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BDB President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury shakes hands with British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury at an Iftar party at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Jatiya Oikya Manch Convenor Dr Kamal Hossain and Australian High Commissioner Lorraine Barker.

Hold national dialogue to forge consensus on electoral reforms

Urge Jatiya Oikya Manch, BDB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Oikya Manch and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) yesterday called for an immediate national dialogue to forge a consensus on electoral reforms, saying reforms are a must to ensure a truly impartial caretaker government and election commission.

"Making the society free from terrorism, corruption, communalism and poverty is possible only through free and fair elections, which will help form an effective parliament with honest, competent and patriotic representatives," said a joint statement of the two parties.

Jatiya Oikya Manch Convenor Dr Kamal Hossain read out the message at an Iftar party for foreign diplomats at

the Spectra Convention Centre in the city.

He said the electoral process must be protected from partisan abuse of the state machinery, influence of black money and illegal arms.

Dr Kamal also called on all to rise above partisan, communal and sectional interests to save the nation from the present crisis, which puts mutual respect, tolerance and communal harmony at stake.

"It has been a source of national pride that people of all faiths -- Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Buddhists -- live in harmony, but this communal harmony is now threatened as vested quarters, driven by the urge for power, have been exploiting peo-

ple's religious sentiments to foment intolerance and hatred and resort to violence and terrorism."

"We desire peace, tolerance and justice, which is shared by all of us. We yearn for a Bangladesh where freedom and justice can be realised, and for this quest to succeed we need to work unitedly on finding effective solutions to the problems confronting us," the eminent juristsaid.

He said the nation needs healthy and enlightened politics, which will enable the nation to build a glorious future.

Calling for accountability of the political parties, he said, "We should commit ourselves to declaration of assets by all those in leadership posi-

tions and their family members. Parties should publish audited accounts and disclose sources of financing."

Parties must not only renounce the patronising of godfathers and mastans and terrorism, but also disband armed cadres and refrain from deploying musclemen in educational institutions and other spheres of national life, said Dr Kamal in the joint message.

BDB President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury gave a welcome speech.

Charge d'Affaires of the US Embassy Judith Chammas, British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, Australian High Commissioner Lorraine Barker and ambassadors of other countries attended the Iftar party.