

British South Asians don't feel so British: Survey

AFP, London

More than a third of people of South Asian ethnic origin in Britain hardly feel British, according to a BBC survey out Monday.

Some 38 percent of South Asians said they felt only slightly or not at all British, in a poll for BBC Asian Network radio marking the 60th anniversary of the partition of India.

Almost half felt they were not treated as British by white Britons and three-quarters felt their culture was being diluted by living in the kingdom.

More than a third of South Asians surveyed said they agreed that in order to do well in Britain, they needed to be a "coconut" -- a sometimes derogatory term for somebody who is "brown on the outside but white on the inside."

Twelve percent said they considered themselves to be "coconuts."

However, 84 percent of South

Asians said they were satisfied with life in Britain and nearly half thought they had more opportunities in Britain than in their countries of ethnic origin.

Half of South Asians and nearly two-thirds of whites surveyed agreed it was too easy for immigrants to enter Britain.

The 2001 census recorded that 2,331,423 people, or four percent of the British population, classified themselves as being Asian or Asian British.

That included 1.8 percent of the population who said they were of Indian origin, 1.3 percent who said they had Pakistani roots and 0.5 percent who said they were of Bangladeshi origin.

Pollsters ICM Research conducted nation-wide telephone interviews with 500 people describing themselves as Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan aged 16 to 34, and 235 white people aged 18 to 34.



PHOTO: WHITE HOUSE

Bangladeshi Ambassador to the USA Humayun Kabir poses with President George W Bush after presenting his credentials at a ceremony at the White House on July 27.

Pakistan tightens security after mosque suicide blast

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan boosted security on Saturday fearing further attacks a day after a suicide bombing during protests at Islamabad's pro-Taliban Red Mosque killed 14 people.

Authorities were also investigating how the attacker was able to strike at a crowded market in the heart of the capital, the 13th suicide blast to hit the country since a bloody army raid on the mosque on July 10.

The bomber targeted officers policing Islamic students who had occupied the controversial Red Mosque to demand that their jailed former cleric should lead prayers after its chaotic reopening on Friday.

"Security has been tightened and a joint investigation team has been assembled," Interior Ministry spokesman Brigadier Javed

Cheema told AFP.

Cheema added that the remains of the suicide bomber had been found and were being DNA-tested to establish his identity.

He said the mosque had been closed indefinitely, adding the suicide attack was "in all probability linked to the Red Mosque issue."

Islamabad police chief Iftekhar Chaudhry said 56 people had been arrested over the mosque disturbance and were being interrogated, but no one had yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

Senior Islamabad police officer Shahid Nadeem Baluch said police had set up extra pickets at all entry and exit points of the capital.

Scanners and video cameras were also being installed at markets and other public places, Baluch told AFP. He said no arrest had been made so far in the ongoing investigation.

"There are indications that the bomber may have tried to carry out a suicide attack at the Red Mosque but because of the tight security he was prevented," a senior security official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The attacker "found an opportunity where a police unit was assembled and blew himself up."

The official added that there was a likelihood of more suicide attacks to come.

A senior militant source said the attack showed that Islamic rebels had

"ready-made suicide bombers who can be launched at short notice."

The violence has cranked up pressure on President Pervez Musharraf, who is fending off US threats to launch unilateral military strikes in Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan.

Musharraf, who launched a crackdown on extremism after 9/11, won plaudits for tackling militants holed up in the mosque, but the loss of more than 100 lives in the operation to clear it sparked the current militant backlash.

Tk 12,581cr stuck up in absence of PAC

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progress. It was not possible to recover a large amount of money in the past due mainly to the lack of proper monitoring," former CAG M Hafizuddin Khan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Chairman of the immediate past PAC advocate Harun Al Rashid said, "It's difficult to recover money even through continued efforts. Now the committee does not exist. Who will monitor the progress of money recovery?"

"We identified the anomalies and directed recovery of the money through hard work. If the public money is not recovered due to lack of monitoring, it will be unfortunate for us," he added.

Contacted by The Daily Star, a secretary, who during the last several months held the top bureaucratic post under several ministries, however said it is a continuous process and the recovery work is well on course.

Senior officials of different ministries, who are designated to deal with the audit objections, also claimed that they are trying to recover the money

and dispose of audit objections, which are pending.

"It is easy to settle any objection, but difficult to recover money. Some officials who were held responsible for the government's financial loss have already retired. So, it is difficult to make them refund the money," said a senior official on condition of anonymity.

Officials in the office of the CAG are sceptical about the success of the next PAC in recovering the huge amount of public money as the new PAC will have to face tremendous backlog of tasks.

The officials said they have done their duty by assisting the PAC in detecting the financial anomalies through the audit reports.

"It proved difficult to make the ministries recover the embezzled money when the Public Accounts Committee was functioning. Without the committee, it would be more difficult to recover the money," Hafizuddin, also a former adviser to a caretaker government, said referring to his experience when he held the post of CAG.

Bureaucrats do not want to

follow the committee's directives, as most of the allegations raised in the audit reports are against them, he said.

Since its formation on May 12, 2003, the PAC discussed a total of 149 audit objections raised by the office of the CAG from FY 1995-06 to 2001-02 in which Tk 13,154 crore was involved.

Audit reports on the ministries of communications, education, shipping, health and family welfare, housing and public works, agriculture, foreign, industries, water resources, post and telecommunications, civil aviation and tourism, Finance Division, Power Division, and Internal Resources Division were discussed.

The committee had the ministries recover only Tk 63.77 crore, adjusted Tk 157.72 crore and decided to discuss some reports involving Tk 278.89 crore at a convenient time later, said the immediate past PAC in its report, which was placed before the House.

In the report, the PAC identified government officials and different

public and private organisations responsible for the misuse of public money through irregularities and corruption.

In view of the importance of functions of the PAC, the CAG on last Tuesday asked the caretaker government to immediately constitute a PAC on ad hoc basis to scrutinise the accounts of the government and reports of the CAG in the absence of a parliament.

Both Hafizuddin and Harun Al Rashid supported the proposal for continuation of the functions of PAC to enable it to monitor whether its directives to recover public money from the corrupt people are followed.

It will also help to reduce backlog of tasks to help ensure accountability and transparency of the government expenditure, they added.

Harun proposed introduction of a new system allowing the PAC to discharge its duties until the next PAC is constituted following formation of new parliament. The system should be like the existing system for the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of parliament, he said.