

'US image around world worsens'

REUTERS, London

The image of the United States has deteriorated around the world in the past year because of issues such as Iraq and prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, according to a poll by the BBC World Service released on Tuesday.

The proportion of people believing the United States has a mainly positive influence in world affairs dropped seven points from a year ago -- to 29 percent from 36, the results from 18 countries that were also polled the previous year showed.

Fifty-two percent thought US influence was mainly negative, up from 47 percent a year ago, the poll found.

The survey, released on the day President George W. Bush gives his State of the Union speech to Congress, found sharp disagreement with US policy on Iraq, which is ravaged by violence nearly four years after the US-led invasion.

In all, 26,381 people were questioned in 25 countries. Almost three in four people disapproved of US policy on Iraq, while two-thirds disapproved of US handling of terrorism suspects held at the Guantanamo Bay camp in Cuba.

"The US administration's recent decision to send more troops to Iraq is at odds with global public opinion ... This policy is likely to further hurt America's image," Doug Miller, president of pollsters GlobeScan, said.

Sixty-five percent disapproved of US policy on last year's war between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas, 60 percent

of its handling of Iran's nuclear programme, 56 percent of its stance on global warming and 54 percent of its policy on North Korea's nuclear programme.

More than two-thirds believed the US military presence in the Middle East provoked more conflict than it prevented and only 17 percent thought US troops there were a stabilising force.

The poll found that the American public also seemed to have serious doubts about US foreign policy. Majorities of Americans polled disapproved of how the United States was handling the war in Iraq (57 percent) and global warming (54 percent) while half disapproved of US policy on Guantanamo and Iran.

Fifty-three percent of Americans said the US military presence in the Middle East "provokes more conflict than it prevents," the survey said.

The poll found US policy was regarded poorly in Britain, Bush's closest ally in Iraq. A majority (57 percent) of the British public saw US influence in the world as mainly negative and 81 percent disapproved of US actions in the war in Iraq, the BBC World Service said.

The poll, carried out between November 3 and January 9, covered Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Britain, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the United States.

Schoolteacher

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body there. The law enforcement agency described Dilu as a top cadre of the outlawed Biplobi Communist Party.

Dilu was accused along with 12 others in the killing of Sayeed's brother Bokul, a night guard of the Agrani Bank Kumarkhali branch, on March 26, 2002.

Sayed filed a case with the Islamic University Police Station on March 27, 2002, without naming Dilu. His name was also not included in the charge sheet of the case.

A relative of Bokul mentioned Dilu's name during the hearing of the case at a magistrate's court.

Dilu was later granted bail and he appeared before the court regularly--last time on January 16.

Dilu's relatives claimed that Sayeed used to threaten Dilu's family with dire consequences.

His colleagues and people of Radhanagar village claimed that Dilu was not involved with any outlawed party and demanded judiciary inquiry into the incident.

Radhanagar Non-Government Primary School Headmaster Aminul Islam, Assistant Headmaster Taizuzzaman, advocates Anup Kumar Nandi and Harunur Rashid attended the press conference.

The Rab, however, refused to make any comment on the issue. They did not also specify which Rab team went to Dilu's house.

EU

FROM PAGE 1

team led by party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at the BNP's election office at Banani in the capital.

Earlier, the EC had suspended all its election-related activities in Bangladesh amidst uncertainty about the January 22 election, which has already been cancelled.

"We are meeting here many political stakeholders and business bodies to understand what is happening," Frowein said. They discussed matters related to the election at the meeting with BNP and got some fine and interesting information that they could not tell right now, he added.

"The EC team (poll-related) now here will return to Brussels soon and submit a report on its activities," he said. After assessing the report, the next team led by the chief observer may come back within the next two or three weeks.

The EC delegation at yesterday's meeting included its election monitoring member Halean Camblee, local mission First Secretary C Whitty and Jaohanes Hachinger, another official.

The BNP team included Reaz Rahman and AHM Mofazzal Karim, advisers to party chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The BNP leaders expressed their views for holding an election as early as possible to ensure continuity of the democratic process, meeting sources said.

Reaz Rahman, also former foreign affairs adviser, later told newsmen that the EC team wanted to know from them about the current political situation as well as the next general election.

"We told them that we (BNP) want the election to be held as soon as possible."

He said, the EC delegation showed interest in sending observers for monitoring the election.

Illegal structures

FROM PAGE 1

said Kamruzzaman Khan, chief estate officer of the DCC.

The same day the railway department conducted an eviction drive in Borolekh and Ashuganj to recover its land that had been grabbed on different occasions.

CHITTAGONG DRIVE

Our Chittagong Bureau office reports: The Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) yesterday continued for the sixth consecutive day its drive against encroachers. Its demolition squad bulldozed some 250 illegal road side structures.

Led by magistrate Tahera Ferdous, the drive went on along the road between Probartak Intersection and Sholoshahar Gate No-2 and also the stretch between Sadarghat and Majhirhat area.

The ongoing drive that began Thursday aims at widening the roads with a view to ease the severe traffic congestion in the port city, sources said.

As per the CDA master plan, the roads were to be expanded, bearing in mind the fast growth of the country's second largest city. But influential quarters with the blessings of successive ruling parties have swallowed vast roadside properties belonging to the CDA, they said.

The road from Probartak to Sholoshahar was narrowed down to only 25 to 30 feet because of the rampant encroachment on either side, said a CDA official.

The same is the case with the road from Sadarghat to Majhirhat," he added.

The official told The Daily Star that they have plans to expand both the roads up to 60 feet.

The CDA eviction team however had to spare some of the structures due to a High Court ruling.

Cairn

It's been many years since the Petrobangla saw a professional financial personnel at the position of director finance. It's ironic that the government never bothered about placing a highly competent person in this chair even though Petrobangla is fetching the government around Tk 3,000 crore a year and overseeing assets worth billions of dollars," the source pointed out.

Petrobangla

"He said that the agreement does not demand such payments. Petrobangla should not pay this money unless the dispute is resolved," said a source quoting the legal adviser's opinion.

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Petrobangla's monitoring and financial scrutiny strength has diminished in the last six-seven years, it is now unable to take the right financial decisions, he added.

Last

year, a legal adviser to Petrobangla dealing with audit objections raised questions why it was giving such a provisional payment and under which clause of the agreement with Cairn.

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