

Dhaka can take lead

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Centre for National and Regional Studies (CNRS), the seminar was attended by scholars from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and host Bangladesh.

The speakers said Bangladesh has set an example by establishing parliamentary democracy, ensuring equal rights of men and women, and empowerment of women.

Condemning the August 17 serial blasts across Bangladesh, they said it is now the prime task of the government to identify the criminals and eliminate their roots. The perpetrators hit at the core spirit of independence and sovereignty, and sentiment of the people of Bangladesh, they reasoned.

The seminar adopted the Dhaka Declaration calling upon Asian Muslim nations to take the lead in upholding the spirit of Islam.

The declaration said Bangladesh has been a moderate Muslim country, and it could take the leadership for waging a campaign to uphold the Islamic spirit.

"Bangladesh is a unique example of communal harmony which can be replicated in many countries, especially the Muslim states," it added.

The Dhaka Declaration in unequivocal terms said there is no room for militancy or terrorism in Islam, which preaches peace and harmony for mankind. "Islam disapproves attacks on innocent people to pursue any political, social or religious objectives or goals," it said.

The declaration condemned the August 17 blasts in Bangladesh, 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US and the July 7 bomb attacks in London. It said rights of the oppressed Muslims cannot be realised by any act of terrorism, it will rather severely frustrate their just causes.

Taking part in the discussion, Sri Lankan Dr MA Cader said Muslim countries need an ideal state, and Bangladesh can be a model by building future leadership. He urged the Muslims around the globe to update their knowledge about Islam through "Ijtihad".

He said commitment of a Muslim towards Islam is the religion's greatest strength, divisions and internal factions are its worst weakness and western media and intellectual campaigns its greatest threat.

Dr Soherin Saleheen from Indonesia said Bangladesh is far ahead among the Muslim countries, and expressed the hope the people of this country would continue upholding its moderate image by maintaining Islamic values.

Singaporean risk management expert and leading Islamic thinker Dr Shamsul Anwar Mohammad Halip said, "We the Muslims have to change our mindset and move for knowledge-based power and invest more for human resources development."

He said the Muslim countries should take steps to develop their sciences in the fields of economics, sciences and technology, and provide modern education to their people to establish peace, progress and harmony so that they can compete with the people of Germany, the US and Japan.

Prof M Shamsul Ali of Southeast University strongly supported reforms in madrasa education in Bangladesh. He suggested subjects related to mathematics, sciences, sociology, economics for at least up to Dakhil (SSC) level and specialisation on Islamic subjects at higher level.

"I don't want to discredit madrasa education, but I don't see the future of Islamic Ummah until the madrasas produce physicians, economists, engineers and students that take civil service examinations."

Prof Ali opposed identifying extremist militants as "fundamentalists" saying it is "a wrong adjective for wrong persons". "A person who believes in the fundamental principles of universal peace and brotherhood is actually a fundamentalist."

Khatib of Dhanmondi Tagwa Mosque Syed Zulfiqar Zahur said the Islamic religious leaders including those in Bangladesh had committed two major mistakes that affected the image of Islam.

The first one was done during the World War II by not protesting against the genocide of thousands of Jews in gas chambers, he said.

The Muslim leaders of Bangladesh

made the same mistake in 1971 by not raising their voice or taking any stand against the atrocities on the Bengalis by the Pakistani occupation forces during the Liberation War.

Rather a section of the Ulema (Islamic scholars) sided with the occupation forces. Their mistake in 1971 keeps the nation divided still now. They should apologise for their mistake and join the mainstream."

Turning to the move of a section of Muslims in Bangladesh, he said chanting slogans in the name of Jihad is suicidal, and urged them to toleave this path.

"We are far behind everything, we are poor in knowledge and finance and not able to do any major things for us. They [non-Muslim powerful states] are launching missiles using satellite technology, while we are chanting slogans for Jihad in the streets or staying in caves; we must come back from such paths of Jihad."

"Let's be enlightened Alem [scholar], develop our Bangladesh and stand as a moderate, democratic and prosperous nation."

"Muslims in the world must be enlightened through knowledge, education and technology to get rid of current disastrous condition."

Former director general of Islamic Foundation Syed Ashraf Ali said there is a huge number of issues, which are strikingly similar in all the major scriptures of different faiths.

"The representatives from different faiths should sit together to weed out the man-made differences and antagonism among the followers of different faiths."

Dr Hasan Mohammad, chairman of political science department of Chittagong University, said democracy must be introduced in all Muslim countries. He also called for establishing Bangladesh as an ideal country in the world.

Turning the 1971 Liberation War a fight against injustice, he asked madrasa teachers to be rational and logical and come forward to bring reforms in their education system to survive in the current global trend.

"Madrasa students will realise which path brings peace and welfare if general education is introduced in their institutions. If there is modern education, madrasa students will be able to choose their way whether they should go for militancy or move for peace and welfare," Dr Hasan added.

He said everything should not be 'Islamised' in the name of 'Islamisation' of knowledge. "Science or other knowledge of one particular time may be proved wrong at another point of time. But Islamic values and spirit are universal and unchangeable," he said.

He urged the Islamic world to strengthen the policy of co-existence with the followers of other faiths and opinions. He said Bangladesh has set an example in terms of its political and democratic practices and other Muslim countries can follow its footsteps.

Prof Mostafizur Rahman of Arabic department at Dhaka University observed there must be a role of a big country behind the recent occurrence in Bangladesh to weaken the country and destroy its image.

He however contradicted introducing Bangladesh as a moderate Muslim country saying others had given this title. "We are not a moderate Muslim country... we are truly an ideal Muslim country," he added.

Prof Mostafizur termed the current practice of Islam as "Muslims' Islam, and not

Islam's Islam that is based on the Qur'an and Hadith", which preach peace, fraternity and progress.

Morshed

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He said Bangladesh has been sponsoring a resolution in the past few years in the general assembly on a "Culture of Peace" that seeks to develop understanding among different religions and faiths.

Morshed reaffirmed Bangladesh's full support to the just cause of the Palestinians and their right to have a state of their own with Jerusalem as its capital.

Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury, ambassador and permanent representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, was present.

Resources Division (IRD) and Postal Department.

On alleged violation of tender rules and holding the SPCBL hostage to their whims, MD of HBL Amin Helaly first claimed that Ahead had bought the hot stamping machines from Artfol Company of UK.

But when this correspondent showed him documentary evidence of his paying money to the HSI in Dhaka for retaining the previous bidder's used machines, Helaly said, "Listen, it's a matter of \$2,400 only. What we could do, we could spend \$2,400 as freight charge for shipping these machines out of the country first and then re-import the same. SPCBL required us to go for fresh import of machines, instead, we procured those locally."

Helaly however wondered that public money is wasted in paying the machines' costs to private parties. "SPCBL is such a fool that each year it pays for the (hot stamping) machines but it never owns one."

While the SPCBL does not own these machines on the logic that reuse of the machines for the second year could pose threats to highly secured holographic foils, it allowed private firms to get away with the violation of rules.

When contacted, Awal said he is not authorised to tell the press anything about it.

Talking to this correspondent recently, Bangladesh Bank Executive Director Khurshid-ul-Alam, also ex-officio MD of the SPCBL, admitted the allegations but said, "I have my limitations. The final approval came from the board (Board of Directors)."

The central bank governor chairs the SPCBL's Board of Directors comprising representatives from the finance and home ministries, Internal

Fresh agitation

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rally was addressed, among others, by journalist Saidur Rahman, Mohila Parishad General Secretary Kolpona Roy, Barind Development Forum Director Fayezullah Chowdhury, Zahangir Alam Aakash, Debashish Pramanik Debu, Prof Rozetti Nasrin and lawyer Khairul Alam.

The speakers protested the role of police in the investigation and demanded punishment to the culprits.

Mafruz Khatun Mili was raped and killed by a gang of miscreants on May 3 when she was alone at their house in the city.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Department, Rajshahi, submitted the final report of Mili rape and murder case, seeking release of three accused-- Fazle Rabi Lion, Saduzzaman Minar, and Fazlur Rahman.

Mili's family members alleged that some leaders of the ruling alliance influenced the investigation into the case.

JCD men

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The JCD men--Niloy Partha, Atanu, Sabu, Tanvir and an outsider--also threatened employees' association president Raton Lal Dey and general secretary Arun Chandra Roy with death.

Tension is running high at the hall following the incident.

Hall Provost Prof Nim Chandra Bhowmik, the chief guest of the reception programme, was not present at the function.

One wounded

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BSF personnel of Moshshampur camp on the Indian side shot four rounds of bullets at them, critically wounding Dalim.

BDR sent a note to the BSF protesting the incident as well as intensified patrol near the spot. Lt Col Mabub Ahmed Zakaria, commanding officer (CO) of the Jhenidah BDR battalion, visited the spot.

Hasina

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implemented, it will not be able to come to power by rigging votes," Hasina said while talking to Awami Jubo League publicity secretaries from different districts at the party's Dhanmondi office.

She also asked the young leaders and workers of Jubo League, the youth wing of AL, to present comparative pictures between the periods of AL and the present government to the countrymen and thus counter the government's propaganda against the AL.

The BNP-Jamaat government also carried out propaganda against the AL during the last parliamentary elections to legalise the widespread vote rigging that cost the AL at least 100 seats, the opposition leader said.

She said the present government was more interested in importing which gives them opportunities for vast corruption.

"The use of army persons for distributing VGF [Vulnerable Groups Feeding] cards proves that the ruling party men, from ministers to the grassroots level leaders and workers, do not even hesitate to steal the meals of the poor," Hasina said.

The opposition leader hoped that all five basic needs of the people can be met by 2021, when Bangladesh will celebrate the golden jubilee of her independence.

AL presidium member Toifal Ahmed, Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanok and General Secretary Mirza Azam were present at the meeting.

Earlier, at a daylong workshop on publicity and publication participated by the AL publicity secretaries, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said a national programme of the 14-party alliance will be announced by Ramadan.

Jubo League organised the workshop at the city's Rajuk auditorium. Prof Mizanur Rahman of Dhaka University presented the keynote paper at the workshop.

AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Kader, Dhaka University Teachers' Association President AAMS Arefin Siddique and Jubo League leaders also spoke at the programme.

Elderly man

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The body is kept at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) morgue but no one turned up to identify the body till yesterday evening.

In another incident, mugger Anis Sikder, 30, died at DMCH at 4:45am yesterday. He died two days after being admitted there with burn and assault injuries all over.

Morgue sources said somebody beat Anis up severely and injured him with burning cigarettes.

Relatives of the victim quoted police as saying that Anis died of mob beating before his arrest. Relatives claim this to be a lie.

"Police themselves beat him up and injured him with burning cigarettes, as he is dead now they are trying to blame the mob," victim's father Rabiul Sikder told this correspondent.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police in a press release on Thursday said they arrested Anis in a private car and found a snatched mobile phone and another phone.

The arrest was made minutes after Anis and his two associates snatched the mobile from Monirul Islam near Azampur Eidgah area in Uttara Sector 6, the press release said.

The police, however, did not mention anything about the mob beating up Anis in their September 22 press release.

As Anis' condition deteriorated in police custody Uttara police admitted him to the DMCH nine hours after his arrest.

AL likely to ask Hanif

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upazila election officers which the main opposition termed a bid to politicise the Election Commission ahead of the next general elections.

"We have taken Mohammad Hanif's interview with a Bangla daily seriously and the party leaders may ask him for explanation... Hanif is trying to damage the party with his acts," said an AL leader on condition of anonymity.

On the recruitment of the upazila election officers, he said the central working committee meeting may take a hard line on the appointments and ask the government to cancel them.

Mohammad Hanif, also former Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) mayor, in an interview with a Bangla daily on September 22 suggested that the party high command should officially abandon its secularist principles.

He said it was time for the party to replace its secularist principles with the slogan of "freedom of religion and religious practices."

Hanif's statement came at a time when the AL is trying to form an electoral alliance with different secular democratic forces in the country against the Islamist alliance of BNP and Jamaat.

On such stance of a senior party leader who has been with the AL since 1960s, another AL leader said the party high command's signal for not giving nomination in the next parliamentary elections to both him

Khulna 'mastermind'

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arrested one more suspected cadre of banned JMB in Joypurhat in connection with the August 17 blasts.

The arrestee is Ziaur Rahman Zia, 25, son of Abdus Samad of Panchurchak village in sadar upazila.

Police said they had arrested Zia following confessional statements of Jahangir and Rabiul, arrested earlier for their alleged links to the blast.

Police have so far arrested 29 suspected JMB cadres in the district.

BOGRA

Police yesterday raided Narul al-Hizab Madrasa, allegedly used as a camp to train women militants, and found camouflage trousers and a cap, reports our Bogra correspondent.

Police conducted the raid following statement of Abdur Razzak, arrested on Thursday in connection with the blasts.

CHARGE-SHEETS LIKELY FOR 2DISTS

UNB adds: Police will press charges in six cases in connection with the bomb explosions in two districts early next month, sources said.

As many as 152 cases have been filed so far with different police stations in the wake of the blasts.

Meanwhile, detectives continue quizzing JMB cadre Mohammad Ershad, arrested in Dharmal early yesterday. DB sources said Ershad gave important information about the serial blasts.

March

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to his death in 'crossfire', the report says.

Kamrul's father has feuds with other people over property in other areas, another possible reason behind the killing, the report adds.

Samsul Islam, Kamrul's brother, told The Daily Star, "The report was made not only to confuse the investigation but also to divert the case in another direction to save the OC."

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) forms today a human chain at 10:00am in front of the High Court, demanding arrest of the OC and other accused.

Meantime, the DMP police commissioner told The Daily Star last night he has not yet read the report. Action will be taken after he reads it, he added.

Dhaka got a bad name

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resource, either foreign or domestic, can help achieve MDGs without improvement in governance and institutions in any country.

He called upon both the donors and the recipients to carry out their respective obligations to improve effectiveness of aid. "Aid should go where it is needed and who can make just use of it."

The finance minister pointed out that appropriate use of aid would always be a problem for countries with weak institutions and bad governance.

"Lack of absorptive capacity also will make aid counterproductive," he said, adding that aid should be performance and result-based.

He suggested that both the donors and the recipients have a joint responsibility to improve aid effectiveness.

Saifur said the present problem of debt relief or debt cancellation for many countries in Africa and Latin America arose only because of ineffective use of aid in these countries. He claimed the scenario in Asia, including Bangladesh, to be different.

"Bangladesh has a good track record of utilisation of aid and it is gradually reducing dependence on foreign aid," he told the meeting.

The minister apprised the participants that the current net aid flow into Bangladesh constitutes about 2 per cent of its GDP, which he termed insignificant as compared to the aid-dependence of so-called highly indebted poor countries in Africa and Latin America.

He emphasised the importance of real country ownership of the development programmes and mentioned that still, in many cases,

and his son prompted Hanif to make such controversial statement.

The AL insiders said Hanif is also unhappy with the party high command for unofficially seizing his power as the party's Dhaka city unit president following conflicts with its General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

Hanif's son Sayeed Khokon lost the last parliamentary elections in Dhaka-7 constituency to BNP leader and the present DCC Mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka. This time, AL is considering to change its strategy for the seat as former president and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh chief Badruddoza Chowdhury is going to contest in the next election from the constituency.

"If the Awami League forms any kind of election alliance with Bikalpa Dhara, it will extend support to the latter's candidate in the constituency by dropping its own candidate," an AL leader said.

"Besides, Hanif is also sceptic about getting party nomination in the next mayoral election," said the AL leader. "His proposal to party chief to contest from three seats in Dhaka in the next election also did not get any positive response," he added.

Meanwhile, talking to the reporters at his residence, Hanif yesterday said he will not join any other party if the AL expels him from the statement.

He said he will explain his position to the party forum and will take steps to motivate the party in favour of his opinion.

Among them, five in Satkhira and one in Kushtia "have been detected", the sources added.

IOJ MEET

State Minister for Home Lutfozzaman Babar yesterday said no innocent people is being harassed or arrested in connection with the serial blasts.

People are being arrested on the basis of specific information and evidence, and if anyone was found innocent, they were released immediately. Babar said at a meeting with the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) delegation led by Moulana Fazlul Haq Aminine.

The meeting held at the minister's residence was also attended by IOJ leaders Rakib, Mufti Mohammad Uakkas MP, Shahinur Pasha Chowdhury MP, Abdul Latif Nizami, Junaid Al Habib, Sharfuddin Ahmed Junaid, Mufti Tyeib, Fajjullah, Lokman Hossain and Mohammad Hossain.

The IOJ leaders urged the minister to bring the real culprits to book and be cautious about arresting suspected people.

The state minister urged the IOJ leaders to cooperate with the government to find out the real culprits involved in the August 17 bombings.

Meanwhile, detectives continue quizzing JMB cadre Mohammad Ershad, arrested in Dharmal early yesterday. DB sources said Ershad gave important information about the serial blasts.

March

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nized the march. "It is now time, once again, for the British people to step forward into the streets and insist that this time we will not be ignored."

Rallies were planned, too, in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Florence, Rome, Paris and Madrid.

In a hitch for some coming to the protest, 13 Amtrak trains running between New York and Washington were delayed for up to three hours Saturday morning for repair of overhead electrical lines. Protest organizers said that held up thousands coming to the rally.

development policies and conditions were thrust upon the recipients.

Sometimes 'one size fits to all' kind of policies are imposed without understanding the sociopolitical realities of the countries, Saifur told the discussion meeting sponsored by the multilateral donor agencies, in unsparing criticism of their aid policies and prescriptions.

"There's no single answer to many development issues," Saifur said and categorically mentioned that "rigidity of conditionalities, cross-conditionalities by different donors and imposition of political conditionalities in policy matters tremendously affect aid effectiveness."

Political conditions by some development partners also affect aid effectiveness. "Every country should be given opportunities to build up broad-based support for reforms," he said, adding that unpredictability in aid flow is another roadblock for effective use of foreign aid and it creates unanticipated problems in macroeconomic management in many countries.

Lack of harmonised procedures amongst donors and between the donors and recipient countries is also hindering effective utilisation of aid.

Earlier in the day, World Bank Vice-President for South Asia region Praful C Patel, along with a team of his sector directors, met the finance minister to discuss the bank's assistance portfolio for Bangladesh.

Major issues covered were PRSP, proposed power-sector investment programme, and country assistance strategy (CAS) which are expected to be approved by December.

No decision yet

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Parishad, to prepare voter list.

"Some interested people advised the Election Commission from their own point of view about preparation of voter list that has possibly created misunderstanding about the involvement of Gram Sarkars," yesterday's EC press release said.

"The field-level enumerators, supervisors and revising authorities are being appointed according to the rules as in the previous years," it said, adding that many government agencies, including local government bodies, used to help the EC prepare voter list.

Coordination committees at district and upazila levels headed by Deputy Commissioner and Upazila Nirbahi Officer have already been formed and all the first class officers of the district have been appointed as committee members, the release said.

Notification has already been circulated for appointing registration officers and assistant registration officers for preparing voter list while one or more assistant registration officers are being appointed for each union, pourasava and city corporation ward, the release added.

Myanmar

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huge potential. Discussion will be held on possible steps that can be taken to raise the volume to \$100 million in next one year.

Also, the two countries are expected to discuss about the natural gas pipeline project between Myanmar and India through Bangladesh.

India is to buy gas from offshore block A-1 in Myanmar's Rakhine state and means are being sought to transport the gas from Myanmar to India's West Bengal state via Bangladesh.

The issue of illegal movement of militants and arms transportation, which is straining the bilateral economic and diplomatic relations, is also expected to be discussed.

Myanmar and Bangladesh have maintained exchange of high-level visits in recent years.

In December 2002, Myanmar SPDC Chairman Senior-General Than Shwe visited Dhaka while Prime Minister Khaleda Zia visited Yangon in 2003, during which the two countries signed two memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on the establishment of a joint trade commission and an agreement on coastal and maritime shipping.

Asian workers

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Protestors said they had not been paid for between five and six months, and put their average monthly wages at about 600 dirhams (164 dollars).

The action prompted the labor ministry to exert pressure on the employer which agreed to pay two months of wages for the time being.

But being paid on time is not the only problem faced by the workers who also widely complain about work and living conditions at the camps which suffer from chronic water cuts.

Workers said they lived 18 per air-conditioned makeshift wooden lodging of 30 square meters (323 square feet) at the camp, which the AFP correspondent was promptly asked to leave.

"In order to take a shower, many times we have to walk to another camp" because of the cuts, said one worker, waiting next to the camp fence where his washed clothes were laid to dry in the sun.

One Indian worker said "I have been in Dubai for two years, and I have been working nine hours a day. I work overtime hours which are paid like regular hours."

It is no perhaps no surprise that workers do not protest more often.

"Some people tell us not to speak about work and living conditions, and advise us to stay quiet or else we could have our work visas cancelled," said one of the workers.

But delays in paying salaries remain their main concern for obvious reasons. "Our families in our home countries are the main victims, as they stay without any money for months," explained a worker.

Income tax

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along with one's tax return, otherwise a tax return will not be accepted.