

CPA secy-gen invites Hasina to confce

AL puts three conditions  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Denis Marshal has invited Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina to 'attend and speak' at the opening ceremony of the 49th CPA conference to be held in Dhaka from October 4 to 12.

"I hope you will be able to accept this invitation to attend and speak at the opening ceremony and would like to assure you of a warm welcome from the CPA executive committee members, delegates, observers and the members of the CPA secretariat," Marshal said in a letter to Hasina.

But Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid yesterday put three conditions for the main opposition Awami League's joining the conference.

In a letter to the Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, who will chair conference, Hamid said they will participate in the conference if the

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Dhaka risks losing US market unless labour standards adopted

US envoy warns at AmCham luncheon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

US ambassador to Bangladesh Harry K Thomas yesterday said Bangladesh risks losing its market in the United States unless it adopts international labour standards.

"Unless such standards are adopted, American firms purchasing Bangladeshi goods or considering establishing manufacturing facilities here will look elsewhere if they fear consumers will boycott products with 'Made in Bangladesh' labels," the ambassador said.

He was speaking at a monthly luncheon meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) at a local hotel in Sylhet.

He said Bangladesh must improve and adopt the labour stan-

dards to retain the generalised system of preferences (GSP) programme for garment export by 2004.

Improving labour conditions in its export processing zones by January 2004 was a condition for keeping its GSP privileges. "If it misses the deadline, Bangladesh may lose duty-free access to the US market."

"I certainly hope this does not happen and I hope I can count on all of you to urge the government to abide by its commitments," the US envoy said.

He said Bangladesh sold almost \$6 billion worth of merchandise to the world last year and a large portion of it, approximately one third, went to the US.

US exports to Bangladesh was on the rise with \$1.8 billion surplus

last year. During the first six months of this year, US exports to Bangladesh decreased 32 per cent compared to the same period last year, while export from Bangladesh increased slightly, he observed.

Thomas also said US remains the largest foreign investor in Bangladesh with direct investments totaling nearly \$1.3 billion.

"We would like to see a surge of investment as a way of helping Bangladesh deal with issues of poverty. Our relationship with Bangladesh continues to deepen and broaden," the ambassador said.

He said to attract such an increased investment, Bangladesh needs to implement significant political reforms and considerably

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Landmark return home

First-ever survivor of the Siamese twins, operated in Bangladesh, goes back to mother's lap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first-ever survivor of the Siamese twins operation in Bangladesh went back home from the Islami Bank Central Hospital yesterday, but without his brother who died five days after the high-risk surgery.

Hasan, now four months and 21 days old, was handed over to his parents from Khulna at a function at the hospital, marking a landmark success in medical science.

"It's a happy day for Bangladesh so far as medical science is concerned. Our country too can achieve notable success, if it is inspired," said Mohammad Mosharrar Hossain MP, attending the function.

According to available records, there have so far been 400 operations on Siamese twins around the world, with Bangladesh's being the latest in 52 success stories and the first instance of a survivor from the surgery in the Indian sub-continent.

"What we lack most is confidence. The sons of the soil are as meritorious as anyone in the world," said Post and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Haque who attended the event as chief guest.



PHOTO: STAR

Post and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Haque yesterday hands Hasan, one of the conjoined twins separated, to his parents at the Islami Bank Central Hospital in Dhaka.

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PHOTO: STAR

Police obstruct a procession of Bangladesh Unemployed Diploma Nurses Association in Dhaka yesterday when demonstrators were marching toward to the health ministry to submit a memorandum demanding implementation of the ministry's decision to recruit 2,000 nurses.

SC stays HC order on Sayedee's JS membership

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed the High Court (HC) order that revoked the parliament membership of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee.

Justice Hamidul Haque's vacation bench stayed the order until October 22, ruling on the provisional leave petition by the Jamaat leader. The court asked Sayedee to submit a regular petition by the time.

The HC Division on Sunday stripped Sayedee of his Jatiya Sangsad membership, declaring his poll victory from Pirojpur-1 constituency null and void for submitting false statements on election expenses and violating other election rules.

Sayedee's nearest rival in the polls Awami League leader Shudhangshu Shekhar Halder challenged the legality of his four-party alliance candidate's election.

Justice TH Khan and Barrister Mainul Hossain moved for Sayedee while Halder himself opposed the

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Angry PM stops dismantling of divider on Airport Road

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dismantling of the extravagantly-built road-divider on the Airport Road has finally stopped following a prime ministerial instruction.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia expressed annoyance at such whimsical waste of public money in the name of beautification, highly placed sources said.

The dismantling of the road-divider raised questions among people, civil society and government circles as well about gross waste of money. Newspapers also ran reports on it.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec) Tuesday, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia asked Communications Minister Nazmul Huda why the road-divider on the Airport Road was being

dismantled, the sources said. But Huda expressed ignorance about it although his ministry is doing the work. Surprised at the reply, the prime minister asked him whether he saw the newspaper reports and photographs that drew her attention.

Khaleda then asked Huda to accompany her to see whether the road-divider was being dismantled or not and went straight to the Airport Road. She found the divider was being demolished and asked the minister to explain the logic behind such an act, an aide to her said.

The prime minister said the divider was constructed during the previous government's tenure by taking expert views to reduce road accidents on this busy road and

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Tk 25 lakh worth medicines seized at ZIA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials seized contraband medicines worth about Tk 25 lakh from three Pakistani nationals at Zia International Airport yesterday.

Mohammad Shaheed, Zahid Shamsi and Nawshad came to Dhaka from Karachi on a Bangladesh Biman flight (No. BG-032) at 7:30am. They were heading towards the transit lounge of the airport with their luggage without checking out from green channel on first floor, officials said.

They claimed themselves to be transit passengers when customs officials challenged them. Checking their luggage, the officials found banned medicines including Primofol, Spiromide, Aldacton, Cafergo, Methergin, Primarin, Icterene and Zestril tablets and Menestrogen, Alcon, Kenacort-A and Profuton ampoules.

The three Pakistanis were handed over to Airport Police Station. A criminal case was filed against them.

Pak FM cancels planned trip to India

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri has dropped plans to visit India next month, the latest setback in a halting process to get the nuclear-armed rivals to the negotiating table.

In a statement issued late on Tuesday, the Foreign Ministry said it was "regrettable" that India had objected to Kasuri personally delivering an invitation to a forthcoming regional summit.

Leaders from the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) are due to hold their 12th summit in

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Monica Ali among women who top Booker Prize shortlist

REUTERS, London

Women writers and first time novelists dominated the shortlist announced on Tuesday for the Booker Prize with bookmakers divided on who would win one of the world's most prestigious literary awards for fiction.

Canada's Margaret Atwood, already a Booker winner three years ago, vied for favorite with first time novelist Monica Ali to land the 50,000 pound (\$80,000) prize on October 14 and achieve instant success in bestseller lists around the globe.

"This has been David's year and not Goliath's," said literary critic

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C'wealth ministers call for rich's commitment at WTO

AFP, Bandar Seri Begawan

The world's richest countries must show a greater sense of commitment towards the creation of a new global multilateral trading accord after the collapse of the World Trade Organization (WTO) talks in Mexico, the Commonwealth grouping says.

"The recent impasse at Cancun is evidence of the fact that the usual give and take negotiating tactics just won't work anymore," the Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon said late Tuesday.

"And in a 'development round' it is

criminal to expect developing countries to accept a raw deal," he said in a speech at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth finance Ministers Meeting in the Brunei capital.

"We need to see a spirit of generous globalisation adopted by negotiators before they next meet in the coming months."

Senior officials from the 146 WTO members will meet again by December 15 in a bid to revive negotiations after five days of talks aimed at creating a new trade accord in Cancun collapsed amid a stand-

off between rich and poor nations.

The heavy agriculture subsidies that the wealthy economies, namely the United States, Japan and Europe, pay to their farmers, thereby artificially distorting global commodity prices, was one of the divisive issues at Cancun.

A successful outcome at Cancun could have meant huge benefits to the members of the 54-nation Commonwealth.

The majority of the Commonwealth's member nations are still developing and agriculture

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2 brothers get death for murder in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A court yesterday sentenced two brothers to death and four others to life-imprisonment for committing a murder in 1996.

Subhash Dhar, 26, and Prohash Dhar, 28, were handed the death sentence. The verdict was pronounced by Mohammad Kauser, the fourth additional sessions judge of Chittagong.

The judge also awarded life imprisonment to three other Dhar

brothers -- Ranjit, Sujit, Pradip -- and one neighbour, but acquitted their mother Sabita Bala Dhar from charges. Pankaj Dhar is the neighbour.

The murder took place on the morning of February 19, 1996 at the city's Gosaidanga area in Agrabad. One Ranadhir Dhar came there to see his brother-in-law Khokan Chandra Dey.

As Ranadhir came out of the house in the morning, the convicts

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Dhaka-Agartala bus service begins tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a number of false starts, the long-awaited Dhaka-Agartala bus service is finally set to be launched tomorrow through a colourful inaugural programme in Dhaka and a similar programme later on the day at Agartala.

Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda and Indian Minister for Road Transport and Highways Maj Gen (retd) BC Khanduri will jointly inaugurate the cross-border bus service at the

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Lawyers stage hunger strike, rally today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawyers under the banner of Six-point Implementation Committee yesterday announced a programme to resist the amendments to the Bar Council Order and the Civil Procedure Code (CPC).

The committee will observe a two-hour hunger strike at the bar association office and hold rallies all over the country from 10:00am to 12:00 noon today.

The committee also decided to hold an extended meeting of the bar council on the Supreme Court premises on September 26. The lawyers will also exchange views with the leaders of different profes

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One Bangladeshi dies in Saudi prison fire

BSS, Dhaka

One Bangladeshi national died in Saudi prison fire on September 15.

The Bangladeshi was identified as Amin, 21, son of Harunur Rashid of Shobhapur village under Kotwali Police Station of Comilla district, an official of the Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh has confirmed the death of Amin, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

A girl holds a portrait of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat calling for an end to the killings of Palestinians during a demonstration in Dhaka yesterday.

Ship carrying chemical in flames at Ctg Port

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A chemical-carrying Bangladeshi ship caught fire at a jetty of Chittagong Port yesterday, but the loss of property in the blaze could not be known immediately.

The MV Taraman Bibi was laden with 13,000 tonnes of sulphur imported from Iran for a Patenga-based fertiliser factory, port sources said.

In a struggle for an hour from 2:00pm, firefighters doused the blaze that started from a friction in the ship's hatch while unloading the flammable product.