

CPA chief : Hasina

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October 12.

The main opposition party took a hard line by deciding to boycott the conference in protest mainly at the inclusion of prime minister's two political secretaries on the steering committee on the CPA conference.

Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui told The Daily Star last night that the two political secretaries, Haris Chowdhury and Mosaddak Ali, withdrew their names from the committee. However, there was no official announcement on their withdrawal.

The deputy speaker, head of the co-ordination committee on the CPA conference, said, "I came to know about their withdrawal, talking to Harris Chowdhury by phone."

At a meeting of party policymakers, the AL yesterday prepared a reply to Marshal's letter explaining its stance on the CPA conference boycott, Saber said.

The decision to boycott the conference was based on AL's three-point demand: the government has to ensure honour to the leader of the opposition in line with national and international conventions, increase the number of opposition legislators on the steering committee and sub-committees and exclude two non-MPs (prime minister's two political secretaries) from the 25-member committee.

The CPA conference steering committee headed by Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar will soon invite all envoys

of the Commonwealth countries in Dhaka to brief them on the preparations for the conference, as they sounded worried about the AL boycott, sources said.

The deputy speaker promised to take initiatives again to bring the main opposition to the conference. "I will try my best to ensure the opposition's participation and communicate with the Awami League tomorrow (Wednesday)," he said.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid, expressing dissatisfaction at the situation, said he was no longer interested in communicating with the speaker or the deputy speaker to end the stalemate.

"We wanted to join the conference but the ruling party pushed the opposition to take a hard line. Will any further initiative yield any result?" Hamid said.

"The ruling party completed all preparatory work, ignoring the opposition party's opinions. Even if we join the conference now, we won't have anything to do other than being only listeners," he said.

But the deputy speaker blamed the opposition for taking the hard decision like boycott. "It's a preplanned political game. They should join the conference as we have met their all demands."

Asked about speculations over probable suspension of the conference in Dhaka, he said, "The conference will be a success. I hope the main opposition will join the conference in the greater interest of the country."

'Former Iraqi number two negotiating surrender'

AFP, Amman

A Jordanian newspaper reported yesterday that negotiations for the surrender of Iraq's former number two Ezzat Ibrahim are under way and have made considerable progress.

"Contacts under way for the surrender of the Iraqi officer have reached an advanced phase," Al Arab Al Yawm daily said in a dispatch from Baghdad, quoting a "source close to the family" of Ibrahim.

"The Iraqi president is demanding that his name be removed from a (US) wanted list as well as humanitarian conditions for his detention," the report said, adding that Ibrahim has heart and abdominal troubles.

It was not clear however who was involved in these alleged negotiations.

Ibrahim -- a former vice president of the once-powerful Revolution Command Council in Iraq -- is on a US most wanted list of 55 members of the deposed regime.

According to Al Arab Al Yawm, Ibrahim has lost contact with former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and is on the move in tribal areas north and west of Baghdad.

Saifur

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but returned home Monday, cutting short his visit due to a family emergency. He, however, met the top brasses of the WB and IMF and also attended a seminar there on IMF's role in the low-income countries.

He earned assurance from the World Bank of doubling development assistance -- from around \$500 million in the last fiscal year to around \$1 billion this year -- for investment into major infrastructures and agriculture.

In his statement, Saifur expressed his disappointment at the declining flow of both Official Development Assistance (ODA) and private investments into developing countries.

Over the last decade, the percentage of GDP of developing countries given as aid by industrial countries fell from 0.33 to 0.22 per cent, far off the agreed range of 0.7 per cent.

This was coupled with a fall in the share of scarce ODA to the least developed countries (LDCs) -- from 32 per cent in 1990 to 24.7 per cent in 2000.

"These unhealthy trends must be reversed," Dhaka pleaded, fearing that the new expectations roused by the Millennium Development Goals may be dashed for want of adequate resources. "The world cannot afford the luxury of aid fatigue at this critical hour."

Although globalisation has opened up new opportunities for developed and developing countries alike, the gains have been offset in developing countries by barriers in agriculture, intellectual property rights (IPR), absence of special and differential treatment (S&D) and many emerging non-tariff barriers to exports.

"Unfortunately the process of trade liberalisation suffered a serious, but I hope temporary, setback in the recently concluded ministerial conference in Cancun," Saifur said in the paper, hoping that new initiatives would be undertaken soon to put the negotiation back on track.

The minister also mentioned the global incidence of poverty, with more than 1.1 billion hapless people earning less than a dollar a day.

"There is however no quick fix for poverty. There are many necessary provisions for poverty reduction," he said referring to developing countries' need to make huge investments in physical infrastructures and human resources.

Al-Jazeera

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or the workings of the Coalition Provisional Authority that runs the occupied country.

Major William Thurmond, a spokesman, said the stations would still have access to military coverage.

The Governing Council statement was signed by Ayad Allawi, head of the body's security committee, and was dated effective Tuesday.

"The Governing Council is very worried about the irresponsible behavior of some media, especially Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya," the statement said.

It said the two stations are "considered to have violated the rules and criteria that the media should respect to continue to work in Iraq."

US officials have accused the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera and the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya of giving too much prominence to anti-US attacks and providing a forum for backers of ousted president Saddam Hussein.

The council statement barring them from official functions for two weeks fell short of the vow by Entefadh Qanbar, a spokesman for the body's current president, Ahmad Chalabi, to shut down their offices temporarily.

It came after a meeting of council officials and an aide to US civilian administrator Paul Bremer on the legalities of action against the broadcasters.

Officials of both stations, which compete for the world Arab audience and deny accusations of bias, said they had not been informed of any action against their operations in Baghdad.

Six more city roads

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Road from Mohakhali to Maghbazar has been partially off-limits to rickshaws, the official added.

Besides, the DTCB recently placed angled iron rods on one side of Bangla Motor to Maghbazar Road to discourage rickshaws, said DTCB officials.

Ansar Uddin Khan Pathan, deputy commissioner, traffic (north), said no deadline has been set for the drive to seize illegal rickshaws and it will continue through the rainy season as the number of rickshaws without licence increases during the season.

Another official said 320 unauthorised rickshaws from the traffic division, north and 312 from the traffic division, south have been seized so far since the start of the drive.

Sources said the rush of illegal rickshaws has increased and the worst affected areas are Maghbazar, Mouchak, Malibagh, Kakrail, Motijheel, Paltan, North South Road, Green Road, Science Laboratory, New Market, Jatrabari, Sayedabad and all roads of the old town.

According to the Wheel Taxation Department of the DCC, there are around 80,000 licensed rickshaws in the city and about three lakh rickshaws ply the city streets without valid papers and mostly with fake licence allegedly issued by a section of the DCC staff.

An official of the department denied any involvement of the DCC staff in providing fake licence in connivance with rickshaw owners' associations. He said an organised gang outside forge the licences and number plates issued by the DCC.

M Ali Akbar, secretary general of Dhaka Mahanagar Rickshaw Malik Oikya Jote, a forum of registered rickshaw owners associations, said, "Considering the growing number of people in the city we held talks with the com-

munications ministry this year for 50,000 new licensed rickshaws and the ministry agreed, but it has not been implemented as yet."

The manufacturing of rickshaws is continuing at some city points including Jurain, Jatrabari, Maniknagar, Mughdipara and Madhubag and the rickshaws roll on the city streets without valid papers.

The DCC has not issued licence to rickshaws after 1986 and the term of licences has ended on June 30 last year.

However, the DCC is yet to renew the licences. A DCC official said the renewal of licence would be complete in June next. The rate of licence renewal fees has been increased to Tk 100 from Tk 70.

Charges framed against 5 in Adv Babar murder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Speedy Trial Tribunal-1, Dhaka Division, yesterday framed charges against five accused in Advocate Syed Babar Elahi murder case.

The accused are Khandker Nayem Ahmed alias Liton, Md Rasheedul Islam, Dr Babu, Md Nazrul Islam and Shafiul Islam. Of them, Liton and Rasheedul are now in jail while the rest still at large.

Judge Shaheed Noor Uddin fixed September 27 for trial of the case.

In the case filed with Dhanmondi Police Station, it was alleged that Babar was shot dead by a gang of assassins at Road no 14 in Dhanmondi on March 3, 2000. The case was filed the following day.

The investigation office of the case pressed charges against the five on July 14 this year, showing 26 people as prosecution witnesses.

Indian smugglers attack BDR at Hilli

BSS, Dinajpur

Indian smugglers attacked the members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) during an anti-smuggling drive on a running train near Hilli Railway Station in Hakimpur upazila on Monday night.

The BDR opened fire to disperse the smugglers and arrested one of them who was injured, official sources said yesterday.

BDR sources said about 50 Indian smugglers were loading goods and drugs onto the inter-city 'Semanto Express' at 10:05pm in the outer signal area of Hilli Railway Station.

Drivers of the Khulna-bound train coming from Parbatipur junction slowed its speed near the border pillar no 284/32S and the smugglers started loading Indian sugar, saree, phensedyl and other contraband items onto it.

As the BDR patrol team resisted the smugglers, they attacked the BDR men with sharp weapons, bricks and stones. In the face of attack, the BDR opened fire, injuring one of the smugglers while others fled to India.

The injured Indian smuggler, Tapan Malu, 25, son of Tarun Malu under Gangarampur Police Station of South Dinajpur district in West Bengal, was admitted to Hakimpur upazila health complex. A huge quantity of smuggled Indian sugar, saree, phensedyl and other drugs left by the smugglers inside the train was seized.

The BDR filed a case with General Railway Police (GRP) at Santahar.

When contacted, Commanding Officer (CO) of Joypurhat Rifles Battalion Lt Colonel Zoaherul Islam told BSS yesterday that the BDR men maintained restraints to avoid human casualties when they were attacked by the Indian smugglers.

"Our jawans are engaged in curbing border smuggling and crimes and they will continue to do so," he said.

Illegal money transfer

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discrepancies in the GSA agreement. The BB served the show cause notice on the SCSL, officials said yesterday.

Talking to The Daily Star, Farid Ahmed, managing director (MD) of the SCSL, acknowledged receiving the notice and said, "We will give our reply in time".

It is mandatory for any firm to obtain permission from the central bank to become local agent of foreign principals, officials said.

Earlier, the central bank initiated a probe into the SCSL's affairs after a complaint was lodged against the firm. A Malaysian lawmaker Dato Mohd Zin Bin Mohamed signed the original GSA agreement with the airlines as chairman of the SCSL on September 21, 2000. Concerning the presence of a foreign national on its board, the SCSL allegedly obtained clearance from the BB as the company is incorporated in Bangladesh with the Registrar of Joint Stock as a fully Bangladeshi-owned one.

Annan blasts Bush

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"Now some say this understanding is no longer tenable since an 'armed attack' with weapons of mass destruction could be launched at any time," Annans said.

"This logic represents a fundamental challenge to the principles, on which, however imperfectly, world peace and stability have rested for the last 58 years," Annan said.

However, Annan said the 15-member Security Council, in charge of war and peace, might need to consider rewriting the rule book for the use of force.

"Its members may need to begin a discussion on the criteria for an early authorisation of coercive measures to address certain types of threats -- for instance, terrorist groups armed with weapons of mass destruction," Annan said.

He said he was establishing a "high-level panel of eminent personalities" to examine current challenges to peace and security and recommend ways the United Nations could reform its institutions.

"Excellencies, we have come to a fork in the road," Annan said. "This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded."

Annan again berated UN members for not being able to agree on an expansion of the Security Council, which has remained nearly the same for 58 years. "I would respectfully suggest to you, excellencies, that in the eyes of your peoples the difficulties of reaching agreement does not excuse your failure to do so," Annan said.

Jan Kavan, the outgoing assembly president from the Czech Republic said earlier that UN ambassadors alone could not resolve Security Council reform after a decade of trying.

"For that, you would need a major political breakthrough in the capitals of certain key member states," he said.

Bush is expected to make a similar appeal for global unity when he

An opposition lawmaker of

Malaysia, Teresa Kok Suh Sim lodged the complaint with the governor of the BB on July 28 this year through her counsel in Dhaka, Advocate Hasanul Alam.

According to the complaint, Zin, who claims to be the chairman of the SCSL, illegally received funds equivalent to \$7 million from Bangladesh. He also comes to Dhaka occasionally to collect his profit and honorarium without permission from the BB.

Zin is not the chairman of the SCSL, as his name has not been registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock in Dhaka. "The SCSL has disbursed honorarium and 49 per cent of profit sharing money to Mr Zin every month since the inception of the GSA," said the complaint.

AL demands free probe

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday demanded an independent probe into the allegation of

illegal remittance of \$7 million to Malaysia from Bangladesh.

It also asked for punishment to the people involved in the money flight scam and resignation of three ministers for allegedly taking bribe in exchange for aiding and abetting in the act.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil in a statement yesterday expressed deep concern at a news published in The Daily Star on September 21 about illegal money transfer to Malaysia. He demanded resignation of three ministers, who he said, were reportedly associated with the money transfer.

He also alleged that several ministers, a certain powerful quarter and their foreign partners have formed a corruption clique under state patronage.

The AL general secretary noted that the country's image abroad was tarnished as the issue of illegal money transfer has been raised in the Malaysian High Court.

gathering danger" of Saddam Hussein's Iraq - or stand aside as the United States acted alone.

In the months that followed, France, Germany, Russia and other nations opposed the war and were incensed when the United States attacked Iraq without Security Council approval.

This year, with mounting bills and US casualties, Bush wants help from the United Nations and support for a US-backed resolution that Washington hopes will encourage countries to contribute troops and money. But France, Germany and Russia want a larger UN political role and a much quicker transfer of power to the Iraqis than Washington is prepared to accept.

The friendship between France and the United States will always prevail over the countries' political differences, French President Jacques Chirac said Monday.

Chirac's comments, made as he inaugurated a French school in New York, came as the two nations try to avoid another showdown at the United Nations over Iraq.

"Events over the past few months have led to tension in relations between our countries. I want to share my personal conviction with all of you, however, that the friendship between France and the United States is deeply rooted in our history," Chirac said.

The key UN meeting comes after devastating bomb attacks against its headquarters in Baghdad in the past month have plunged the world body into mourning - and raised questions about its future role.

"Subject to security considerations, the United Nations system is prepared to play its full part in working for a satisfactory outcome in Iraq, and to do so as part of an effort by the whole international community," Annan said in his prepared text.

WB dev policies

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told reporters quoting Sheikh Hasina.

"The AL chief identified development as a continuous process," Saber said adding that Wallich welcomed the AL chief's suggestion.

The opposition leader told Wallich that after assuming power the present government halted several development programmes initiated by the previous AL government, Sabers said.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Member of the Advisory Council A M A Muhiit and Jawadul Karim, press adviser to the party president, aided Sheikh Hasina during the meeting.

Wallich told reporters after the meeting that she discussed different issues including Bangladesh's economic programmes and poverty alleviation strategies.

There was no discussion on political issues and export of natural gas, she said.

Saber told reporters that the previous AL government established about 12,000 community health clinics for rural people. He said another 6,000 clinics were in the process of being set up, but after coming to power the present government stopped the process.

The meeting also discussed shut-down of state-owned mills and industries. The AL position on the issue is that before closing down a factory the government should identify the reasons behind its incurring losses and take the initiative to make it profitable, Saber said.

There might be problems in the factories, but wholesale closing is not the answer, the AL representatives observed at the meeting.

Saber said Hasina stressed the need for investment in the social sectors like health and education.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury said Wallich expressed concern over corruption in the government when the issue was raised at the meeting.

Saber said the AL would develop relations with all donor countries and

agencies through dialogue and opinion-sharing. "Such an effort will help both sides -- the donors will be informed of the main position's expectations and at the same time the AL can familiarise itself with their views on the country's development programmes," he added.

Ctg Port accident

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The MV Eagle Strength was carrying 774 containers, the sources added.

A three-member committee formed earlier to probe the incident was reconstituted yesterday with two more members. Lt Col Sarwar Shaheed, director (Security) of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) is heading the probe body.

Other members are Lt Commander Lokman Hossain, deputy director (Security) of CPA, Captain Kamrul Islam, harbour master, Engineer Aminul Huq of Hydrography Department and Mashur Rahman Beg of Traffic Department of CPA. The committee will submit its report within seven days.

Zulfikar Haider Chowdhury, secretary of the shipping ministry, yesterday visited the accident spot and directed officials of the CPA and other departments concerned to take necessary steps to salvage the containers. He also asked the inquiry team to submit its report timely.

Sources said the CPA already served show cause notices to Kim Waigee, captain of the MV Eagle Strength and its local agent Neptune Orient Line, and two navigators of the ships.

Meanwhile, the MV Bangabiraj anchored at the MPB Jetty-1 of CPA yesterday evening to shift its containers to another vessel MV Bangabarthi which was called in at the port jetty from the outer anchorage. The step was taken to send the exportable items to foreign buyers timely.

Saudi hostage

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The gang, wanted by police, had holed up in an apartment in a staff residential building at King Fahd (hospital) in Jizan with the intention of carrying out acts of terrorism," the statement said, making no mention of hostages. "They were armed with sub-machine-guns and grenades."

"Tuesday morning the security forces laid siege to the building and asked the terrorists to give themselves up. But they opened fire on the security forces," the spokesman said.

A medical source inside the hospital had earlier told AFP by telephone that four members of a large group of wanted gunmen had been shot dead after taking hostages.

Two other gunmen were seriously wounded and being treated in intensive care, the source said by telephone from inside the hospital compound on the edge of the city of Jizan.

"Four of the attackers have been killed," the medical source said. "Two others have been wounded and taken into intensive care," after an exchange of fire.

"They are terrorists," he said. "There's a lot of them."

The gunmen had barricaded themselves into the block, taking as hostages staff and patients of various nationalities, the source added.

Security forces had at about 1100 GMT warned the hostage-takers "to give up or face an attack on the hospital", he said.

Security forces had attacked at dawn a nearby farm where the gunmen had been holed up, local residents said.

The gunmen fled from the village and attacked the housing block, taking an unknown number of staff hostages.

Sources close to the London-based opposition Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia also reported that hostage had been taken by the gunmen who were fleeing from security forces.

Saudi Arabia has launched a major crackdown on presumed al-Qaeda militants, notably since May 12 triple suicide bombings of residential compounds in Riyadh that left 35 people dead.

Since then, repeated shootouts have taken place in which several security men as well as militants were killed or wounded.

More than 170 presumed Islamist militants have been detained for suspected links with terrorism since the Riyadh bombings.

Powell

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Powell made the remark in an interview with the Charlie Rose Show on public television while talking about Washington's vision of what kind of government Iraq should have.

He said he expected it to be "an Islamic country by faith, just as we are a Judeo-Christian."

"We, it's hard to tell any more, but we are a country of many faiths now," he added quickly.

The remark was likely to antagonize millions of American Muslims, most of whom want to be included in the mainstream.

Some American Muslims have coined the term Judeo-Christian-Islamic to reflect their ideal of what the United States should be.

Petrobangla rejects

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ments regarding Block 9 also needs prior concurrence of the GOB."

"We request you to explain under what provision of the PSC you made the sale to Niko Resources (Cayman) Ltd," the letter read.

Announcement of the Chevron pullout by transferring shares to Niko has enraged the Block 9 operator Tullow that felt the 'opaque' deal made operations in the block uncertain. Niko was disqualified in the same bid that gave Tullow and Chevron-Texaco the licence for Block 9 to explore oil and gas.

Though Tullow appeared as the best bidder for the block, it was forced to strike a partnership with Chevron-Texaco 'under American pressure', the Irish company claimed.

The biggest problem in the change-over bid is that Niko will become 60 percent stakeholder despite the fact that it has been disqualified once and is still a very small company compared to Tullow.

The section 31.3 of the PSC that allows the partners to assign any part or all of its rights, interests and obligations to a non-affiliated third party clearly demands prior written approval of the government and Petrobangla.

One of the conditions for such a deal suggested by the PSC says, "The proposed assignee or assignees must produce reasonable evidence to govern-

ment of its or their financial and technical competence."

Ironically, when the PSC enters the development stage of gas field Niko, in place of a giant like Chevron-Texaco, will become the block's operator straightaway after April next year.

Industry insiders also term this deal 'most uneven' that could dry up the investment flow in Block 9. The oil companies have spent \$20 million so far and were set to spend another \$20 million by April, 2004.

Criminals buzz

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get tips in return."

Some of the callers reportedly introduce themselves as Jisan, Sumon, Kawsar, Biplob, Sujon, Bikash and Quayum.

The BTB operators allow them to talk for about 18 minutes on average, said a telephone operator at a clinic at Moghbazar.

A hospital owner said in July he had paid Tk 15,000 in telephone bills for calls to Kolkata made from five telephones at their hospital. He or his staff did not make any of those calls, he added.

The BTB officials said they connect any number abroad sought by a subscriber from a BTB number.