

Terrorism figures in OIC Summit: FM

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The issue of terrorism was considered extensively at the 3rd extraordinary summit of OIC in Makkah and all leaders strongly condemned the acts of violence and terror being carried out by a few misguided individuals and groups in the name of Islam.

Leaders at the summit, which endorsed the proposal to set up an International Centre for Counter-Terrorism to serve as a network in tracking down those elements involved in acts of terror, took an unanimous stand against those engaged in tarnishing the image of Islam.

Speaking at a press briefing yesterday on the outcome of the just concluded summit, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia underscored Bangladesh's firm position on terrorism and urged the OIC to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism in all forms and manifestations and take concrete measures to counter it.

Khaleda also underscored the need for establishing a multi-lingual OIC electronic media to reach out to peoples across the world in an effort to fight against the alarming phenomena of Islamophobia.

Morshed said the PM's speech and proposals were highly acclaimed by the OIC leaders, who supported the setting up of an OIC electronic media to inform the world people about Islam and the message of the holy Quran as well as counter the propaganda against Islam.

Khaleda in her interventions at the summit also emphasised the

need for empowerment of huge human resources of the Ummah through education in engineering and technology and sought further support for Islamic University of Technology in Bangladesh to strengthen the institution.

The foreign minister said a major outcome of the summit was that the entire Islamic Ummah was unanimous in expressing their outrage at the acts of the few who have hijacked the true image of Islam and the path of peace and goodness to give it a bad name.

OIC leaders also expressed their firm resolve to unitedly confront the misguided groups and put an end to their efforts to defame Islam, he added.

He said the preambular paragraph of the final communiqué reads: "The summit reaffirmed that Islam is a religion of moderation which rejects bigotry and extremism, and underlines the importance of combating deviant ideology using all available means, besides developing educational curricula that firmly establish the values of understanding, tolerance, dialogue and multilateralism in accordance with the tenets of Islam."

Morshed said the summit highly appreciated Khaleda's decision to project the actual teachings of Islam and promote tolerance through the Imams of mosques in Bangladesh.

He said the leaders of Islamic countries laid emphasis on the united efforts of political leaders, academicians and civil society members in the fight against terrorism and this was reflected in Makkah Declaration.

The foreign minister said terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is a global phenomenon which

is not confined to any particular religion, race, colour or country, and this in no way can be justified or rationalised.

He said the leaders vowed to develop their respective laws of the land and frame legislation to root out terrorism and stop every single practice leading to the financing or instigating the terrorism.

The Makkah Declaration also called for an orchestrated international effort to combat terrorism, including establishment of an International Counter-Terrorism Centre as endorsed by the Riyadh International Conference on combating terrorism, he added.

Replying to a question, Morshed said the counter-terrorism centre will complement and supplement and not to create any conflict with the UN counter-terrorism body or any other countries' efforts towards eliminating terrorism.

"Rather it would be helpful for all," he added.

He told a questioner that the OIC would soon start talking with the member states to prepare modalities and venue of the counter-terrorism centre.

Morshed also hinted about holding of another extra-ordinary summit of the OIC after the OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting in Azerbaijan to follow up the decisions of the just concluded summit.

Foreign Affairs Advisor Reaz Rahman, Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin and other high officials were present at the briefing.

PM to visit Saarc states next year

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will visit some Saarc countries as Chairperson of the seven-nation grouping during the first half of next year, a foreign ministry source said here yesterday.

The source, however, could not confirm whether her visits would include India and Pakistan. There is pending invitations from both the Saarc countries, the source said.

OVERBOOKING Passengers ransack Ctg Biman office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Some agitated passengers yesterday ransacked the Biman Regional Office at Sholoshahar in the port city.

Sources said they went to wildcat demonstration following cancellation of their flight schedule of Jeddah-bound BG-037 by Biman authorities to make way for some Hajj pilgrims on the flight.

Unable to catch the flight scheduled at around 1:45am yesterday, they became furious at the Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport, went to the Biman office at around 8:00am and ransacked different rooms including that of manager.

A team of Panchlaish Police Station rushed to the spot and managed to calm them down. Sources said the incident occurred due to overbooking of passengers, mainly pilgrims from both Chittagong and Dhaka, in the flight that has 274-seat capacity.

Admitting the fault, Biman District Manager JC Barua said about 66 Jeddah-bound passengers couldn't avail of their schedule flight due to overbooking. "We were instructed by higher authorities not to hamper flight schedules of the pilgrims at any cost. This might have caused the overflow and five to 10 percent overflow or overbooking is quite a normal incident," he told this correspondent yesterday evening adding that alternative flight arrangements for the 66 passengers were already made.

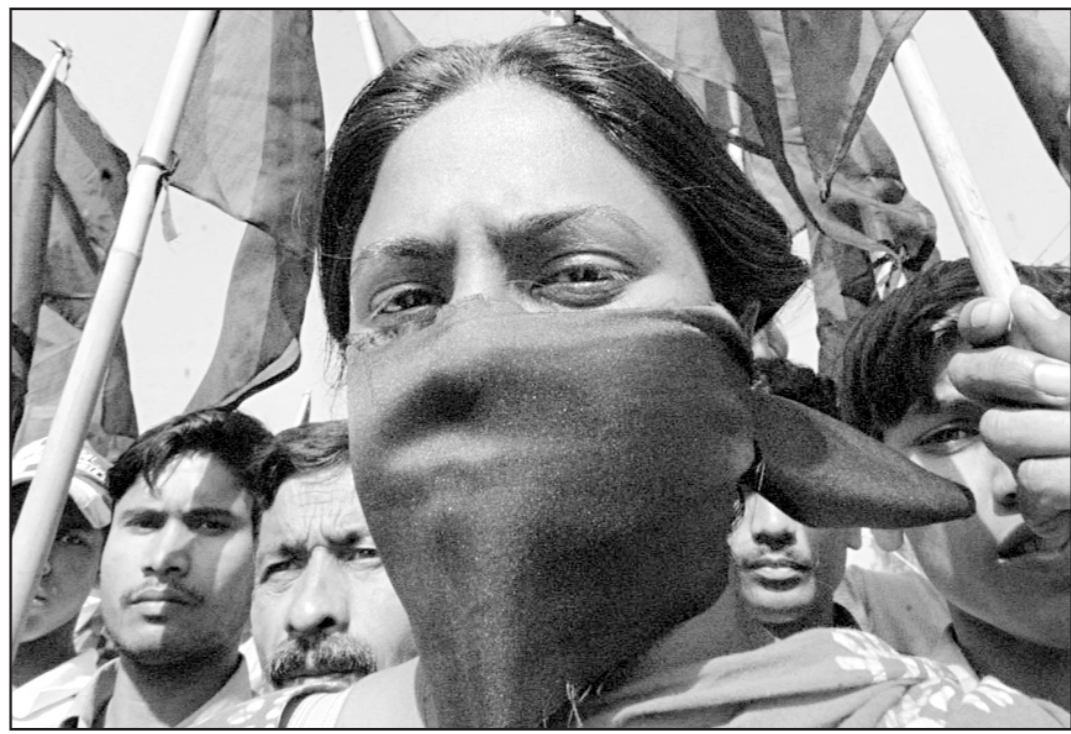


PHOTO: STAR

EPZ workers stage a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding their rights to trade union representation. The workers took out a silent procession on the occasion of World Human Rights Day.

HUMAN RIGHTS FAIR HELD IN CHITTAGONG

'Take strong stand against corruption'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called on every member of society to take a strong stand against corruption, which leads to the violation of human rights.

They also called for removing the corrupt leadership at the grassroots level and forging a movement against corruption.

They were addressing the inaugural ceremony of a Human Rights Fair at the auditorium of the Institute of Engineers in Chittagong city.

The Academy for Educational Development (AED) and the Bangladesh Institute for Theatre Arts in cooperation with a USAID-funded project of Bangladesh Human Rights Advocacy Programme (BHRAP) organised the daylong fair to mark the World Human Rights Day.

The speakers also called for

establishing independent judiciary, anti-corruption commission and election commission and a strong local government system.

Speaking as the chief guest, former chief advisor of a caretaker government Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman said corruption is an obstacle to redressing the violations of human rights.

The judiciary should be made more effective in order to protect and promote the human rights, he said and called on the administration and the people involved in the judicial system to play an active role in this regard.

The Anti-Corruption Commission formed under the pressure of donors also lacks adequate manpower and proper rules and the country is yet to sign the UN Anti-Corruption Convention Charter, he said.

Justice Habibur Rahman

stressed the need for appointing an ombudsman in every sector of the administration to check partisan domination and for amending the Official Secrets Act.

Itefharuzzaman, executive director of the Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), Abul Momen, resident editor of the Prothom Alo in Chittagong, writer Selina Hossain and Gene George, director of USAID, also spoke as special guests.

They underscored the need for political commitment from the highest level of the government to making the anti-corruption commission an independent and effective body.

They also said the movement should be geared towards putting an end to corruption, not against any particular government.

Almost all the problems facing the nation today have resulted from corruption, they said, adding that the people have been deprived of their rights because of corruption.

Presenting some statistics, the speakers said that 36 percent of children had to give bribes for admission to schools and around one third of those receiving stipends had to give bribes for enlisting the names while 54 percent of female students receiving stipends do not get 40 percent of the stipend money.

In the health sector, around one third of the outdoor patients at public hospitals had to give bribes to receive proper treatment and medicines while 54 percent of them had to give bribes to get x-rays and other diagnostic tests done, they said.

Around 78 percent of people deprived of human rights had to bribe police to lodge general diary, the speakers said.

Corruption is contributing to the rise of poverty as it eat away around 7.5 percent of the daily income of general people and 9.5 percent of those living below poverty level, they said.

The South Keraniganj Police Station consists of five units-Konda, Teghuria, Suvadda, Aganagar and Basta. With this, the number of police stations in Dhaka district rose to seven.

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