

Blair blasts unruly English fans

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair condemned yesterday violence involving England football fans at the Euro 2004 championships, saying that such hooligans brought "shame" on the nation.

"It's just worth pointing out that those, whether here or indeed in Portugal, that have engaged in disorder, they are a tiny minority of people," he said in response to a question in parliament.

"I don't believe they are true English football fans at all," Blair said. "They bring shame upon our country and shame upon the vast majority of decent English football fans who simply want to enjoy the games."

Portuguese police arrested 33 British nationals in the southern Algarve holiday region late Tuesday and early Wednesday

How they see

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getting the post of its secretary-general this time. But the nomination of Salaudinn Quader Chowdhury led to loss of the opportunity and it was nothing unexpected, she noted.

Former ambassador Faruk Chowdhury told BBC last night Bangladesh's candidate was to become secretary-general of the OIC this time but an appropriate candidate with diplomatic experience was not nominated.

"He (the candidate) was considered unacceptable because he had several accusations against him," Chowdhury added.

Former assistant secretary general of the OIC from Bangladesh Arshaduzzaman told BBC Bangladesh faced international criticism for repeatedly selecting inappropriate candidates for the post of OIC secretary general.

"The candidate this time lacked experience and was not known internationally," said Arshaduzzaman. The previous political candidates had some experience in the international arena but this time the nominee is just a member of parliament and an adviser to the prime minister, he mentioned.

But former ambassador Mufleh R Osamany told BSS "Unfortunately, our candidate this time faced campaigns against him by some Bangladeshis. This might have damaged our prospect at the last moment."

President of the Communist Party of Bangladesh Manzurul Ahsan Khan said, "It is not a defeat for Bangladesh, it is a defeat for

following a second night of football-related violence.

The disorder took place in the resort town of Albufeira, which is being used as a base by many fans from various nations competing in Euro 2004.

There had been no trouble from England supporters after the team's first game, an agonising 2-1 loss to France on Sunday which saw the French score two last-gasp goals.

However this defeat did prompt outbreaks of violence in a series of British towns, which Blair also slammed.

"Let me make it absolutely clear, these are completely intolerable, and the police should come down very heavily... and make sure that those who engage in this disorder face heavy penalties," he said.

anti-Bangladesh forces and for the government that made anti-Bangladesh elements and war criminals its allies."

"It is a victory of conscious people of the OIC-member countries and Bangladesh government should take lessons from it," he told The Daily Star.

President of the Workers party of Bangladesh Rashed Khan Menon said defeat of the Bangladesh nominee rather 'saved the prestige of the nation and the country'.

"We had warned the government against nominating an anti-liberation person as a candidate for OIC secretary general but it ignored that," he told The Daily Star.

President of a faction of Jatiya Samaitantrik Dal (JSD) Hasanul Haque Inu and General Secretary Syed Jafar Sazzad, in a joint statement, said, "Defeat in the election of OIC secretary general is the result of nominating a controversial man as the candidate and pursuing a misdirected and failed foreign policy."

President of Ekatturer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee Shahriar Kabir, said,

"Bangladesh lost the opportunity to get the post of OIC secretary general because the government nominated an anti-liberation war person, which also tarnished the image of the country." He congratulated the OIC-member countries for not electing him.

The city AL and Bangladesh Chhatra League said nomination of Chowdhury damaged Bangladesh's image abroad.

AL walks out of JS

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As an undaunted Mosharraf continued his speech, AL lawmakers staged the stormy walk-out for two minutes.

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar expunged all 'indecent words' used in the half an hour debate.

The high-tempered debate opened when AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta attacked the four-party coalition for the defeat, standing on a point of order.

The veteran parliamentarian demanded a general discussion on Bangladesh's foreign policy.

Mosharraf in his speech saw AL's hand in Salaudinn's defeat.

"The Awami League sent an envoy to launch a counter-campaign against the Bangladesh candidate. It is very disgraceful for the nation."

Referring to the leader of the opposition's speech, he protested her 'indecent remarks' against a lawmaker in the House and demanded expunction of all unpatriotic words used in the unscheduled debate.

BNP front-bencher KM Obaidur Rahman said Bangladesh's challenge opened a new chapter of democratic practice in the grouping.

"It's a matter of pride that we got 12 votes. Under the previous Awami League government, Bangladesh did not get a single vote, though they campaigned for it."

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in his supplementary budget speech also touched on the issue.

"How will the Bangladesh candidate win the secretary general's post of the OIC against a counter-campaign at home?" he asked.

Hasina in her speech brushed aside Obaidur's remarks, saying Dhaka did not field a candidate in an understanding with Morocco.

Rabat promised to back Bangladesh in the next election, she said, adding: "Dhaka had every possibility to win the post as my government got assurances of support from most member countries."

"Had the BNP-Jamat coalition picked a right person for the post,

Sellers ask govt

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sciences as reference and text-books and compel the importers to pay taxes, making import more expensive.

The absence of a list of text and reference books according to syllabus of different government and private universities, technical institutes and other educational institutions is also making it difficult for the pre-shipment inspection agencies to identify which are textbooks and which are not, he pointed out.

"That's why they make mistakes in identifying tax-free or tax-imposed books."

M Nazmul Karim, another BBPSS leader, said because of the import tax imposed by the government in 2002, import of books made a 50 per cent fall in the last one year. The PSI system is the main obstacle to importing books, he added.

Traffic tails

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in various city points to uncover manholes for clearing the water-logged areas.

Sources said rainwater was cleared within one and half hours but traffic backlog continued to turn worse as more vehicles flowed in on streets after the shower stopped.

The Met office said 47mm of rain was recorded in Barisal, 30mm in Khulna, 28mm in Maizdee Court, 19mm in Satkhira and 20mm in Chuadanga yesterday.

Heavy rainfall is likely in the capital today (Thursday), it forecast.

Saifur

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In the question time, Saifur explained different initiatives proposed in the budget and future steps relating to child rights.

"In the near future, secondary students will get free books like the primary students," he declared.

On a question why a teacher of social science teaches grammar, the minister said, "I also ask the same question to the education minister."

He, however, said apart from recruiting teachers the government was also giving them training.

The 'Child Parliament' members informed the finance minister about the education for brothel children, health services, entertainment purposes, non-implementation of child budget and the poor state of schools.

After the question time, Saifur said the children got a chance to express their views in a democratic way.

Tourist plan

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development and Bangladesh can earn huge foreign currency if it is given to the BPC for building an exclusive tourist centre.

On Cheradia Island, Jafur said it is the 'only live coral area' in Saint Martin's Island having numerous species of fish and rich bio-diversity.

The environment ministry has taken up a project to develop it for eco-tourists while the fisheries ministry has taken up another project to build it as "safe sanctuary" for sea fish breeding.

But Nasiruddin stressed building an environment-friendly tourism centre to attract foreign tourists.

The meeting then rejected the proposal for tourism centres. It emphasised conserving the forests and bio-diversity of the two islands and asked the environment ministry to expedite implementation of its projects

However, the meeting okayed the proposal to build tourism centres at Patenga sea beach and Parki sea beach under Anwara upazila in Chittagong. It asked the BPC to conserve the environment, forest and bio-diversity of the two areas.

Sources said the meeting also stressed protection of bio-diversity of Nijhum Dip.

9/11 probe

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senior Iraqi intelligence official to Sudan to meet with bin Laden in 1994, the commission said it had not turned up evidence of a "collaborative relationship."

The Bush administration has long claimed links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda, and cited them as one reason for last year's invasion of Iraq.

On Monday, Vice President Dick Cheney said in a speech that the Iraqi dictator "had long established ties with al-Qaeda."

Tough law

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Resources Goutam Chakraborty told The Daily Star that the government began discussion with India for peaceful solution to sharing of common river waters, including of the Ganges and Teesta.

He said the technical committee on Teesta waters would sit in Dhaka from July 15-16.

Dhaka has proposed a ministerial level meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission in mid-August.

Earlier, Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Veena Sikri called on him at his secretariat office yesterday morning and discussed bilateral issues.

Living in death traps

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logical structure built in the Mughal era. The structure is in ruins and so vulnerable that it may collapse any time.

"Out of our 450 students, at least 150 are living in the Bara Katra building," said Abrarul Haq, 12, a student of Jamiya Hossaina Ashraful Ulum Madrasa.

Some grabbers on the other hand are using Chhoto Katra, another archaeological building of the same age as Bara Katra, for commercial purposes.

Both the Katras were built between 1644 and 1663. But, instead of the archaeological department taking them under its protection, the historical buildings are still being used for residential and business purposes.

Some other archaeological sites, including Ruplal House, Nawabbari Gate, Ahsan Manjil and Nilkuthi, have also fallen into so bad a condition that they are also feared to be broken down anytime. But the department of archaeology fails to maintain them for lack of funds, officials concerned said.

Neither Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipaksha (Rajuk) nor Dhaka

City Corporation (DCC) has been paying adequate attention to the urban areas of Old Dhaka, the establishment of which dates back to the 16th century. These two agencies even do not have any proper list of the ruined and high-risk buildings in the city. Now they are only trying to shift the blame for the Wednesday's catastrophe on each other.

"As far as I know, Rajuk doesn't have any specific plan about the old buildings of the city," said a top Rajuk official, who did not want to be named, as he said, "It has become a very sensitive issue."

Rajuk has a list of only 120 unplanned buildings across the city, but no list of risky buildings. On the other hand, according to the Planning and Design section of the DCC, the number of risky buildings is 81 in its Zone-2 covering the old parts of the city.

But officials of both Rajuk and DCC admitted to The Daily Star that the number of risky buildings would be no less than 1,000.

Recently a private firm working for the DCC has carried out a survey of the aged buildings in the old city. The survey marked more than 500 buildings as vulnerable.

New hope for home helps

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also expect a better future.

Togor enrolled in a non-formal education (NFE) school at Kayedtuli, Nayabazar in old town with the assistance of her employer for education and training.

Nearly 1000 child domestic helps in the old town get training from 28 NFE schools that are run by Palli Mongal Kamosuchi (PMK), an NGO. The children attend schools from 3pm to 5pm six days a week.

Togor and some other children so far have shown a lot of encouraging signs.

"I was totally illiterate two years ago, but now I can write my name, I can do some maths and I even have learnt some English," said Togor, beaming with confidence.

She says she is now prodded by an ambition within her to be a doctor these days. She, however, knows the limitations as well and adds in despair, "who's going to help me become a doctor? I know it won't come true for me."

Rina Bishwas, the employer of Togor, said, "Togor is under my guardianship for the last two years. But she won't be with me forever and she has a future. So I decided to get her in to the non-formal education school. I don't face any problem with household work at all and I let her work only after school period."

Monira Akhter, another work-

ing child who is getting the ILO trainingsaid, "I think this opportunity should be given to all other domestic hands across Bangladesh."

Dewan Abdul Hashem, action programme coordinator of PMK said, "With this training the children have become even more skilled as workforce. They now work better for the employers as they have been trained in cooking, operating home appliances and also better manners and etiquette."

Hashem said one tenth of the children, who are older than 16 years, have been given a six-month training in tailoring to make them self-reliant.

Monir Hossain, the project monitor appointed by the ILO, said out of 5,000 child domestic workers, mostly girls, 500 children will be awarded certificates of professional house keepers by the ILO soon in a ceremony.

It will be easier then for those children to go abroad to take job of house housekeepers, he added.

ILO has extended this support with a view to improve the quality of life of the child domestic workers.

"But we will evaluate the performance of the NGOs in implementing the project before deciding on the continuation of the scheme in the future."

Ankara wins OIC top post

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Bangladesh's candidate had strong endorsement from at least 27 OIC countries in the 57-member grouping.

Speaking to reporters at his office yesterday, Reaz Rahman, adviser to the foreign ministry, expressed disappointment at the defeat that came despite what he called an "organised, concentrated and sustained campaign". "Personally, I am disappointed. I also regret it."

This was the first time Bangladesh did not withdraw its candidate from the race in an effort to secure the top OIC post. Both previous candidates Shamsuddoha during the rule of HM Ershad and Humayun Rashid Chowdhury during the rule of Awami League in 1999 backtracked at the request of other members in a last-minute decision.

Several Bangladesh ministers, Salaudinn Quader and special envoys visited nearly all member states in their campaign that included visits to key countries

Saudi Arabia, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco and Senegal.

Bangladesh was the first to announce its candidature for the current race and received strong support from Saudi Arabia, including a letter of endorsement from the Saudi crown prince, which was circulated among all OIC members. But the Saudi foreign minister could not turn up at the ICGM on Tuesday that dealt a major blow to Dhaka's campaign.

Sources say most of the 27 countries that pledged support for Salaudinn Quader gave verbal endorsement and only five countries, including Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and Brunei, gave written support.

In a rotation system, candidates for the post were required to come from Asian countries. Ihsanoglu's election came as OIC foreign ministers met in Istanbul to decide whether to support the new interim government in Iraq and how security in the country can be boosted.

At the ICFM, the Saudi representative proposed one-year extension to the Moroccan incumbent until a consensus is reached, but Turkey had insisted upon an immediate election.

Ihsanoglu, who speaks fluent English and Arabic, has served as director general of the Istanbul-based Organisation of the Islamic Conference Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture.

(Material of AFP and other agencies has been used in this report)

Abducted man

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the hall provost and police. Provost Prof Sirajul Islam and police raided the hall at around 3:00am, rescued Bashar and arrested the three.

However, the masterminds of the incident Salahuddin and Shanta managed to escape. JCD leaders and activists of the hall said, adding that they were expelled from the party for their involvement in crimes.

Tariqul Islam Titu, JCD president of the hall unit, said the JCD and general students helped police nab the abductors. "We'll help police arrest the expelled JCD leaders," he added.

The arrestees were placed before a court, which ordered to send them to jail.

Play due role

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parliamentary standing committee on fisheries and livestock ministry, Sahidul Islam, chairman of the standing committee on power and energy ministry, Nurul Islam Moni, chairman of the standing committee on science and ICT ministry, MA Matin, chairman of the standing committee on water resources ministry and Mosharraf Hossain, chairman of the standing committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts affairs ministry.

The committee chairmen expressed their gratitude to the prime minister for creating an atmosphere where the standing committees were working independently as per the rules of procedure.

Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, who was present at the meeting, later told reporters that the meeting was part of a routine programme of interaction between the Leader of the House and the standing committee chairmen.

Fifteen other chairmen of the standing committees earlier met the prime minister in three phases and the remaining 35 will meet her gradually, Chowdhury added.

The prime minister hoped that the parliamentary standing committees would work effectively to fulfil the aspirations of the common people and ensure overall development of the country.

The Leader of the House asked the chairmen to play a more dynamic role and create an atmosphere for proper and timely use of the allocations made in the new national budget against the ministries.

During the meeting, the standing committee chairmen said the progress of activities of different ministries were satisfactory and positive.

Tk 2,738-cr

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49,360 crore.

"Overall expenditure during the current fiscal has declined, but expenditures by some ministries have increased for one reason or other," the finance minister told the House.

As rationale of the supplementary budget, he observed, "It is the constitutional obligation of the government to get any extra expenditure made by any ministry passed by parliament."

With this approved additional budget, this year's revenue expenditure has grown by Tk 1,892 crore and development spending by Tk 845 crore.

Of the sum, health and family welfare ministry has spent the highest, Tk 335 crores, for development purposes.

As revenue expenditure, the home ministry alone claimed Tk 242 crore, besides spending another chunk of Tk 50 crore for development work. The defence ministry this year spent Tk 243 crore extra as revenue expenses and Tk 1.38 crore for development purposes.

These two ministries are followed by education ministry with an additional spending of Tk 237 crore, water resources ministry Tk 153 crore, primary and mass education ministry Tk 129 crore, telecoms ministry Tk 123 crore and disaster management and relief ministry Tk 100 crore.

The Prime Minister's Office also spent Tk 16.6 crore over its original allocation.

In case of additional development expenditures, the industries ministry spent Tk 206 crore and local government and rural development ministry Tk 147 crore.

4 cops jailed

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the same case.

The magistrate announced the verdict in a jam-packed courtroom after hearing arguments from prosecution and defence lawyers and recording statements of 15 prosecution witnesses.

M Harun-ur-Rashid, complainant of the case, who was present at the court, expressed his satisfaction at the judgement.

On October 31 last year, Harun, a businessman, filed the case under the Law and Order (Disruption) Speedy Trial Act accusing eight law enforcers and a police informant of mugging Tk 2 lakh from two Jhut (garment by-products) traders at Goran in Khilgaon the previous night.

Locals held four policemen and recovered Tk 1.46 lakh from SI Shamsul immediately after the incident.

NOAB slams

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whole.

While local industries supply only 15 per cent newsprint to the newspaper industry, the remaining 85 per cent is imported at a very high cost. Thus, the imposition of enhanced duty and VAT would seriously hamper the industry further. In addition, the rising value of US dollar against taka is further adding to the high cost faced by the industry.

NOAB members had apprised the finance minister in the past about the problems facing the industry including rate of government advertisement, non-payment of dues and inadequate government allocation for this purpose.

NOAB members are shocked to notice that instead of solving the existing problems, the finance minister has proposed new taxes on an industry which is devoted to public service and strengthening democracy.

Two GIs killed in attack on Iraq base

AP, Baghdad

A rocket slammed into a U.S. logistics base yesterday near the city of Balad, killing two U.S. soldiers and wounding 21 people, the military said.

Fourteen of the injured were taken to the U.S. Army's 31st Combat Support Hospital and seven were treated at a clinic on the U.S. base, known as Camp Anaconda, according to a military statement.

Air and ground units responded to the attack, the military said. Balad is 50 miles north of Baghdad.

The military statement did not specify whether the injured were U.S. soldiers or included civilians or others on the sprawling compound.

On June 6, a U.S. soldier on the same base was killed and another wounded in a mortar attack. Camp Anaconda was also the scene of a mortar attack last July 4 that wounded 18 U.S. soldiers.

Also yesterday, saboteurs blasted a key southern pipeline for the second time in as many days, shutting down Iraq oil exports, and gunmen killed a security chief for the state-run Northern Oil Co.

The latest attacks at Iraq's oil sector have slowed the process of reviving its economy after decades of war, international sanctions and Saddam Hussein's tyranny. Insurgents also are targeting the country's infrastructure apparently to undermine confidence in the new government, which takes power from the U.S.-led coalition

June 30.

Elsewhere, radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr ordered members of his militia to leave the holy cities of Najaf and Kufa unless they live there, fulfilling a key aspect of an agreement meant to end fighting between his forces and U.S. troops.

Exports were halted last month through the other export avenue the northern pipeline from Kirkuk to Ceyhan, Turkey after a May 25 bombing. Turkish officials said on condition of anonymity.

Two explosions on the southern pipeline occurred in the same area as a blast Tuesday. It could take up to a week to repair, Jassim said.

In another assault on the country's petroleum industry, Northern Oil Co. security chief Ghazi Talabani was killed in an ambush while going to work in the city of Kirkuk, said Gen. Anwar Amin of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. Three gunmen attacked Talabani's car after his bodyguard briefly left the vehicle in a crowded market. The bodyguard was wounded.

Talabani, the third Iraqi official to be killed since Saturday, was the cousin of the head of one of the two main Kurdish political parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Saboteurs also blasted a northern oil pipeline about midnight Tuesday near the town of Dibis, some 20 miles west of Kirkuk, said Northern Oil official Mustafa Awad. The Dibis attack did not disrupt exports and the fire was extinguished, Iraqi oil officials said Wednesday.

Whales seen facing biggest threat in 15 years

REUTERS, London

The world's whales are facing their biggest threat in 15 years as the three whaling nations -- Norway, Japan and Iceland -- all have their fleets at sea at the same time, environmental activists said yesterday.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) said the Japanese whaling fleet had just left port to hunt for a total of 260 whales ranging from minke to sperm whales, while the Norwegians had already killed 340 minke from a quota of 670.

It said Iceland had already killed five minke and aimed to take another 20 within the next two weeks.

"Far from improving, things are getting worse for the whales,"

IFAW UK director Phyllis Campbell McRae said in a statement.

"Iceland rejoined the whaling community in 2003 after mothballing its fleet for 15 years; and Japan is targeting endangered species including Bryde's, sei and sperm whales as well as hunting in an internationally recognised sanctuary in the Southern Ocean," she added.

Although commercial whaling was banned worldwide in 1986, Norway refuses to be bound by the ban, with Japan and now Iceland hunting whales for scientific research.

Iceland, which angered environmentalists by resuming scientific whaling last year, has declared its intention of killing 500 whales in 2004/5.

al-Qaeda threatens

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States on what actions to take.

"And then we will make decisions on what the next steps are but our history has been one of not negotiating with terrorists," he said.

De facto Saudi ruler Crown Prince Abdullah said on Wednesday the kingdom would strike against al-Qaeda soon.

"We have forces and until now they have not appeared but you will see them in the coming days," he said in remarks on Saudi media. "We can only be patient for so long and from now on you will see things that will reassure you."

Concerns about security in Saudi Arabia had helped push world oil prices to record highs recently before oil producers said they would increase output.

A US State Department official said Washington will use every appropriate resource to gain Johnson's safe release in co-operation with the Saudi government.

"Saudi Arabian authorities can count on the United States to give them an assistance they request or need... The US government makes no concessions to individuals or groups holding our citizens," the State Department official said.

The leader of al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, Abdul Aziz al-Muqrin, promised in earlier statements that 2004 would be "bloody and miserable