Special trial planned

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will be tried in the civil court.

Besides, there will also be a provision allowing the Rab authorities to discipline the Rab members through departmental proceedings, which would not require them to set up any court or taking the matter to the special courts.

The Rab director general (DG) and additional DG, however, cannot be tried in the courts no matter what allegation is levelled against them. In such a case, the home ministry or a higher authority will look into the matter.

Besides, the Rab members coming from the civil administration will be kept outside the purview of the special courts. For misconduct, they will be tried in their respective departments.

Of the two special courts, one will deal with the major offences and will be named Special Court and the other dealing with minor offences, and be named Summary Court.

The major offences include mutiny, criminal activities inside the station, attacking the colleagues, fleeing while under arrest, on duty and in operation, leaking classified information, smuggling out arms and ammunition, taking bribe, getting involved with criminals, and deliberately violating orders.

The minor offences include dereliction of duty at checkposts, misbehaviour with the colleagues, accepting illegal gratifications, and lacking in efforts to arrest criminals.

The Special Court will have authority to award life imprisonment while the Summary Court will sentence a maximum of 10 years in prison.

The crime-busting force which is operating still without any rule of its own, came into being in March, 2003 through The Armed Police Battalions (APBn) (Amendment) Act, 2003. It launched formal operations on June 21 last year, having members from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, APBn, Coastguard and Ansar on deputation.

Sources said the draft rules have already been finalised and are now at the law ministry, which is examining whether the rules contradict other laws.

SIMILAR TO MILITARY COURT?

Sources said the proposed special courts will be similar to martial law courts, as they like military courts will not allow the convicts to appeal to other courts against the judgement.

A Rab high official, however, opposed the view and said there are four kinds of court martial in defence general, field general, district and summary court martial. But the courts proposed to be set up in Rab will operate like one in the APBn. "The provision already existing in the APBn has just been adapted for Rab."

The Rab is enjoying simultaneously the power of operation, investigation, and intelligence while the other tiers of the police are not allowed the same.

"Since the Rab has been allowed huge power to curb crime, there is always a risk of misuse of that power. So, the rules are going to be strict to enable the authorities to deal out harsh punishment through the special courts," a Rab high official said while explaining the necessity of the courts' authority.

COMPOSITION OF COURTS

Two units of Special Court and as many of Summary Court will be set up permanently on orders of the IGP.

Each of the courts will be comprised of two high Rab officials. One unit of the Special Court will deal with the superior officials like the commissioned officers from the defence and police officers from the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) and above. An additional DG (director general) will be at the helm of the court and will have a deputy director (of the rank of SP for police and major for defence) as the other member.

The other unit of the Special court will also be presided by an additional DG while his member will be one with the rank of deputy assistant director (inspector for police). This court will try Rab men who are non-commissioned officers from the defence and under the rank of ASP for police.

Of the two units of Summary Courts, one will try aforementioned superior officers while the other the rest of Rab men.

If the man to be tried and the court member are of similar rank, the latter will be replaced by an officer of superior rank.

PROBE AND TRIAL

After a unit chief receives an allegation or himself raises one against any of his men, he will take the matter to the DG. An investigation will be conducted on orders of the DG, who will forward the probe report with his opinion to the IGP. On receipt of the report and DG's opinion, the IGP will order necessary steps according to the rules.

There will be two kinds of arrest. Given the gravity of their offence, Rab men will be either kept in Rab's close custody [a separate Rab cell] or be confined to their stations, which will be called 'open arrest'.

As in the defence, the accused will choose a defending officer from the fellow Rab personnel. If he fails to do so, the authorities will do the job for him.

"The trial will be a quick one, to be completed in one month," said a Rab official.

APPEAL

The convict will be able to appeal against the judgement in 30 days of its delivery.

The superior officers will first appeal against the judgement to the IGP, and if not satisfied, they may still appeal, this time, to the home ministry. The others will appeal to the DG and IGP.

Since the additional DG, who will preside the Special Courts, cannot be tried in the court for allegations against him, the matter would be taken to the home ministry or higher government authority.

If any allegation is raised against a member of the court, a superior official will replace him and hold his trial. Similar arrangement will be made in case of allegations against the chief or the members of the Summary Courts.

"Presently, we cannot discipline our members for any offence. Till now, we have to send them back to their mother organisations for action. Once the rules are passed, we'll be rid of this particular shortcoming and deal with the matters ourselves," Rab Additional DG Fazlul Bari told The Daily Star. "The rules will act as a deterrent to offenders."

Advani, 7 others

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that left at least 2,000 dead.

In the charges, a special judicial magistrate said Advani and the others had made "exciting and provocative speeches" which instigated a mob to destroy the Babri mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya on December 6, 1992.

The holy site is claimed by both Hindus and Muslims.

The eight who appeared in court in this northern Indian town included two former federal ministers and top leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council). They all pleaded not guilty.

Advani, 77, and the others were bailed for 10,000 rupees (230 dollars to appear again on August 30.

2 sweetmeat

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sweetmeat from his shop.

The court also fined two other shop owners Tk five thousand each as they were cheating people during measurements while selling goods.

The court also collected Tk one thousand each from six other restaurant owners as they were selling unsafe foods that had been preserved in a filthy environment.

The second court, led by magistrate Md. ABM Abdul Fattah, collected Tk 31 thousand from three shops in Gulshan section one.

The court charged Tk 12 thousand from the owner of the Islamia Mistanno Vandar for using unsafe colour in sweetmeat and producing sweetmeat in a filthy environment.

They collected Tk nine thousand from Habib Hotel and Restaurant for unhygienic condition of its kitchen.

The court also collected Tk 10 thousand from the owner of the Rupa confectionery for selling unsafe food items like water in polybags.

IMF

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mission refers to the central bank's informal direction in March to the commercial banks to keep the highest price of dollar at Tk 63.70, which did help steady the dollar price for a few weeks.

The IMF report also pointed out that as the nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) were allowed to exceed the limits on their net open positions, a two-tier pricing developed between the NCBs and the private banks emerged, with a 0.6 percent spread at its peak.

Against this backdrop, the IMF urged the government to adhere to market-based principles in the foreign exchange market, not to control the exchange rate and to allow the exchange rate to reflect the market forces.

In response, BB Deputy Governor Allah Malik Kazemi in a letter dated June 26 to IMF Managing Director Rodrigo de Rato committed not to interfere in the foreign exchange market.

"Bangladesh remains committed to maintaining a market based flexible exchange rate system," he affirmed and said, "Relying on market mechanism to adjust to exchange market pressures, Bangladesh Bank is not now resorting to, and does not intend to resort to suasion for this purpose."

Kazemi also informed the IMF MD that the long-persisting divergence between the exchange rates quoted by the NCBs and other banks has been narrowed down. He assured, "Bangladesh Bank is keeping continuous watch to prevent tendency to re-emergence of any significant divergence and will ensure that this does not exceed 2 percent."

The binding commitment makes the BB unable to take any direct measure to halt the ongoing dollar price hike. But, the government is greatly worried over the situation, as it would further worsen the current inflationary spiral.

Sources said following the first-ever meeting of the high-powered fiscal co-ordination council early this week, where the dollar price spiral featured prominently, the BB took some indirect measures to stabilise the forex market.

Sources said on the central bank's informal instructions, Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association (Bafeda) and the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB) held meetings on the issue and took a number of decisions to rein in price spiral.

ABB President Aminuzzaman said they would adopt a special mechanism so that taka cannot depreciate further. But he did not disclose any details of the mechanism.

However, the managing director of a private bank said, "The treasury managers of all banks will sit together in a day or two and set the buying and selling rates of dollar, which would be acceptable to all."

But some bankers are sceptical about the effectiveness of the move. It will take a week or two after fixation of the exchange rates of dollar to find out the efficacy.

Probe body

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is yet to complete its job.

The inquiry committee was supposed to complete its investigation by July 28 and submit its report to the energy ministry by July 29.

The government had formed the inquiry committee headed by President of the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) Professor Anwarul Azim on June 25 following the blowout on June 24.

The committee was first asked to submit the report by July 10 and then its tenure was extended until July 28 upon a request.

Benapole port

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Association, C&F Agents Workers' Union, Transport Owners' Association, Transport Workers' Union and Port Handling Workers Union.

Alhaj Shamsur Rahman, president of Benapole Customs C&F Agents' Association said the customs authorities are not interested to sit with the leaders of the five organisations to end the deadlock.

When contacted, a source at Benapole Customs said the 12-point demand of the port users are illegal.

On the other hand, four organisations at Petrapole land port in India continued their strike for the eighth day yesterday. They went on the strike on July 21 demanding release of four reconditioned Indian trucks seized by Benapole Customs recently.

A team of Bongaon Truck workers Samity and Shimanto Paribahan Malik Samity held a meeting with Benapole Customs officials on Wednesday. But the meeting yielded no positive results.

Back from jaws

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whole night but could not gather anything.

"In the early hours next day, they [Rab] blindfolded me with a piece of black cloth and took me to an isolated place near a river. They asked me if I have any last wish," Samad narrated the bone-chilling story, frequently breaking into tears. The place was Godagari, the Rab told him.

"Time stood still at that time. Suddenly an army officer's cell phone rang. A few minutes later, the officer asked me whether I was a freedom fighter. As I said 'yes', they took me back to the Rab office," said Samad.

"As a freedom fighter, I never wanted anything from my country. Even I did not take any allowances for the freedom fighters. Ironically, the Rab members while taking me to Godagari called me an enemy of the country and said I should not be let live," he said.

On July 25, the Rab members handed over Samad to two unknown persons who in a microbus took him to his house in the city. They advised him to hide at least for a week.

Top PBCP leader 'Lal' Samad, with whom Abdus Samad was mistaken, is a listed criminal in the police book, facing 17 cases.

Engaged in business and agriculture, Abdus Samad claimed that he was neither an outlaw, nor a murderer. His daughters Rumi and Shirin alleged that it was the police who turned Abdus Samad into "Lal Samad".

He was first caught by the joint forces during the Operation Clean Heart in 2001 following "fabricated" cases for murdering three persons of Bagmara upazila. However, the police later submitted charge sheet, dropping his name.

Released in October 2002, he shifted from Bagmara to Rajshahi city. He was again arrested from his business shop in July last year and implicated in a number of murder cases, including the murders of Taherpur municipal chairman Ali Khondokar, BNP leader Abdul Hamid Moru and two others.

In 2002, the police damaged his houses at Bagmara and later in 2004, Bangla Bhai's men demolished his property at Bagmara and named me Lal Samad.

"Nobody wants to rent us a house, no school admits my sons. Now we are about to starve as the lone bread earner of our family is running for life," said Samad's wife Moyful Begum, a mother of three sons and two daughters, in tear-choked voice.

ACC proposes

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complementary force."

"There are flaws which we have been trying to address and we have also made some progress by now. We are working with the aim to build the police as a more honest, dedicated and effective force," he added.

Police on their part mentioned many of their limitations, including lack of logistic support, inadequate pay and allowances.

The meeting was also attended by Additional IGP Shahidullah Khan, OCs of all the police stations in Dhaka and other high officials of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP). The ACC commissioner was accompanied by its Secretary M Ataur Rahman.

India's heaviest rain

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"Around 166 people drowned in these floods and these numbers came in only much later," Kulkarni said.

Aerial pictures of Mumbai showed much of the city marooned in debris-laden water. Long queues of vehicles were stranded on highways.

However, the main airport reopened early afternoon after being closed since Tuesday due to water-logged runways.

Aside from allowing the resumption of commercial flights, the reopening had allowed the air force to start flying in relief materials, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency said.

Suburban trains -- the lifeline of the city -- were also limping back to normal, a railway official said, but inter-city lines had yet to be restored.

Heavy casualties occurred in a remote village in Raighad district of the rain-lashed state, where at least 100 people from 20 families were feared killed by a landslide, PTI said

Majority opts

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parties, except Jatiya Party (Ershad), boycotted the dialogue that saw poor response and sparked severe criticism for inviting a huge number of political parties most of which exists in name only.

Only 53 political parties, out of 117 invited, joined the dialogue. Of them, 35 parties expressed their willingness for a new voter list while 15 suggested revision of the existing list. Three parties did not give any opinion.

Leaders of the ruling BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) and Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) who met the EC yesterday proposed preparing a fresh voter list, saying that the existing list is outdated and full of errors.

"The voter list which was prepared six years ago has largely become out of date. We prefer a fresh list, which must be correct as far as possible," BNP Vice-President MK Anwar told the EC yesterday during the dialogue.

On the question of huge expenditure for a fresh list, Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to the prime minister, said the EC should consider the greater interest of the nation, not the expenditure in preparing a fresh list.

The BNP delegation that also included Post and Telecommunication Minister Aminul Haque and Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman assured the EC of all-out cooperation in holding the next parliamentary polls in a free and fair manner.

"We will consider the proposal for reintroduction of two provisions empowering the Election Commission to cancel candidature and initiate contempt proceedings, Anwar, also the agriculture minister, told the meeting, responding to the CEC.

The CEC earlier in his welcome speech said he would submit proposals to the government for reintroduction of these provisions, a separate cadre service for election officials and financial autonomy to the Election Commission.

"Reforms are needed in the electoral rules to hold free and fair election," Abdullah Al Noman said, echoing the CEC, but he did not elaborate it.

CEC CENSURES PARTIES FOR CONFLICT

The CEC expressed dismay at the conflict among parties as he saw as many as 12 factions of four political parties joining the dialogue. Some of them refused to sit together.

Even the partners of the coalition government set an example of such discord. The EC yesterday was compelled to arrange separate sessions for Jamaat-e-Islami, IOJ and BJP as leaders of the parties refused to sit together in a session.

Besides, a number of parties declined to sit with the smaller parties that compelled the EC to arrange a few separate sessions during the dialogue.

The CEC said it is unfortunate that there are two or three factions in each party and they do not agree to sit together. "Trust, understanding and tolerance are the preconditions of democracy, but all these are absent here," the CEC said yesterday.

He said the conflict among parties, mistrust and lack of tolerance are obstacles to holding a free and fair election.

In the last three days, three factions of Jatiya Party, three of IOJ, four of Muslim League, two of Nejam-e-Islam party took part in the dialogue.

HEATED DEBATE WITH CEC

Mejbaur Rahman Chowdhury, leader of a faction of IOJ, engaged in a heated debate with the CEC during yesterday's dialogue. He said they want a neutral role of the EC, but a remark by the CEC about a major political party damaged its neutrality.

"Have you come here to quarrel with us?" an apparently angry CEC said and asked the IOJ leader to cite a specific example to prove his contention.

The IOJ leader citing newspaper reports said the CEC had said the next election will be held if even the Awami League does not join it. The CEC said he did not make such comment.

"His (CEC) remark is provocative. It can harm the polls environment and discourage political parties willing to participate in the election," the IOJ leader told reporters after the meeting.

JAMAAT LEADERS SHOW A DIFFERENCE!

Leaders of all the parties, including senior ministers, stood up while speaking before the full Election Commission. The only exception was the leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami.

The Jamaat leaders -- Quamaruz-zaman, Abdus Sobhan and Moqbul Ahmed -- offered their suggestions sitting in chair in front of the commission. A number of EC officials termed it 'indecent attitude' towards the EC which, however, did not object to it.

CEC sees no problem

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(CEC) MA Aziz yesterday said many people hold misconceptions about the electoral laws. "The laws say the Election Commission, if it deems, can prepare a fresh voter list on some conditions."

The chief election commissioner (CEC) and the two other election commissioners who find 'misinterpretation of law' in preparing the last four voter lists, now themselves seem puzzled about the legal provisions pertaining to the electoral register.

"There is some misgivings that a fresh voter list cannot be prepared unless the relevant laws are amended," the CEC said at yesterday's dialogue with the political parties.

Election Commissioners M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali, who first pointed out that the existing electoral laws do not provide for having a fresh list, kept mum about the drastic shift in the CEC's opinion.

Asked whether the laws will be amended to prepare a fresh voter list, the CEC yesterday told reporters that they would take decision after examining further the existing laws.

The CEC has started changing his earlier stance on the legal viability of preparing a fresh roll mainly after consultation with the senior officials of the EC secretariat yesterday morning. He wanted to know in detail from them about the previous practices by the EC in making the voter rolls, sources said.

Speaking on the brewing legal controversy over the voter list issue, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar said the idea that a fresh roll cannot be prepared without having the laws amended is not right.

"The Election Commission has unlimited legal authority to decide whether the electoral roll will be prepared afresh or be revised," Anwar, who once served the EC as its secretary, said at a dialogue with the EC over the voter list.

"If there is still any confusion in anybody regarding the issue, they can discuss with us," said the agriculture minister, also vice-president of the ruling BNP.

. CEC MA Aziz has said those were not prepared lawfully, but following a convention.

Aziz, who is a judge of the Appellate Division, had earlier opined that there is no provision for preparing a fresh voter list in the 1982 ordinance and that it suggests revision of the existing one.

"The laws will have to be amended to prepare a fresh voter list. We will ask the government to amend the law if the majority of the political parties want a fresh list," the CEC said on the first day of the dialogue with the political parties Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the EC ended its dialogue with the political parties on the voter list yesterday when it has already got itself into a tangle regarding the issue.

The three-day EC-initiated dialogue has been widely greeted as a farce amid boycott of the mainstream political parties including the main opposition Awami League.

Britain detects

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but it may include ways of barring sites that talk of jihad and fan religious hatred.

On the other hand, the government is in talks with other European countries for communication data preservation and legal cooperation to prosecute terrorists, a lawmaker of the European parliament and a conservative Tory high-up told The Daily Star.

"We are aware of the force of the Internet," said Paul Goggins, minister for race and faith, in a telephone interview. "It is an issue the government is seriously looking into about how not to abuse this power."

"Britain is working on agreement of data protection of telephone conservation and email up to a year with the European Union," Dr Charles Tannock, member of the European Parliament, said. "Britain already has provisional agreement with Germany."

Internet has become a major area to focus for the British government after it found that some young Muslims are visiting sites calling for jihad against the 'infidel' and showing video clips of suicide bombings. The scene of blowing up of an army vehicle carrying three British soldiers posted on a website have especially stirred up strong sentiment in Britain. To make it worse, the person who has uplinked the site, a Saudi IT professional, is living in this country and the authorities cannot do anything against him because of legal loopholes. The long-robed Saudi's argument is that he is just a mere website manager, anybody can post anything on his site which he cannot control.

On another level, Britain is working on having an European evidence warrant, after the fashion of the existing European arrest warrant which empowers a judge of one country to have a criminal brought from another country for trial. The evidence warrant will enable a UK judge to ask the police or magistrate of another European country to produce evidence in the trial of terrorists.

The cross-border cooperation in terrorism is aimed at fighting Islamic radicals who take asylum in one European country and fan out hatred in another country.

Although such unified EU cooperation on the transfer of terrorist suspects has got a momentum following the Madrid bombing and recently the London attacks, some countries are still posing some mild resistance to the idea and Britain plans to vigorously pursue the issues.

Scrap 'ineffective'

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from the anti-encroachment steps in line with the law," he alleged while presiding over the discussion.

The Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (Bilia) and National Committee of Arpita Sampatti Pratirodh Andolon (vested property resist movement) jointly organised the discussion at the Bilia auditorium in the city.

"Out of 6,43,140 acres of vested property across the country, a total of 4,45,726 acres have ended up in encroachment as the government lost control over this property," said renowned economist Prof Abul Barkat citing a government statistics in his keynote paper.

But as the government itself has admitted it has control over only 1-1.5 lakh acres out of 21 acres of vested property, it means that more than 98 percent of property has been gobbled up by the grabbers, Prof Barkat said.

Declaring the Vested Property Act as anti-constitutional and anti-human rights, he also said the Act violates five rights of the people -- economic opportunities, social facilities, political freedom, transparency guarantee and protective security.

"Seventy-two percent grabbers are involved in the BNP, while 11 percent are in the Awami League," Barkat pointed out.

Barrister Aminul Islam said the problem was created as lawyers, economists and other experts were not involved when the law and policy were made in parliament.

Justice KM Sobhan, Justice Naimuddin Ahmed, Kamal Lohani, Advocate Subrata Chowdhury and several members of the minority group, who lost their property, were present.

Withdraw case

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withdrawal of the case filed by the law minister against the secretary of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

PSP Convenor Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud made the demand at a press conference at Bangladesh Bar Council library.

He said the PSP has postponed its seminar styled "Politicisation of Administration: Crisis and Remedy" scheduled for July 31 at Jatiya Press Club in the wake of the lawsuit.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed was scheduled to attend the seminar as the chief guest. But the PSP decided to cancel it as Moudud filed the case against SCBA Secretary Enayetur Rahim, Rokan added.

Moudud on Tuesday filed a defamation suit against the SCBA secretary on charge of making "false statement" on him in connection with the much-talked-about presidential amnesty for Mohiuddin Ahmed Jhintu.

Rokan said the PSP has expressed solidarity with the SCBA demand for immediate withdrawal of the suit.

In reply to a query, he said the PSP executive committee will decide about the next course of action if the case was not withdrawn.

Rokan said everybody has the right to file a case, but one should not file such a suit considering the greater interest of the nation. He however declined to comment on the case as it is now on trial.

On issuance of warrant and filing the case at 3:00pm, he said this would not happen if the magistracy were under the Supreme Court and the legislative free from the executive.

The SCBA secretary on Wednesday secured anticipatory bail from the High Court (HC) in the defamation suit.

He surrendered before the HC after the chief metropolitan magistrate, Dhaka issued a warrant of arrest against him.

The SCBA secretary, Dr Kamrul Hassan Khan, PSP member secretary, and ZI Khan Panna, central member, among others, attended the press briefing.

Caretaker govt

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caretaker government is not an agenda topic for the conference.

In a press statement, Sproule said the conference titled "Conference on International Best Practices for the Conduct of Free and Fair Parliamentary Elections" is expected to take place in late 2005 or early 2006.

"Indeed, agenda topics to be discussed are technical in their nature and do not include discussion of any reform issues currently being proposed," said the statement.

"…my Tuesday Group colleagues' comments on caretaker government reforms have been strictly limited to urging the sponsors of the reforms and the government to meet and discuss the issue in parliament or elsewhere," it said.

"None of our members has commented on the merits of the legal or constitutional reforms…and the caretaker government system is simply not an agenda item for the Elections Conference," the statement said.

The topics of the conference will include development of a reliable and transparent voter list, listing and standards of conduct for candidates, management of polling centres, counting of votes, transmission and aggregation of results, and steps to prevent multiple voting.

The Tuesday Group consists of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the ambassador of the European Commission and the United Nations Resident Co-ordinator.

London did not deserve

FROM PAGE 20

dinner Evan, his girlfriend Stepheny, David and I, all my old friends in Leeds. After a few light moments of reminiscing the university days, the talks palpably switch back to the 7/7 and beyond; the Labour's foreign policy, the race tension and all. I notice the stiff upper lips in them of fears and anxieties.

Evan, who now works in a computer firm, says he and his girlfriend will never go on the Tube together; they love each other too much to be separated in a suicide bombing. At first we laugh, then we look down at the table. For some, life might be like that from now on.

In the quite upper class neighbourhood of Flodden Road of Oval, the quaint appearance of the detached house draped in the shade of oak and frilled by rosemary only reveals the cosy inside and not the tension.

In the drawing room graced with Victorian time furniture blacked huge oak tables and book shelves, a very old Bible cut out with pictures in hard and thick paper on the side table Lord Eric Evebury and his wife sip on tea.

"It's not like the Second World War," the lord says, reflecting on his long past. "It's not like the IRA era. It's new to London." He takes a pause to, maybe, call up the memory and find the exact words.

"First of all, you don't have an enemy now," he says finally. "We are up against a faceless enemy without a single point of existence. We knew the Nazis, now we don't know who they are or where they are. They are not geographically existing. We had a bomb falling just behind my house during the war and we were not really scared."

Mark, an unemployed self-made leftist who does not support the Labour, feels very much the same way and even more. His eyes burn, his voice pitches high and his thin body moves to and fro as he argues: "It's not Iraq, nor Palestine. It's just that these people hate the Western way of life, it's just that they want the whole world to become Muslims. That is why 9/11 happened."

The British whites, the Englishmen as we call them, are today in a deep trauma and soul-searching. The uncertainty that has gripped their lives is likely to stay for quite a long time, if not forever. The black Thursdays and then the finds of more bombs and then the extensiveness of the whole terror network and then the constant media coverage these are making life nervous. Londoners now ask: How do we live with all this?

Britain that has gone through the blitzkrieg and IRA bombings are faced with a new kind of violence it has not witnessed before. "It is this aspect of suicide bombing that makes the situation so alarming," says Dr Charles Tannock, a member of the European Parliament. "Europe has witnessed terrorism and bomb blasts before, but not suicide bombings."

And the reaction to the outrageous behaviour is mostly unified fight them out in a united way as Ken Livingstone said immediately after the 7/7 : "They seek to divide the Londoners. They seek to turn Londoners against each other. Londoners will not be divided by this cowardly act. They will stand together in solidarity."

There are some gung-ho calls, very small in number and often overlooked by the Englishman, at least outwardly. The mainstream media have focused on the need for tackling the terrorism and talked about what to do about the asylum seekers and hate preachers as the identify of the 12/7 would-be bombers' identity has shown they came to this country as refugees. Pictures of clerics such as Omar Bakri are there and invariably, pictures of hijam decked women protesting the attacks have been blown up on all pages. The tabloids have been restrained, unlike anytime before, in saying what they say, not hurting the Muslims although inside page banners sometimes read : If you don't like us, go away from here.

The outward angry and hateful reactions to the Muslims are sometimes manifested as I found out at Bekash Restaurant at Wickford at Essex. An angry Englishman told the waiter: "F***k the hell out of here, you Pakis. Why you make your money here to blow us apart? Don't make us Londonistan."

"We're brought up on certainties and now we have none," the agitated man's girlfriend tries to reason. "You see when the IRA used to blast in London, they used to call the police and the press before doing that so that people could be evacuated. They wanted to blow up installations, not rip through the guts of innocent people. Now, these people want to draw blood."

Outside in the drizzle of the sad afternoon, red double-deckers roll by and a weary Londoner skates through the afternoon crowd unheedful of the fume inside the restaurant.

"We did not deserve it," says another customer. "London did not deserve it. We organised the largest protest in the world over Iraq. Why did they do it then?"

Sitting in the window of the hotel, I suddenly wish I was not sitting there.

Jhintu no stranger

FROM PAGE 1

In a newspaper interview, the former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader admitted that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia tasked him with re-organising the ruling BNP's Sweden chapter and promised to try to get 'justice' for him.

The interview was run in the February 2004 issue of the Probashir Kantho, a Sweden-based Bangla newspaper, with a picture showing Jhintu and Khaleda at a function in Geneva in December 2003.

In the interview, Jhintu said the government of HM Ershad also offered him pardon if he joined Jatiya Party, but he turned down the offer.

He said, during the 1980s, when he was hiding in Bangkok, former BNP secretary general Abdus Salam Talukder, Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas and former minister Goyeshwar Chandra Roy sent him separate letters, advising to flee to the Europe.

Convicted in a double murder case, Jhintu received presidential pardon on January 13 this year, just 10 days after his surrender to a Bangladesh court. He returned to the country 23 years after the judgement.

The government came under severe flak from many quarters for arranging the clemency for Jhintu who along with Kamal, Shaheed and Manik were sentenced to death for the double murders.

In face of the extensive censure, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed disclaimed his involvement in the clemency process and said he did not and does not know Jhintu. But some pictures released in Dhaka Wednesday show him with Jhintu in a meeting and a reception given to him by Jhintu in Sweden.

A picture also shows Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman accompanied by Jhintu at a party meeting on April 10 last at Sheraton Hotel in Stockholm.

Although the law minister claimed Jhintu was not named in the first information report (FIR) of the murder case, Jhintu said himself that the case was filed with Demra Police Station against him along with Ruhul Amin Hawlader, Arif, Shantu, Kamal, Shaheed and Manik.

The Probashir Kantho also described Jhintu's life in hiding since his conviction in 1982 by a martial law court.

Jhintu told the Kantho he approached the BNP bigwigs during its 1991-96 regime seeking pardon of the capital punishment, but before everything could be arranged, Awami League came to power.

"I went to Geneva for organisational work recently [December 2003] where I met Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and told her about the sentence delivered as part of a conspiracy. I told her I was innocent and was linked to the murder for my involvement with BNP. She assured me of trying her best to arrange justice for me," the newspaper quoted Jhintu.

After Jhintu, Kamal, Shaheed and Manik were awarded death penalty, all of them except Kamal went into hiding. Kamal, who was already in jail custody, was hanged immediately after the judgement, he said.

"The government of Ershad told us we would be pardoned if we surrender. Ruhul Amin, Arif and Shantu surrendered and joined Jatiya Party. Manik also did the same. But I did not compromise my ideology [of BNP] and went to India," the interview reads.

"Shaheed later went to Dhaka, but I did not change my decision and had secret contact with Mirza Abbas and Goyeshwar Chandra Roy," Jhintu went on.

He claimed, when he was in Bangkok, police arrested him for 'beating up Major Khaled, one of the killers of Ziaur Rahman," but he came out of jail paying fine.

He received asylum in Sweden in 1989 under the Refugee Law of Geneva Convention.

Jhintu said during her Geneva tour Khleda Zia learned about the factional conflicts in BNP's Sweden chapter and asked him and Akhteruzzaman Fanu to work unitedly and reorganise the chapter. Jhintu later became its president.

MOUDUD TERMS AMNESTY JUST

The president granted amnesty to Jhintu rightly exercising the power conferred on him by the country's constitution, reiterated Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday.

He mentioned that the previous AL government appointed as a High Court judge a man who had once been sentenced to death by a military court. The president pardoned this person as per an AL demand, he told newsmen at his secretariat office.

Besides, Abul Kasem, a co-convict of Jhintu, surrendered to the court after five years in 1987. The then president also pardoned him 24 hours after his surrender, said the law minister. So, the law ministry did everything right in case of Jhintu, he added.

On the picture run by the press yesterday showing him with Jhintu at a function in Sweden, the minister said it was taken in April, after Jhintu was pardoned by the president.

Moudud said it is usual that when a minister visits a country aboard the expatriate Bangladeshis call on him. "The minister is not supposed to know their identities -- who among them are convicts and who are innocent," he rationalised.

Moudud declined to say anything on the defamation case he has filed against Supreme Court Bar Association Secretary Enayetur Rahim, as it is a subjudice matter.

EX-LAW MINISTER COUNTERS MOUDUD

Former law minister Abdul Matin Khashru yesterday dismissed Moudud's allegation that a convict awarded with capital punishment was appointed a High Court judge during the AL rule.

"Moudud has made the comment to disown his link to the presidential clemency to Jhintu. It's not only a false comment but also politically motivated and an outcome of political hatred," Khashru said in a press statement.

As the law minister of the previous AL government, Khasru unequivocally said no convict was appointed a judge by our government, let alone a man sentenced to death.

Khasru said not only as a minister, as a lawyer too, Moudud knows very well the difference between mercy and acquittal.

In an oblique reference, he quipped, "It's not possible for a man who was convicted for corruption and obtained mercy by changing his political identity to understand the difference."