

PM opens meet

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party Awami League (AL), began on October 4 but was formally opened yesterday.

This is a unique experience for the CPA, which in its 92-year history already held 48 conferences in different member-countries with the participation of both the ruling party and the opposition.

The 16-member official delegation of Bangladesh was supposed to include five from the opposition AL, which stayed off the meet protesting government's handling of the affair. Delegations of the 45 other countries that joined the conference comprise representatives of both the party in power and the opposition.

Apart from ministers and leaders belonging to the ruling four-party alliance, some leaders of smaller opposition parties -- HM Ershad, Roushan Ershad, Anwar Hossain Manju and Kader Siddiqui were present at the inaugural ceremony, also addressed by CPA President and Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar.

At the inaugural function, those sitting on the dais included Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon, CPA Executive Committee Chairman Bob Speller, CPA Secretary General Denis Marshall, Jatiya Sangsad Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui and Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Khurshid Jahan Haque.

After her address, Khaleda released a commemorative stamp.

Jamir Uddin Sircar read out a message from the CPA Patron, Queen Elizabeth II. The message said, "Your theme of partnerships for global peace and prosperity is a valuable one, focusing on the importance of deepening democracy and the prevention of conflict in all groups of society."

Daniel Hayes, CPA alternate vice-president and speaker of the Canadian Senate, gave the vote of thanks.

The invitation card for the programme mentioned that Leader of the Opposition

Sheikh Hasina would also address the inaugural ceremony. But she and her party AL did not show up in the conference.

Khaleda said, "The Commonwealth parliamentarians irrespective of gender, race and religion, are united, based on a commonality of interest, respect for the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms and the ideals of parliamentary democracy."

The CPA vice-patron went on saying: "We are determined to promote knowledge and understanding of the constitutional, legislative, social and cultural systems within the parliamentary framework work through the CPA and such other organisations."

Welcoming the delegates, the prime minister said, "This august gathering, indeed, provides us with great impetus to our political journey through the parliamentary democracy."

She also described briefly various initiatives taken by her government to lead the nation towards development. "We have made considerable progress in establishing the rights of women and children in our country. Bangladesh is now poised for a victory over poverty and deprivation."

Seeking cooperation from the Commonwealth countries, the prime minister said, "We are confident that we will continue to receive your support and cooperation in this regard in the years ahead."

Khaleda recalled the Liberation War in 1971 and said Bangladesh had achieved independence after great sacrifices made by millions.

"I also recall the support that Bangladesh received when multi-party democratic system was established in our country by our great leader and proclaimer of independence, Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman," she said.

In his speech, Jamir Uddin hoped that the conference would discuss and devise ways and means of partnership in global peace and prosperity, keeping in view deepening democracy and prevention of conflicts.

3 US soldiers

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nize bombings and other attacks against American forces, the military said.

The arrest in a pre-dawn raid in the city of Baquba, north of Baghdad, came as a roadside bomb exploded near a convoy of US troops driving near central Tikrit, slightly injuring three soldiers.

The former officer was captured along with six other people and U.S. troops discovered a suitcase full of bomb making materials along with small arms, rocket propelled grenades and mortar sights, various passports, large amounts of ammunition and a large sum of money, Maj. Josslyn Aberle, a spokeswoman for the 4th Infantry Division, said.

She said the passports included one from Germany, one from Russia and a number from countries in the region all belonging to the former officer. He was not identified and no further details were available.

Also Tuesday, large sections of Baghdad were in turmoil after an explosion inside the Foreign Ministry compound, former intelligence officers demanding back pay or jobs hurled paving stones at American forces and US soldiers confronted a big demonstration of Shiite Muslims after closing a mosque and allegedly arresting the imam.

"The parliamentarians of CPA should be the torchbearers focusing on the importance of deepening democracy and adopting appropriate measures for prevention conflict."

The CPA president also said the large presence of parliamentarians in this conference would 'inspire all of us to strengthen the nexus of partnership for global peace and prosperity'. It is not peace for the north or the south, it is peace and prosperity of the mankind all over the world.

"The future will be more challenging for all of us to meet the basic needs including food, medicare, habitat and clothing... The countries of the CPA have a vital role to play through mutual cooperation and understanding to fulfil the basic needs," he observed.

Upholding the role of parliamentarians, Jamir Uddin said the democratic way of life must be persevered to take the humanity to a greater height of achievements through working together. "For that, CPA is an important forum. The parliamentarians will provide a sense of direction to the international community against aggression and war".

After the inaugural ceremony, the delegates, observers and their spouses had their luncheon at the friendship conference centre.

There were separate group meetings of various Commonwealth regions in the afternoon while Don McKinnon and Denis Marshall gave speeches at the plenary hall at the same venue and replied to questions from delegates for over an hour.

Later at a press conference, they expressed hopes for fruitful discussions on governance, global peace and prosperity over the next few days of the CPA conference.

The PM hosted a dinner in honour of the delegates, observers and their spouses at the friendship conference centre.

Speaking briefly at the dinner, Khaleda said, "An ardent and active member of the Commonwealth, Bangladesh is a firm believer in peaceful co-existence. We are also strongly opposed to all forms of terrorism and anti-democratic activities."

The CPA is the proper forum to reiterate "our solidarity with democratic ideals," she noted.

UNB adds: Bob Speller, Don McKinnon and Denis Marshall made a courtesy call on the prime minister at her office yesterday afternoon.

Jamir Uddin Sircar was also present.

Khaleda said the CPA conference would help expand the friendly and brotherly ties among the Commonwealth countries and play a positive role in building closer relationship among legislators of the member-countries.

Bob Speller highly appreciated Khaleda's speech at the inaugural session. The delegates also praised speech and termed it 'inspiring'.

Speller said inauguration of the conference by the prime minister has increased its importance. He thanked Bangladesh government for the warm hospitality extended to the delegates.

Don McKinnon recalled that he had an opportunity to witness the PM's question hour session in parliament during his last to Dhaka.

He lauded the way the members expressed concern about the problems of their respective constituencies and also the response of the PM.

Shibir

FROM PAGE 12
Secretary Kamal Uddin and Polytechnic GS Towfiq Hasan Siddique.

Kushtia Polytechnic Institute Principal Abdul Gafur filed another case without accusing anyone.

District Jamaat-e-Islami at a press conference yesterday accused JCD cadres of killing the activist of ICS, Jamaat's student wing, and demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

None were arrested till yesterday but police are looking for the suspects, said Abous Salam, police superintendent of Kushtia while talking to The Daily Star.

But at another press conference at Kushtia Reporters Unity, Kushtia district JCD claimed that the police gunned down the ICS activist.

Two platoons of police and BDR have been deployed on the polytechnic institute campus.

Kushtia district BNP has demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident.

Kala Jahangir

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posing as Kalal Jahangir to collect toll from a businessman.

The businessman had earlier paid Tk. 2 lakh to the so-called Kala Jahangir after receiving a phone call that his three and a half-year-old daughter would be cut into pieces if he did not pay Tk. 5 lakh.

The victim informed the CID after the so-called Kala Jahangir phoned him and demanded the remaining Tk. 3 lakh. Police filed a case against Sayeedur following the arrest.

The police have recently recorded a steep rise in incidents of gangsters using the name Kala Jahangir to extort toll from their victims. The police have so far arrested 84 such fake Kala Jahangirs this year, according to DC Khan.

Free trade

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By 2010 the world could see a free trade area with nearly two billion people and total gross domestic product of almost \$3.0 trillion taking shape in Asia, Wen said.

Several leaders urged an earlier deadline for creating the ASEAN Economic Community endorsed as part of the Bali Concord II, warning Asean's economies risk being left behind.

Leaders discussed bringing forward the date and left open the possibility, said a final statement by the chair.

"Seventeen years from now might be too late," Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said Monday of the goal to cut tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade in the region.

Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, a leading advocate of the free trade bloc, poured cold water on high expectations for quick progress by a group that has frequently adopted such plans and failed to follow through. He urged proper implementation.

Asean has long been viewed as a talking shop that stresses consensus over confrontation among members, ranging from nascent democracies to monarchies and a military dictatorship, which can be reluctant or unable to follow through on agreed initiatives.

The communique underscored the thrust to faster integration and agreed to put 11 key sectors, including electronics, air travel and tourism, on fast-track to cut tariff and non-tariff barriers by 2010 rather than 2020.

ASEAN comprises Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, Myanmar, Malaysia and Thailand.

McKinnon

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secretary-general said, "The most important in this context is a determination to completely sideline the opposition rather than work with it. It is still difficult for many in the Commonwealth to recognise that the opposition has a legitimate role and that it must be given a formal place in parliamentary and other political arrangements."

About the opposition, he said, "To be even-handed in one's criticism -- the opposition can often take on the role of a spoiler, exploiting all opportunities to damage the governing party and, in the process, very often failing to distinguish between harm done to its opponents and harm done to the country."

"In some countries, there is an extensive use of the crude and desperately damaging weapons of political strike, endless no-confidence motions or boycotts. That is the denial of parliamentary politics. As a former MP myself, I can say that this is what parliamentarians are elected to avoid. People want benefit, not blasphemy. People want responsibility, not chaos."

McKinnon recalled previous CPA conferences he attended and said the political parties in the Commonwealth often fail to meet their wider responsibilities to deepen democracy.

"There is no agreement on roles, rights and responsibilities, on limits and consensus, on what the idea of a constructive and responsible opposition means in practice and, for instance, on when and how government and opposition should work together to promote national consensus. Very often there is no real dialogue at all."

Assad

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Israel said it did not intend to pick a fight with Syria but the air raid should serve as a warning for it to stop Palestinian militants operating on Syrian territory.

Syrian Information Minister Ahmad al-Hassan told Asharq al-Awsat daily in comments published Tuesday that the raid hit an abandoned building in which one guard was injured.

He said footage of a training camp released by Israeli army was "doctored to give Israel an excuse to carry out its attack."

Syria denies links to "terrorist groups" but says it backs legitimate resistance to Israeli occupation. It says Palestinian militant groups only have media offices on its territory.

Assad said a main US demand on Syria was for it to deport Palestinian groups there, but that Damascus would not do so.

"Naturally, we refused for several reasons, primarily because these people did not break Syrian laws and have not harmed Syrian interests and are not terrorists," he told al-Hayat.

Assad said US pressure on Syria was a way "to escape the American crisis" in Iraq and denied US charges that Syria was not doing enough to stop militants from crossing into Iraq.

"The borders are large and cannot be controlled...and there is a lot of chaos. There is smuggling of arms and the escape of people we do not know. Of course, the Americans say these people are terrorist and anyone for them is a terrorist," he said.

TI corruption index

FROM PAGE 1
Pakistan shared 92nd position with seven other nations with just 2.5 out of 10. India fared little better, recording a score of 2.8 to rank equal 83rd in the world with Malawi and Romania.

"CPI 2003 published globally yesterday is a poll of polls, reflecting the perceptions of business people, academics and risk analysts, both resident and non-resident," said Peter Eigen, chairman of the TI.

He said, "It is important to note that the CPI, even with 133 countries, is only a snapshot. There is not sufficient data on other countries, many of which are likely to be very corrupt."

The TI's new CPI, released yesterday, points to high levels of corruption in many rich countries as well as poorer ones, making it imperative that developed countries enforce international conventions to curb bribery by international companies, and that private businesses fulfil their obligations under the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, namely to stop bribing public officials around the world.

It also said the rich nations need to do much more to help developing countries tackle endemic corruption.

Five out of 10 developing countries scored less than three out of 10, indicating a high level of corruption.

Corruption is perceived to be pervasive in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Haiti, Paraguay, Myanmar, Tajikistan, Georgia, Cameroon, Azerbaijan, Angola, Kenya, and Indonesia, countries with a score of less than two in the new index.

Countries with a score of higher than 9, with very low levels of perceived corruption, are rich countries, namely Finland, Iceland, Denmark, New Zealand, Singapore and Sweden.

This year, of the 31 new countries included in the index were Algeria, Cuba, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

Nine out of 10 developing countries scored less than five against a clean score of 10.

"Their governments must implement result-oriented programmes to fight corruption, but they also urgently require practical help tailored to the needs of their national anti-corruption strategies," the TI report said.

For these strategies to succeed, such support must go hand in hand with international backing for civil

society to monitor the implementation of these strategies. In addition, donor countries and international financial institutions should take a firmer line, stopping financial support to corrupt governments and blacklisting international companies caught paying bribes abroad, the TI maintained.

"Western governments must also show they are serious about tackling their own companies that bribe abroad," the report said.

Eigen said, "The governments of these countries have an obligation to developing countries to investigate and prosecute the companies within their jurisdictions that are bribing. Their bribes and incentives to corrupt public officials and politicians are undermining the prospects of sustainable development in poorer countries."

He added: "It is time for the words to be turned into action to stamp out corruption, and this requires close co-operation between the developed and developing world. If corruption is allowed to flourish unchecked, more children will suffer from lack of clean water and lack of medicines, and will go to schools with no books. The time for excuses is long past. It is time for decisive action by governments and business alike."

Eight independent surveys were used for Bangladesh. Some of these are: World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Reports 2001, 2002 and 2003, World Bank's World Business Environment Survey 2001, Columbia University State Capacity Survey 2002 and a multilateral development bank survey for 2002.

FBI funded

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with a Chinese woman suspected of espionage.

FBI officials said they tried to get Ellen to end the relationship and his work was terminated for failing to follow rules.

Melvin McDonald, the former US Attorney in Phoenix who has championed Ellen's cause, said the FBI's abrupt end to the investigation squandered an important intelligence opportunity.

Trio wins Nobel

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"The rules of the Nobel prize mean they cannot choose more than three names but a large number of people worked in this field," he remarked modestly, adding that he was "delighted" by the award.

Superconducting materials let electric current pass without resistance, and one major field of application is magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for medical examinations.

This area was already highlighted on Monday in this year's Nobel Medicine Prize, awarded to US scientist Paul C. Lauterbur and Briton Peter Mansfield for their work on MRI.

Superconductors do not dissipate energy as heat and thus are many times more effective than conventional conductors, such as copper.

Researchers and industrialists alike have hungered to harness superconductivity, with the vision of building a generation of ultra-fast computers, magnetic trains and power lines that would lose none of their energy to cable resistance.

Abrikosov, while working at the Institute for Physical Problems in Moscow in the 1950s, formulated a theory for the superconductivity phenomenon. His work was based on superconductor research by Ginzburg and others.

Although decades old, their research got a new lease on life because modern-day materials can be made superconductive at increasingly high temperatures and strong magnetic fields, paving the way for future breakthroughs in technology.

While Abrikosov and Ginzburg are credited with bringing superconductivity in from the cold, Leggett was honoured for applying this knowledge to

the area of superfluidity, which occurs when the viscosity of liquid helium vanishes completely.

His work, conducted during the 1970s, gave decisive insights into the interaction of atoms.

"Knowledge about superfluid liquids can give us deeper insight into the ways in which matter behaves in its lowest and most ordered state," the Nobel jury said.

Depression

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in Khepupara, 74mm in Ishurdi and 68mm in Khulna.

Our correspondents from greater Khulna and its adjoining areas reported heavy rainfall since 10:00pm Monday, flooding low-lying areas and disrupting normal life. Standing crops and a large number of shrimp enclosures were also destroyed in southern Khulna, particularly at Batiaghata, Dumuriya, Paikgachha and Koira upazilas. Hundreds of kutcha houses were damaged and others were submerged in knee-deep water.

Cargo handling at Mongla Port remained suspended as cautionary signal number one has been hoisted there.

Maritime ports at Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to lower distant cautionary signal number one, and instead hoist local cautionary signal number three.

All fishing boats and trawlers in North Bay have been asked to keep close to the coast.

Iraq's foreign ministry

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neighbourhood minutes after the blast.

"There was a fire in the same area. We do not know if they were connected or not," said Staff Sergeant Army Abbott, without giving further details.

The shell hit in the ministry's garden, ripping a hole in the ground and shattering windows in the building, said Umar Husam of the US-sponsored Iraq Facilities Protection Service.

Ayman Talib, a lawyer who had just entered the compound at the time of the blast, said: "I heard a huge explosion. After that I heard shooting. Maybe it was ministry employees firing warning shots."

Two US tanks, one humvee armoured vehicle and several soldiers guarded the street outside the ministry complex, keeping passers-by away from the gates.

The area, also home to the coalition's main offices in Saddam's former republican palace and the Baghdad convention centre, is among the most heavily guarded neighbourhoods in the city.

The attack on the compound came barely a week after three rocket-propelled grenades were fired on the nearby Rashid hotel, home to coalition officials and US soldiers.

It also coincided with a protest outside the nearby presidential palace by about

Hasina blasts

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ference, she said, "I cancelled my US trip to join the conference, but the government forced us to stay out of it."

She said, "We know why they (government) forced us to boycott the conference. Many misdeeds of the government would have been exposed before the foreign delegates if the AL joined the conference."

"It's unfortunate that we could not join the conference due to the treatment meted out to the main opposition by the government from its preparatory stage," Hasina said. "The government politicised the conference like other sectors, including the judiciary and the administration."

Hasina said by holding the CPA conference without the main opposition's participation, the government has brought disgrace to the nation.

Hasina put the blame on the government for destroying parliamentary democracy saying that opposition lawmakers are not allowed to speak in parliament.

"The speaker directed the leader of the opposition to submit a notice before saying anything in the House," Hasina said, pointing out that the practice went against the norms of parliamentary democracy.

Hasina said, "The government has cancelled permission for an AL public rally in the city claiming that it would pose a security problem to the conference. But it has not stopped the rally of the four-party alliance at Paltan Maidan."

The government has violated constitutional rights of political parties to express their views, said Hasina.

Quoting newspaper reports Hasina said, "A foreign delegate, who is now in the city for the CPA conference, wondered whether he was a prisoner."

Hasina bitterly criticised the government for ruining the economy and alleged that the prime minister and her sons misappropriated about Tk 11,000 crore and smuggled the money out of the country.

Hasina announced from the rally that the AL would stage demonstrations across the country on October 10 to protest the misdeeds of the government.

Presided over by Dr HBM Iqbal, the rally was addressed by Abdus Samad Azad, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta, Matia Chowdhury and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, among others. Tejgaon and Ramna thana units of the AL organised the rally.

Israeli soldier

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The Israeli army was on high alert along its northern border with Lebanon and Syria after the soldier's death Monday, Israel's Army Radio reported.

The shootings began when a sniper with the anti-Israeli militia Hezbollah fired toward Israeli soldiers on a routine patrol near the border with Lebanon not far from the Israeli town of Metulla, the Israeli army said. Soldiers returned fire, the army said.

But Hezbollah, which is backed by Syria and Iran, said in a one-sentence statement faxed to The Associated Press in Beirut that it was not involved.

Lebanese security officials said two cars and a house in the Lebanese village of Kfar Kila were hit by the Israeli fire but that no one was injured.

The head of Israel's northern command, Maj. Gen. Benny Gantz, warned Lebanon and Syria that a refusal to stop the Hezbollah activities would bring about Israeli retaliation.

A senior Israeli military official said on condition of anonymity that Israel was considering further retaliation against Syria, Lebanon and Hezbollah.

1 stabbed to death

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and he was dropped from the organising committee 10/12 days ago," he said.

Solaiman filed a case with Kotwali Police Station accusing Babla, Masum, Isa Mia, Zahid, Lagla, Siraj, Kalam, Sabbir, Suman, Israfil, Sultan and Sohel. Police arrested Sabbir, Suman and Sohel yesterday.

At Shyampur, local extortionists shot Ismail Hossain Chowdhury, 55, at his house when he refused to pay tolls.

Ismail said at the DMCH that five extortionists went to his house at Nama Shyampur at 8:30am yesterday and demanded money. As he refused, one extortionist shot him in his right knee.

In another incident, unidentified assailants shot Omar Faruq, 40, in front of Moghbazar T&T Colony at 8:45am.

As soon as Faruq came out of Paglar Goli with his friend at 8:45am, the assailants opened fire on them and one bullet hit Faruq in the abdomen.

Police could not confirm who was the target of the attack. None was arrested in this connection till yesterday evening.

In yet another incident, local criminals stabbed a small trader, Ishaq Masum, at Surlota under Kotwali Police Station at 11:00am yesterday.

Some criminals led by Habibur Rahman alias Pagla Habib called him out of his shop near Surlota Mosque, took him a few yards away and stabbed him in the chest.

Masum told journalists that Pagla Habib demanded Tk 75,000 from him one and a half months ago and linked the attack to his refusal to pay the money.

US envoy worried

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On security aspects and fight against terrorism, particularly after the September 11 attacks on America, he said Bangladesh's commitment to it is visibly demonstrated through ratification of several UN conventions and hoped that Dhaka would sign the remaining nine UN conventions.

Reaffirming the US commitment to combat terrorism, Thomas noted that there is an important link between combating terrorism and achieving other important goals like promoting democracy, economic development and regional stability.

In this context, the US envoy apprised the audience of his country's present foreign policy focus on this region and the world over. "Counter-terrorism which is our number one priority around the world has been key factor of US policy in South Asia and around the world."

The envoy said USA is prepared to assist governments in strengthening border security and tightening immigration and passport-issuance process. These measures, he said, can help Bangladesh collaborate with other governments to identify terrorists.

Thomas lauded Bangladesh's constructive and moderate role in the region and the world body as a moderate and tolerant Muslim democracy. He particularly praised skill and efficiency of Bangladesh troops in peacekeeping operations around the world, especially in the war-prone countries in Europe, Central Asia and Africa.

Bangladesh is seen in the world stage as "responsible actor" because of its constructive and tolerant attitude.

Thomas also expressed his happiness over the military cooperation between Bangladesh and the United States through various military exercises by army, navy and airforce.

Inaugurating the workshop, Foreign Minister Morshed Khan expressed Bangladesh's willingness to work with international community, particularly with its small neighbours, toward averting the risk of nuclear war or accidents at nuclear sites in South Asia.

"We also have to work together to avoid channelling of our scarce resources to armaments. We need to increase spending on economic development activities and poverty alleviation," he told the workshop.

The foreign minister said

Bangladesh is ready to work with its neighbours to bring about qualitative changes in the lives of more than one billion people, which he said is the guarantee for security in the region.

"Collectively, small states can play a decisive role in ensuring regional stability even in a nuclear weapon regime," he said, urging the arms selling nations to exercise restraint in selling arms to small states fighting poverty.

Referring to the hurdles facing the small states because of their economic backwardness in the post-cold war era, Khan said these small states were not in a position to play a key role in the security and stability of any particular region.