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Israel strikes Syria after suicide attack

REUTERS/AFP, Jerusalem

Israel yesterday took its battle against Palestinian militants to Syria, bombing near the capital Damascus for the first time in decades, after a suicide bomber killed 19 people in an Israeli restaurant.

It was the first time Israel had struck so far inside Syrian territory since the 1973 Middle East war, military commentators said. "The Israel Defence Forces operated last night deep inside Syrian territory and hit a training base used

by terror groups, including Islamic Jihad," the army said about the air attack at Ain Saheb, about 20 km (12 miles) northwest of Damascus.

But Syria said the strikes hit refugees living near the Lebanese border.

Terming it a 'serious escalation', Syria said it sent an urgent complaint to the United Nations Security Council over the air raid, the first direct military confrontation between Israel and Syria since the Yom Kippur war exactly 30 years ago. "Israel attacked a civilian area",

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UN meets today

Arab League terms raid state terrorism, Hamas vows retaliation

AFP, United Nations

The United Nations Security Council is to hold a closed-door meeting today after the Arab world reacted with fury to Israel's raid in Syria yesterday.

The meeting was set for 2000 GMT, and comes at Syria's request.

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Governance, world peace to top Dhaka agenda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) at an agenda setting meeting yesterday decided to bring the issues of governance and global peace to the fore of its nine-day 49th conference that opened in Dhaka on Saturday.

Coming out of the meeting of the executive committee, its chairman Bob Speller said: "We discussed a broad outline of the CPA conference agenda."

"Besides, your speaker, who is also the president of the 49th conference, briefed about the overall planning," he told journalists at

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Messy affairs still dog CPA conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nine-day 49th conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) rolls into its third day today, amid utter mismanagement and the main opposition's resolute refusal to attend the grand meet of lawmakers.

Serious lack of coordination in delegates' arrival, lodging and food and dissemination of information to the media continued to mar the conference.

But putting on a brave face, president of the conference Speaker

Jamir Uddin Sircar said everything was going on accordingly.

Vice-president of the CPA, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is scheduled to officially launch the conference at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre at 11:30 am tomorrow.

With the Awami League's final 'no' to attend, the CPA is holding the first-ever conference without the host nation's opposition in a break with its 92-year history.

Sircar said the name of the opposition leader had already been printed in the invitation cards of the

official inaugural programme and she could still come and speak.

Following CPA working party's meeting on Saturday, the executive committee of the grouping met at Sonargaon Hotel and the two-day CPA Small Countries' Conference opened at Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

On the mismanagement, participants, observers and mediapersons said there was no publication of the conference bulletin as planned earlier, no official press briefing, no media cell to feed the press and no booth for the officials of the Press

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Buses stay off road to protest illegal toll collection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Illegal toll collectors are at work again alongside the two authorised private operators at three bus terminals -- Sayedabad, Mahakhali and Gabtoli.

At Sayedabad, 77 passenger buses of Sundarban Paribahan kept off the road yesterday for the second consecutive day, protesting toll extortion.

Some owners and drivers told The Daily Star that for the last three

days some extortionists led by one Akhteruzzaman Akhter and his accomplices -- Razzaq, Montu, Khorshed and Hiru, were collecting Tk 500 from each bus plying the southern route, despite repeated protests.

The extortionists snatched Tk 16,000 from Solaiman, a driver, after he refused to pay tolls. He was injured in the attack.

Out of the 87 buses of Sundarban Paribahan, only 10, owned by the

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Dhaka might send troops to Iraq if UN asks

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh would consider sending troops to Iraq provided an Iraqi government elected by the Iraqi people made an appeal through the United Nations.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan informed his US counterpart Colin Powell about Dhaka's position on the issue during a meeting in New York with the US secretary of state.

"We don't send soldiers... We send peacekeepers. If Iraqi people feel that the presence of Bangladeshi troops would be helpful for peace and if an elected Iraqi government makes appeal through the UN, we'll certainly consider that," he told reporters the Zia International Airport yesterday on his return from the UN General Assembly (UNGA) session in New York.

Powell, who came to Dhaka on June 19, had requested the government to see if it was possible to send Bangladeshi troops to Iraq, now under the occupation of US-led forces following the ouster of Saddam Hussain's regime. Khan

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Sircar rues no role of small states in global policies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Globalisation and 'military-political domain' of the world after the disintegration of the Soviet Union have left the world with one military superpower.

President of the 49th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar made the observation while delivering the inaugural speech at the two-day CPA

Small Countries' Conference that began at Hotel Sheraton yesterday.

"Where then do small states fit in this world of dramatically increasing economic and military resources, power and influence? What role can they play?" Sircar raised these questions and said, "Small states cannot make global policies. Global policies on the environment, money laundering, counter-terrorism and labour standards have reflected the

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Hasina sticks to her 'no' CPA chairman, secretary general fail to woo her to meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Alast-ditch attempt yesterday by the officials of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) to convince the main opposition Awami League (AL) to join the CPA conference failed, as AL chief Sheikh Hasina refused to change her decision.

A disappointed Bob Speller, chairman of the CPA, refused to make any comment about the outcome of the meeting and pointing at Kazi Zafarullah, AL presidium member, said, "You better ask my friend."

At the meeting at her Dhanmondi residence, the CPA

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PHOTO: STAR

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Chairman Bob Speller and Secretary General Denis Marshall call on Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at her Sudhasadan residence in Dhaka yesterday.

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PHOTO: STAR

Ending four days of celebrations, devotees in Dhaka prepare to immerse the images of Goddess Durga into the Buriganga River in the evening of Bijoya Dashami yesterday.

Durga Puja ends

UNB, Dhaka

Durga Puja, the biggest Hindu religious festival, ended yesterday through immersion of the image of the deity Durga.

Thousands of Hindus joined a huge colourful procession parading with scores of Durga images through the streets in capital Dhaka yesterday.

Dhaka Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee organised the Bijoya procession from the city's Dhakeshwari Mandir (temple). The procession passed through different city thoroughfares and ended after immersion of Durga in the river Buriganga at Waiz Ghat.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and his wife Anwara Begum hosted a reception for the distinguished Hindus at Bangabhaban yesterday.

The Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee organised a blood donation programme at Dhakeshwari Mandir yesterday. Puja Committee President Swapan Kumar Saha inaugurated the programme by donating blood.

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