

## Summit begins

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ability to improve standards of living for millions of people."

Swiss President Pascal Couchepin was, among others, on the podium at the inaugural ceremony attended by leaders from nearly 200 countries, including 60 heads of state and government.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who was invited by the UN secretary-general, also attended the inaugural function.

Annan said, "We have tools that can propel us towards the Millennium Development Goals; instruments with which to advance the cause of freedom and democracy; vehicles with which to propagate knowledge and mutual understanding."

He said, "We have all of this potential. The challenge before us is what to do with it. The so-called digital divide is actually several gaps in one. There is technological divide, great gaps in infrastructure.

There is a content divide. A lot of web-based information is simply not relevant to real needs of people. And nearly 70 percent of the world's web sites are in English, at times crowding out local voices and views."

Earlier on the sidelines of the WSIS, chief Technology Officers (CTOs) from 30 leading technology companies agreed on some defining principles for the next generation ICT.

Global standards emerged as a recurring theme in the discussions and were seen as a vital element in future ICT.

The CTOs from some leading suppliers and developers of ICT drafted a 'Vision Statement' outlining their thoughts on the future of ICT.

The first UN-sponsored WSIS aims to bridge the rich-poor digital divide amid growing concern

## Tk 3.20 cr Danish grant for water, sanitation in CHT

UNB, Dhaka

Denmark will provide 4 million Danish Kroner, equivalent to Tk 3.20 crore, for the implementation of "Hygiene Promotion, Sanitation and Water Supply Project" in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

An agreement to this effect was signed between NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation and Danida yesterday, says a Danish Embassy press release.

Executive Director of the NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation SMA Rashid and Danish Ambassador in Dhaka Niels Severin Munk signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

The project will be implemented over a period of two years to start the process of hygiene promotion and create a more extensive range of activities envisaged under the "Establishment of CHT Fund for Hygiene Promotion, Sanitation and Water Supply (HYSAWA Fund)" under CHT Affairs Ministry.

The overall objective of the project is to improve hygiene behaviour and access to safe water supply and sanitation facilities to support improvement of the public health situation in the CHT.

The immediate objective is to build the capacity of local NGOs, including the Hill Tracts NGO Forum, to provide services in hygiene promotion, community mobilisation and design, construction and sustainable management of water supply and sanitation facilities.

The project will be implemented through 11 local NGOs in partnership with the NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation and the Hill Tracts NGO Forum (HTNF).

The experiences, to be gained from the above project, will be used for possible support to a longer-term programme in the CHT to support the peace process and improve livelihoods among people living in the region.

## Anti-graft pact

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the US, said corruption is "a tax on the poor".

"It steals from the needy to enrich the wealthy," he added.

Anti-graft campaigners have given a cautious welcome to the treaty, saying it must be supervised closely to have any effect.

Some campaigners fear it does not go far enough, since rules on political party funding and on private sector corruption are only optional.

"The convention is a very complex instrument," said Eduardo Bohorquez of Transparency International. "It's not the point of arrival but of departure."

The treaty must now be ratified by 30 countries - a process that may take as long as two years.

Mr Bohorquez said local governments must do their utmost to ratify the treaty and "ensure it is respected".

from the developing countries and civil society about its outcome. The summit is expected to come up with solutions to issues on internet governance and a global plan to ensure everyone's access to ICT.

With the WSIS due to be launched, last ditch efforts are on to reach an agreement on key issues such as the role of the media in the digital age and on who should run the internet.

Currently, the internet is managed by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, (ICANN), a semi-private body created by the US government in 1998.

Khaleda is expected to present a strategy paper that puts greater emphasis on local software development.

Bangladesh plans to garner international support for greater market access to ICT products for developing nations at the summit. It also wants help in product development, research and investment to bridge the digital divide between the rich and the poor nations.

Dhaka has prepared a country strategy paper, which stresses a set of ethical guidelines to boost the country's software industry so that it can play a stronger role in the post-WSIS regime.

## Dhaka rejects

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ters are bent on tarnishing the peaceful and non-communal image of Bangladesh. Most of these reports are generalisations and devoid of specific instances," the release said.

It said, "The government of Bangladesh would like to assert that it has taken and will take immediate action whenever there is any report of terrorism or any crime affecting any segment of society."

According to AP, the Canadian Press news agency obtained a declassified copy of the secret July report under the Access to Information Act. Considerable portions of the highly sensitive document were withheld from release.

A CSIS spokeswoman declined to elaborate on the findings.

After going through the report, Bangladesh's high commissioner in Ottawa steadfastly denied the allegations.

"We condemn terrorism in any country, in any form, in any place," Mohsin Ali Khan said Tuesday. "Bangladesh is against any terrorist attack and it will not allow its soil to be used by any terrorist group."

## Char villagers

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operation by police, BDR (Bangladesh Rifles) and coastguards.

Both died from severe mob beating. Selim, another alleged robber, succumbed to his injuries in a similar lynching incident earlier in the morning. All three men are alleged operatives of the infamous Bashar Majhi gang.

In separate incidents yesterday, groups of locals caught Shahabuddin from Nayapara and Hamid 'Commander' from Char Majid -- two other alleged robbers -- and gouged their eyes out. The two men were also severely beaten by the mob.

Meanwhile, law enforcers arrested 40 alleged robbers with the help of local people and seized two light guns and a pipe gun along with 15 rounds of ammunition.

Of them, 22 were arrested in Nalerchar and Bayerchar by coastguards, five in Bashar Majhirhat by the BDR while the rest were rounded up by police from Char Clerk and Char Bata areas.

A diary containing names and telephone numbers of political leaders, industrialists and journalists allegedly maintaining liaison with the bandits was also recovered during yesterday's operations, sources said.

Angry locals also set fire to three houses of suspected bandits near Bashar Majhirhat yesterday.

## Jungle rule

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Haider.

He said a process was on to lease out the water-bodies.

Word on the crimes of the gangs, who built their hideouts in deep forest, did not spread across Bangladesh because of the remoteness of the chars.

"The gangs have cut trees on about 43,000 acres of the 60,000 acres forest," said the district administrator.

Locals blamed the deforestation equally on the gang and rangers of the forest department.

The gangs singled out their members and victims from the landless people.

"Our duty was to find out landless people from the char areas and introduce them to our leaders," Bahaullah said.

"Our leaders used to take money from them for letting them settle in the territory and cultivate a certain part of land," he added.

The gangsters took Tk 3,000 to Tk 5,000 an acre, he said.

## Sujan murder case verdict today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Speedy Trial Tribunal in Dhaka delivers judgement on Sujan alias Michel murder case today.

Judge Sheikh Jahangir Hussain will pronounce the verdict at 12:30pm, courtsources said.

Both the prosecution and defence completed their argument on December 3 and the court has recorded statements of six prosecution witnesses.

The case alleged that Michel was shot dead by assassins at KB Road in Sutrapur on May 4, 1999 when he and his brother Pintu were returning home by a rickshaw from Nawabpur.

A murder case was filed with Sutrapur Police Station, accusing Sharif and six others, the following day.

But a judicial inquiry implicated Ward Commissioner Saidur Rahman Shahid, in the murder case.

The court framed charges against Shahid and others on January 16, 2001.

Shahid and Sharif are now in custody, while Kachi, Bashir, Mohan Miah, Jewel alias Sohel and Kutub Uddin are at large.

Shahid has been sentenced to life imprisonment in the advocate Habibur Rahman Mondol murder case.

## Outlaw slaughtered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Tipu Molla, 35, a regional leader of the outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (BPCPM-L) and a listed criminal, was shot and then slaughtered Tuesday night.

Police recovered his beheaded body early yesterday morning from Padmobila Bazar Primary School ground under Kalia upazila of Narail district and sent it to Khulna Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Son of freedom fighter late Fahomuddin Molla of Shaikhpara Bazar under Terokhada upazila of Khulna, Tipu Molla was one of the suspects in the murder of two policemen at Bamundanga Bazar on July 2 this year.

He was also wanted in several other criminal cases including two for murder filed with Rupsha and Terokhada police stations, said Habibur Rahman, superintendent of police, Khulna.

The officer-in-charge of Terokhada Police Station said Tipu was abducted by a group of armed men from his house and later killed.

The other faction of the PBCP, Jonojuddho, has claimed responsibility for the murder of Tipu, branding him an enemy of the people.

## OIC secy-gen Riyadh iterates support to Dhaka's candidature

UNB, Dhaka

Saudi Arabia has reiterated its support to Bangladesh's candidature for the post of secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Abdullah M Bin Al-Obeid Al-Namla, Saudi ambassador in Dhaka, called on Foreign Secretary Shamsur M Chowdhury at the latter's office yesterday and reiterated the support of his government to Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, the Bangladesh candidate for the top OIC job.

The Saudi ambassador handed over an official letter to the foreign secretary and said his government felt it necessary to reiterate the support because of some propaganda by certain quarters against Dhaka's candidature.

## Hazari

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Rabbi are also on the probe body that talked to party leaders and workers in Feni and victims of Hazari's alleged atrocities. Journalist Tipu Sultan, tormented by Hazari's men, submitted a statement to the probe body.

The Amnesty International and French Embassy in Dhaka voluntarily provided reports linking Hazari to Tipu's suffering.

After Hazari's sidekicks married the AL meeting in Fen on May 31, an ALCWC meeting on June 4 suspended 19 leaders of the party and its front organisations on Feni district units.

Hazari escaped immediate punishment as the ALCWC resolved to commission the investigation.

Hazari, who has been accused in 40 cases since 1968, is currently awaiting trial in 16 criminal cases.

He was awarded life imprisonment, along with an accomplice, in an arms case on August 10.

The joint forces of army and police raided Hazari's house in Feni in his absence on August 17, 2001 during the caretaker government and seized huge arms and ammunition.

Hazari is at large since the raid.

## Unocal first US firm

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"Burmese soldiers enforced a system of slave labour and committed horrible acts of violence on Unocal's behalf," said Terry Collingsworth, executive director of the International Labor Rights Fund, which represents some of the villagers.

Unocal, which did not directly operate the field that was owned by the Myanmar government, strongly denies any involvement in abuses.

The case centres on the construction of the much-disputed pipeline, built by Unocal and partners including France's Total, to carry natural gas from Myanmar to neighbouring Thailand.

The villagers are suing for unspecified damages alleging that Unocal benefited from use by the Yangon junta of forced labour and its soldiers' use of murder and rape, even if it did not agree with the abuses.

At issue in the first part of the complex trial is whether Unocal can be held liable for the conduct of its subsidiaries which invested in the pipeline.

Daniel Petrocelli, Unocal's lead lawyer, said California's "alter-ego doctrine" bars plaintiffs from trying to tap a parent corporation if a subsidiary has valuable assets of its own.

"The whole case boils down to one point: If the subs (subsidiaries) can pay, the case goes away," he told a crowded courtroom in opening arguments.

But lawyers for the villagers maintain that Unocal is using its subsidiaries as corporate shells to avoid responsibility in the case.

"Unocal's opening statement was a tribute to the ability of corporations to do whatever they want in the name of profit," Dan Stormer, attorney villagers, told AFP.

"Nothing about these various entities was independent," he said

adding that Unocal should be held directly responsible for its units' role in the affair as they were sham companies.

But Petrocelli insisted the units - Unocal Myanmar Offshore Co., Unocal International Pipeline Co. and Unocal Global Ventures -- had hundreds of millions of dollars in assets and their own corporate structures.

"Every one of these companies has the ability to pay," Petrocelli said.

In July, Judge Victoria Chaney rejected Unocal's arguments that the case should be tried at least in part under the laws of Myanmar or Bermuda, where its subsidies were based, instead of under US law.

If Unocal manages to convince the court in the first phase of the trial, which is expected to last about 20 days, that its subsidiaries, rather than the parent company, should be targeted by any suits, it could move to have the abuse charges thrown out in the second phase of the trial.

In written complaints, the villagers said they were pressed into service to clear a route and build facilities for the pipeline, widely described as the largest foreign-invested project in Myanmar.

The plaintiffs' identities have been concealed for fear of reprisals by Myanmar's junta.

Unocal executives have acknowledged that troops did force villagers to carry ammunition and supplies for the military and to perform other labour in the vicinity of the project, but deny that any of the labour was linked to the pipeline's construction.

Unocal owned the pipeline jointly with Total, formerly TotalFinalElf, and the Thai and Myanmar governments. Total is being sued separately in Europe.

## Hasina accuses

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rights situation in Bangladesh has worsened due to repression, torture and murder of political opponents by the ruling party men. "No-one is secure in Bangladesh - whether at home, workplace, mosque or in custody."

She said under the present government's rule the country has turned into a dangerous place to live in where an average of 15 people are killed daily and 27 women and children are raped or tortured. "We must unite for democracy and against the enemies of humanity," she said.

She said a tough agitation programme against the government is on the cards. "A movement is already on and it will continue to grow till this anti-people government steps down."

Referring to the recent lynching incidents at Char Clerk in Noakhali that resulted in 31 deaths in three days, Hasina said the incidents proved that people have no confidence in the government. "People have now taken the law into their own hands and resorted to killing suspected criminals after losing faith in the government," she said.

Terming the Noakhali incidents extreme violation of human rights, Hasina apprehended that society is heading towards anarchy and extreme cruelty with no human values. She demanded proper investigation into the lynching, adding that an AL team would be sent to Noakhali to probe the incidents.

Hasina also touched upon the recent arson attack in Banskhal where 11 people of a family were

## 6 Afghan kids

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falling wall, he said.

He expressed regret over the death of civilians in Afghanistan, but said it was impossible to completely eliminate such incidents.

"We try very hard not to kill anyone. We would prefer to capture the terrorists rather than kill them," Hilferty said. "But in this incident, if non-combatants surround themselves with thousands of weapons and hundreds of rounds of ammunition and howitzers and mortars in a compound known to be used by a terrorist we are not completely responsible for the consequences."

Hilferty said he was not sure if the wall collapsed because of US fire or the secondary explosions caused by weapons stored at the site. There was no word of US casualties in the operation.

The news comes on the heels of a tragic US military blunder in neighboring Ghazni province on Saturday. Nine children were found dead in a field after an attack by an A-10 ground attack aircraft that was targeting a Taliban suspect.

## One robbed of Tk 1.34 lakh in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Bidhan Sarker, 45, a dealer of petroleum products, was robbed of Tk 1.34 lakh on Tuesday night at East Senpara under Khanjahan Ali thana.

The incident occurred at 8-45pm only 50 yards away from Pulbarigate police box.

The muggers threw acid on Bidhan when he was alighting from a bus from Noapara and took away the said money from him in front of the police on patrol duty near the police box.

He was rushed to the Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) with severe burn injuries in his entire body including eyes, doctors said. His condition is stated to be critical.

Bangladesh Bird Club informed birdwatchers and ornithologists around the world about the sighting of crested kingfishers in Bandarban.

## Hartal observed at Taherpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A dawn to dusk hartal was observed at Taherpur in Bagmara upazila of the district yesterday by and large peacefully.

Local unit of the Awami league (AL) called the hartal protesting the murder of Taherpur Poursava chairman Alo Khondokar. Alo, also an Awami League leader, was gunned down reportedly by underground operatives on December 8.

Businessmen kept their shutters down, vehicles were off the road and educational institutions remained closed during the hartal.

Police raided Taherpur, Hamirkutsha, Jogipara, Dipu and Jhikra villages early yesterday and nabbed 40 people for their alleged involvement in the killing.

Rajshahi Police Superintendent Anwar Kamal said, "The arrestees are also accused in several other criminal cases".

## BCL forms Ctg city unit sans criminals, non-students

CU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Tuesday formed a 104-member new committee for its Chittagong city unit, leaving what it claimed criminals, married middle-aged activists and non-students out of the fold.

President and General Secretary of BCL's central committee Liaqat Sikder and Nazrul Islam Babu approved the committee with MR Azim and Mohammad Salah Uddin as president and general secretary of the Chittagong city chapter. The central committee formed the fresh BCL body based on recommendations of a steering committee formed three months ago.

The new committee has 10 vice-presidents and five joint secretaries. SM Alam, Hasan Murad Biplob, Chowdhury Jahiruddin Md Babur, Rajib Dutta Rinku, Ali Riz Rozi, Sakhawat Hossain Babul, Mainul Haq Milon, Abdul Halim, Anwarul Islam Nawshad and Tareq Hayder Babu have been picked as vice-presidents.

The joint secretaries are Farhan Ahmed, Saifur Rahman Swapan, Murshed Akhter Chowdhury, Morshed Hussain and Jamaluddin Ahmed.

Participants from all groups were put on the new committee in a bid to calm the four sub-groups based in different colleges.

It was alleged that Vice-presidents Alam, Babar, Rinku, Roxy and Babul are Chittagong Metropolitan Police-listed criminals, sources said.

But Liaqat Sikder refuted the allegation, saying that any member found to be non-student, married or charge sheeted in any case will be fired from the committee.

## Remain alert

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government's socio-economic and development programmes and thanked the prime minister for forming the Ministry of expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment.

The prime minister said various measures and reforms programmes of her government had infused dynamism in the country's economy and increased its growth rate and foreign exchange reserves.

Terming Switzerland as a friendly country, she lauded the Bangladeshis' contribution to the country's development and also to economic progress of Switzerland.

The prime minister said her government will give a chance to skilled and qualified university educated Bangladeshis now living abroad to work in Bangladesh.

## Contractor

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phone for some time. "He was worried and wouldn't answer the phone for the last few days," Rahman said.

But an uncle of the victim linked the murder to business rivalry. "He was likely to buy a tender schedule for an R&H work at Paikpara tomorrow (Thursday)," he said.

Jabbar worked as a contractor since 1986 and owned a rent-a-car shop at Kalyanpur he opened three years ago. He left behind his wife and three children.

He was also a commissioner candidate from ward No. 11 in the last DCC (Dhaka City Corporation) elections, but later pulled out of the race.

No case was filed or no-one arrested till 8:00 last night.

## Kingfishers

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Enam believes more crested kingfishers might be seen in other fast-moving streams near Loikree and is planning another trip to the area at winter-end.

Bangladesh Bird Club informed birdwatchers and ornithologists around the world about the sighting of crested kingfishers in Bandarban.

## Gazipur indigenous people urged to unite to protect rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

back from Gazipur

Leaders of Bangladesh Adivashi Forum (Baf), a body of different indigenous communities, yesterday urged indigenous people in Gazipur to unite to protect their rights.

Local Baf held a rally at Durga Mandir premises in Thakurpara protesting Kashimpur Union Parishad Chairman Shawkat Hossain's bid to grab a 22.2 acres of khas land in Andharmanik where Koch and Barman communities have been living for the last 19 years.

Recently, Shawkat has filed a case to evict around 300 landless indigenous people from the land in a bid to grab it, locals said.

A Baf team visited Andharmanik and Thakurpara villages under Kaliakoir upazila to see the condition of the Koch and

## Outlaw demands toll from Betal official

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) allegedly demanded Tk 1.5 lakh in toll from a senior official of Bangladesh Betar in Khulna on Sunday.

In a letter sent by post, the PBCP (Jonojuddho) also gave death threat to Abdul Mannan, the senior official of the state-run radio, asking him to pay the money to a PBCP cadre at his residence at noon today.

"I am scared as they threatened to kill me and abduct my three daughters if I do not pay the amount in full. They have also told me not to inform police of the matter," Mannan told local journalists yesterday.

The PBCP was continuously threatening him over phone, he added.

## Peter out

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the taskforce on CHT, briefed the body on their initiatives to resolve land dispute and refugee problem.

Mosharaf presided over the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

## Pajero drags

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Nahar