayun took the chisel from carpenter Shaniram, he (Shahid) stabbed Shazneen with the kitchen knife and Humayun hit her with the chisel. Parvin grabbed Shazneen by the hair and pressed her hands."

The witness further said, "The three pulled down Shazneen from the bed. She was becoming unconscious. Shahid raped her in this condition and came out of the room with the blood stained knife and threw it beside the tin-shed where Shaniram used to stay. He fled the house immediately. Shahid then met Hasan at Gulshan Avenue. Hasan was waiting there in a white microbus and asked him if the job was done properly. Shahid told him that it was done as per his instruction and asked him to arrange their escape. Hasan then took Shahid to cantonment railway station and he (Shahid) went to Chittagong by train. As per instruction from Hasan, Shahid surrendered to Chittagong Kotwali Police Station on April 27."

Shazneen Tasmin Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom, was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Special public prosecutors (PPs) Arfan uddin Khan, Mahbub Ahmed and Saima Khanam appeared for the state while advocates Mosharrarf Hossain Kajol, MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam and Mizanur Rahman appeared for the accused yesterday.

Top businessman

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said.

He chatted with his friend Habib and the headmaster of the school, Abdul Karim for sometime. As he was returning home with Habib, two unidentified youths fired twice at Sabbir, missing him narrowly.

Sabbir started running, but the gunmen chased him down and sprayed bullets on him point blank. The killers ran away as Sabbir lay bleeding.

People took Sabbir to the hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Soon, hundreds of BNP supporters thronged the hospital. They tried to block the main road of the town and damaged four buses owned by Zakir Khan.

Police raided different areas and arrested Ziku Khan from his residence.

Sabbir's brother Taimur said criminals engaged in garment waste business are responsible for the killing. He was buried at the Masdar graveyard.

Sabbir Alam left behind two daughters and a son.

Police informant murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police informant was killed by unidentified people in Sutrapur on Monday night.

Safiq-ul Islam alias Dulal, the informant, was stopped by five to seven people in Panch Bhai Ghat Lane at 9:30pm. At one stage of their altercation, the men hit Islam on his head with a piece of brick.

The doctor on-duty at the Mitford hospital declared him dead on arrival. Police could not give further details of the murder but the victim's wife said that her husband may have been killed as consequence of prior enmity.

Noor Jahan Begum, Islam's wife, filed a case accusing seven people but no one was arrested till last night.

120 killed

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Passengers, sensing the danger, struggled with the man but he fought them off and threw the bottle to the ground, witnesses said.

"He soaked the floor of the train with the liquid and lit it with his cigarette lighter," Jun Yung-Nam, 64, was quoted as telling Yonhap news agency.

The fire quickly spread to several carriages and engulfed the station in thick black smoke.

A 19-year-old girl, Lee Mi-Young, called her father on her mobile phone in a desperate plea for help.

"Daddy help me, the door wouldn't open," she said before the phone went dead.

Rescuers with gas masks battled the thick black smoke and toxic fumes to reach survivors trapped underground at the main subway station in central Daegu.

Many of the victims died from smoke inhalation, said medical authorities in Daegu, some 200 kilometres (120 miles) southeast of Seoul.

City officials said the two trains were being slowly towed from the station to a train depot at the western end of the subway line where forensic scientists would work to identify the human remains.

In April 1995, 101 people died in a morning rush hour gas explosion on the city's subway line which was under construction at the time. The system was completed in 1998.

President Kim Dae-Jung sent condolences to the victims of Tuesday's blaze and ordered a full investigation.

"I express my condolences and offer solace to the victims of the incident," Kim was quoted as saying by his spokesman.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin sent a message extending his 'sincere sympathies' to the South Korean people as did Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer.

US war plans hit snags

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rush to war" while also calling for a second UN resolution.

"I always said that I want to resolve this through the United Nations," Blair told a press conference at Downing Street, acknowledging "there is a lot of debate to go on" before a decision is reached.

Blair, who has committed 30,000 troops, a 17-ship naval task force and some 100 warplanes to a possible war, was speaking after a new poll showed that for the first time a clear majority of Britons -- 52 per cent -- oppose war with Iraq.

At the Security Council last Friday, the headline US stance calling for imminent military action against Iraq garnered support from only two of the 14 other council members: Britain and Spain.

France, China and Russia -- all veto-wielding permanent members of the Council alongside the United States and Britain -- have presented a united position in favour of allowing UN inspections in Iraq to continue.

The joint statement by the leaders of the 15 EU countries Monday underlined that approach by calling military action a "last resort" if Saddam did not seize his "final opportunity" to disarm peacefully.

That prompted Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin to say yesterday that France's position is "shared more and more, and therefore we

are more in a strategy that consists of maintaining the unity of the international community and of making sure that the Security Council can keep its unanimity."

Meanwhile France pursued its drive for European unity against a rush to war as Defence Minister Michele Alliot-Marie warned EU candidate countries that they were putting their membership plans at risk by supporting the United States on Iraq.

Europe's divisions on Iraq were brought into sharp relief last month in a pro-US letter published by eight European countries including EU candidate countries Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic that left France and fellow war opponent Germany out in the cold.

Days later, the leaders of 10 eastern European countries issued their own letter backing Washington on the threat of military action against Baghdad.

Turkey's warnings yesterday came as talks between Turkey and the US were at an impasse on the amount of financial aid Ankara will receive from Washington to offset the economic impact of a war, amid reports that Turkey is seeking up to 50 billion dollars.

Only Sunday, Turkey had won a commitment from NATO to start planning its defence in the event of war, after the issue caused a damaging rift in the 19-member alliance

over the inevitability of military action.

Popular opposition to a war in Iraq is overwhelming in both Saudi Arabia and Turkey, as well as across the Gulf region, and was echoed on the streets of dozens of cities around the world when an estimated eight to 10 million people joined weekend anti-war marches.

The 22-member Arab League at the weekend also proclaimed support for the peaceful disarmament of Iraq through continued UN weapons inspections and urged Arabs "not to provide any kind of assistance" to any potential US military campaign.

The non-binding resolution did not sit well with Kuwait, where almost half the 150,000 US-led troops deployed in anticipation of a new war are posted.

As for Saudi Arabia, which served as a springboard for the liberation of Kuwait by a US-led coalition in 1991, some 5,000 US troops remain in the country.

Tuesday's developments came as Iraq's disparate opposition groups were gearing up for a key meeting in the northern Kurd enclave, hoping to assert themselves as a viable political force in the countdown to Saddam's ouster.

Akram recalled

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the youngster. "He has just recovered from a long injury layoff. It's sad that he has broken down again just when he was picking up his pace and rhythm"

Mashrafees will be sent back home to recuperate upon clearance from the International Cricket Council (ICC)'s medical committee, team manager ASM Faruque told reporters in Benoni where Bangladesh was playing the West Indies.

Veteran batsman Akram Khan has been chosen as his replacement and flies off to South Africa later today to join the squad.

The call-up came as a surprise to Akram who was in the list of 30 probabilities for the World Cup but missed out on final selection.

"I thought my international career was over. I had one of the best aggregates in the practice games but still didn't get the nod. I must say I never expected a recall," said the experienced middle-order batsman.

Akram promised to give his best. "I understand that I've been summoned to help a team in crisis. I'll do my best not to let the nation down."

The 34-year-old has played in 38 one-day internationals and scored 857 runs at an average of 23.80 including five half centuries.

Qatar agrees to informal NAM talks on Iraq

THE STAR/ANN, Kuala Lumpur

Qatar, the current chairman of the Organisation of Islamic Conference, has agreed to Malaysia's proposal to hold an informal meeting to discuss the imminent US-led attack on Iraq on the sidelines of the 13th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit next week.

The word of support came on Monday following talks between Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the Emir of Qatar Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani.

Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said besides expressing its support for the Malaysia-initiated informal talks,

Qatar had also requested for support to its plan to hold an emergency OIC summit in accordance with OIC Charter to discuss Middle East crisis and other current issues affecting Muslim community.

He said Qatar had yet to fix a date for the emergency summit to be held in Doha, but Malaysia has informed it of Kuala Lumpur's support for the move.

Syed Hamid said Qatar's change of stance on the proposed informal meeting was due to request by many OIC member countries which considered this issue an urgent matter that needed immediate attention by the organisation.

"Most agreed that we need this informal meeting because so far, the OIC has not articulated its view on the proposed US-led war on Iraq.

It is a pity the attack on Iraq is carried out when OIC has not even expressed its views on the matter.

"Furthermore, many OIC countries also feel that this is a matter of national interest," he told reporters after presentation of books titled "Portrait of a Nation" and "Malaysia's New Economic Policy - An Overview" to be distributed to NAM delegates at his office here Tuesday.

Syed Hamid also received petrol smart cards from Petronas worth RM1ml to be used by vehicles ferrying NAM delegates during the summit.

Qatar had initially disagreed to Malaysia's plan to call for the informal

meeting scheduled for Feb 26, a day after the NAM summit.

Syed Hamid said the informal meeting would be chaired by Dr Mahathir and its main focus would be to make clear OIC's view to see a secure and peaceful world that was not inundated with war and suffering.

The talks, he said, would provide the avenues for OIC member countries to express their opinion and views on current issues and problems facing the Muslim community worldwide.

He said the talks would be outside the ambit of the OIC Charter and thus would not come out with any resolution or declaration.

He said it was held to take advantage of the attendance of many OIC leaders at the NAM Summit. Of the 114 NAM member countries, 40 are OIC nations. Syed Hamid said invitation letters had been sent out to OIC countries Tuesday and was confident that most would be receptive to the idea of having an informal meeting.

Telecom licences

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spectrum, sources in the industry said. BTRC officials said it had assigned the Infrastructure Investment Facilitation Centre (IIFC) to conduct a study on spectrum management.

The officials also said the BTRC was laying out a format for a request for proposal (RFP) and tender documents for launching fixed line phones.

Police nab 47

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elections to the Ganna union council amidst heightened security.

Additional 150 security personnel, including 60 Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) men, have been deployed in Kutuhidurgapur village.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Modabbir Hossain Choudhury visited the spot Monday night and also yesterday.

Cricket: Bangladesh

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Hooper said.

"It obviously puts some pressure on us now. We have now just have to win our match against Sri Lanka at the end of the month to qualify for the next round."

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh skipper said the decision to field was taken in view of the rain forecast.

"We were trying to win, we thought we had nothing to lose. We lost our first two matches, so we wanted to do well in this match."

Electing to field in overcast conditions, Bangladesh put up good show with the ball backed by some excellent fielding.

But the West Indies were sitting pretty as Ricardo Powell smashed 50 off 31 balls to help his team recover from 158-5. The right-hander plundered four sixes and three boundaries as the West Indies took 84 runs in the last 10 overs.

Bangladesh lost openers Al Saharar and Ehsanul Haque at the score of 19, before the sky opened up.

The only inspiration of Bangladesh batting was a magnificent straight drive by Ashrafui followed by scorching cover shot off successive deliveries by Drakes.

Brian Lara, who made 46, and Hooper, 45, were the other main contributors for the West Indies.

Left-arm seamer Monjurul Islam picked up three wickets, but part-time medium pacer Ehsanul Haque was most effective bowler with 2-34 from 10 overs.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the World Cup Pool B match between Bangladesh and the West Indies at the Willowmoore Park in Benoni on Tuesday:

WEST INDIES

Gayle c Sanwar b Monjurul 8
Hinds c Al Shahriar b Mahmud 10
Lara c Al Shahriar b Ehsanul 46

Enam's lawyers

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Ajanta, Aloka and Chhayabani cinemas.

His confessional statement was recorded in the magistrate's court on December 17. Two days later, he was shown arrested in the Ruppani cinema bomb blast case.

The lower court rejected his bail prayer in the case. He then obtained bail from the High Court on January 26.

But on January 28, he was shown arrested in the Ajanta cinema bomb blast case.

On February 6, the lower court rejected his bail prayer in this case also. Chowdhury's lawyers then prepared to move a bail petition before the High Court.

But they are yet to obtain the certified copy of the lower court's bail rejection order.

"We fear that if Chowdhury gets High Court bail in the Ajanta cinema blast case, the government may show him arrested in the remaining two bomb blast cases," Tanjibul said.

Chanderpaul lbw b Ehsanul	29
Hooper c and b Kapali	45
Sanwan c and b Mahmud	13
Powell c Sanwar b Monjurul	50
Jacobs not out	6
Drakes run out	0
Dillon c Ashrafui b Monjurul	10
Collymore not out	0
Extras: (b-1, lb-6, w-13, nb-7)	27
Total: (For 9 wickets in 50 overs)	244
Fall of wickets: 1-19, 2-41, 3-108, 4-130, 5-158, 6-217, 7-231, 8-231, 9-242	

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Monjurul	10	0	62	3
Jubair	8	0	46	0
Mahmud	10	1	48	2
Ehsanul	10	0	34	2
Rafique	10	0	44	0
Kapali	2	1	3	1

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Dillon	4.1	0	13	1
Drakes	4	1	17	1

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Dillon	4.1	0	13	1
Drakes	4	1	17	1

Result: Match abandoned due to rain.

Toss: Bangladesh
Umpires: Russell Tiffin (Zim) and Brian Jerling (RSA)
TV Umpire: Billy Bowden (NZL)
Match referee: Gundappa Viswanath (Ind)

Banned medicine recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The customs surveillance intelligence and investigation team yesterday discovered banned medicine worth about Tk 40 lakh in airfreight cargo at the Zia International Airport.

A customs team searched a three-packet consignment at the airfreight main warehouse and found Neorobion and Methogin injections.

The consignment arrived here on Friday from Pakistan in a Singapore Airlines flight. The shipment (airway bill no. 618-2675-9423) was sent to one Mohammad Aziz Anwar of Netrokona.

Opposition