

CHOGM to focus on human rights, pluralism

HARARE, Oct 16: The 11th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) which opened here today is expected to highlight human rights issues, pluralism, social development in Commonwealth countries, the role of women in society and environmental matters during its week-long meeting, reports BSS.

Also to be discussed at the meeting over the next seven days will be ways to eliminate drug trafficking in member countries and promote human resources development.

Addressing journalists after a day-long meeting by the ten member high-level appraisal group, chaired by Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Muhammad, the Commonwealth Secretary General, chief Emeka Anyaoku, said last night the meeting was held in an "off beat and positive manner."

The ten members were asked to review and endorse the agenda for the summit as well as identify tasks that the Commonwealth could fulfil in coming years.

The summit which took place at the magnificent Harare International Conference Centre was attended by 43 heads of government including ten new leaders who were not in the Kuala Lumpur summit two years back.

Robert Mugabe, the host president of the summit, in his welcome speech called upon the members to take a fresh pledge to proceed energetically to the task of moulding a new and reinvigorated Commonwealth.

Mugabe said, "we must strengthen practical cooperation in such areas as environ-

ment, health, finance, trade, sport, education and social development. Much more urgently, as more of our members turn to accountable forms of governance, we must be in a position to encourage and support nascent democratic structures."

President Mugabe welcomed the new leaders attending today's meeting and praised the revolutionary spirit of Sam Nujoma, President of Namibia saying "a fighter for freedom and yet a man of peace."

Referring to the women development, the host president said, "It must be in the forefront of reversing the injustices which for centuries have made it acceptable that women are inferior to men. The Commonwealth must endeavour not only to redress those historical injustices but should also empower women to exercise their full civil rights."

He also paid tributes to late Rajiv Gandhi of India and said the Commonwealth lost a distinguished statesman.

AL worker stabbed to death in Narail

NARAIL, Oct 16: Chayan Kumar Mallik, an Awami League worker, was stabbed to death allegedly by rival political activists here today, reports UNB.

Chayan, aged about 25, and his fellow party worker Mosharrif received serious stab wounds when at about 1 pm they were attacked by a group of armed assailants at village Auria, about 3 miles from the district town.

Awami League sources blamed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists for the attack.

Police said they picked up Chayan and Mosharrif in the town while they were fleeing and sent them to local Sadar Hospital. They were wanted in connection with several criminal cases.

Later in the afternoon, Chayan was shifted to Jessore Combined Military Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Enraged Awami League workers brought out a militant procession in the town after the body of Chayan was brought back from Jessore.

Processionists tried to attack residences of some BNP leaders and workers but were restrained by police.

Tension was prevailing in the town as thousands of Awami League workers surrounded the local Sadar Hospital where Mosharrif was under treatment.

Kumari Puja celebrated

Kumari Puja was celebrated by the members of the Hindu community Wednesday on the third day of five-day Sharaditya Durga Puja with religious enthusiasm and solemn devotion, reports BSS.

The puja was offered in the morning, while the 'Mahastami' was observed in early morning hours.

Besides, Sandhi puja was also offered.

In the capital city, the puja was observed mainly in Ramkrishna Mission, Dhakeshwari Temple and Jagannath Hall largely attended by hundreds of devotees.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Prof M A Mannan, Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mirza Abbas and State Minister for Sports and Youth Sadek Hossain visited the puja pandals at Ramkrishna Mission and witnessed the Kumari Puja.

The ministers stayed there for some time and exchanged greetings with members of the Hindu community. They also wished best luck to the devotees.

On the occasion, mahaprasad was distributed among the devotees at the Dhakeshwari Temple, blood donation and other cultural function were also held there.

With the favourable weather a great number of devotees attended the religious congregations and offered 'arati' seeking eternal blessings.

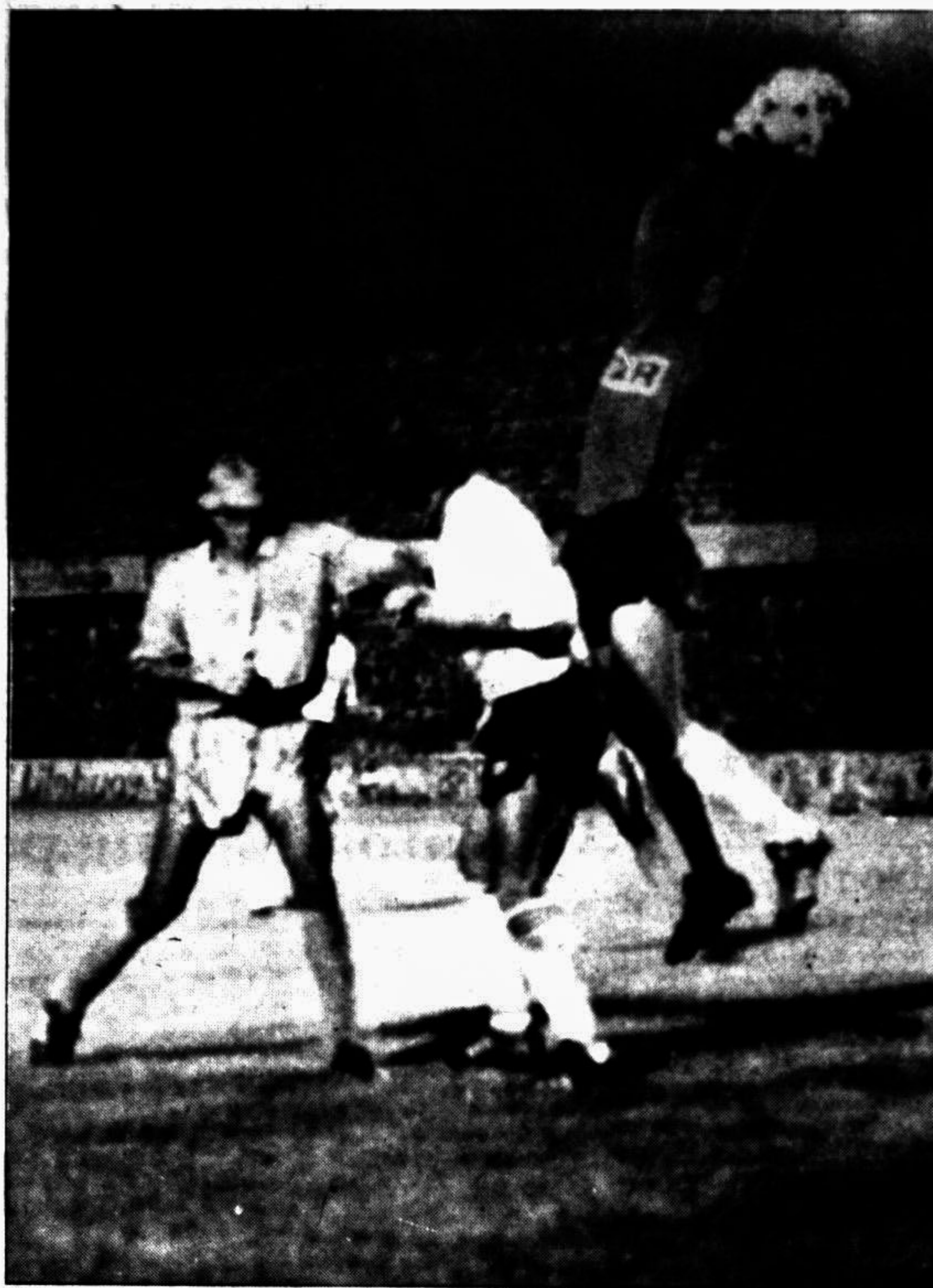
Special prayers were also offered for the peace and prosperity of the country as well as global peace.

According to message received from different districts, there are 250 puja pandals installed in Manikganj, 108 in Gazipur, 76 in Narayanganj district and its adjoining areas this year.

In the port city Chittagong, J M Sen Hall, Sadarghat Kali Mandir and Ramkrishna Mission at Asker Dighi were the largest venues of puja celebration there.

The goddess Durga this year arrived on mare and would be immersed in palanquin.

Bijoya Dashami, final immersion of the image of goddess, will be held on October 18 on the river Buriganga in the capital.



Mohammedans' Imtiaz Sultan Johnny tries to block Abahani's Zakir as Kanan safely collects a high ball during yesterday's Federation Cup football semifinal match at the Mirpur Stadium. Story on Page 10 —Star photo

Baker reports progress in proposed ME peace talks

DAMASCUS, Oct 16: US Secretary of State James Baker said today he had made progress in marathon talks with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad on a proposed Arab-Israeli peace conference in late October, reports Reuter.

Addressing a joint news conference with his Syrian counterpart Farouq Al-Shara, Baker said one issue of difference remained — the timing of talks on regional issues.

"We just concluded extensive and positive talks with President Assad on the remaining issues necessary to launch this process," Baker said.

Shara said Syria would go to the peace conference but he would not shake hands with Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy.

"After these sessions it is my view that we are still on course to hold a peace conference in this month of October," Baker said.

He described his three sessions of talks with Assad, which lasted almost 15 hours as positive.

"There is one issue having to do with the timing of the multilateral negotiations on

which there is a difference. We will continue to exchange views," he said.

Shara said he would not shake hands with Levy because of what he called "guilty hands which still occupy our land and ignore the Palestinian rights."

The marathon negotiating session delayed Baker's departure for Jerusalem.

Syrian Presidential spokesman Jouban Kourich said earlier the talks centered on letters of assurances from Washington to parties in the conflict and how to facilitate the holding of the conference planned for the end of this month.

Baker, on his eighth tour of the region since the end of the Gulf war, has not yet persuaded Palestinians to attend. In Jerusalem, Jewish settlers and peace activists planned rival demonstrations to coincide with Baker's arrival.

Expectations in the Baker party were that invitations would be sent out for the conference, expected to open in Switzerland on October 29, even if no agreement was reached on some of the fine print.

Baker will try to clinch a

deal on who should represent Palestinians at the conference, to be co-sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union, when he meets representatives of the Israeli-occupied territories in Jerusalem.

Those talks were originally planned for later on Wednesday.

Israel has refused to deal with any representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation or anyone from East Jerusalem, which it seized in the 1967 Middle East war and later annexed.

In Amman, PLO executive committee member Yasser Abed Rabbo said the PLO's decision-making central council, which will have to endorse any deal, may delay until after Baker's talks in Jerusalem on whether to allow Palestinian participation. The council had been expected to make a final decision on Wednesday night.

US officials in Washington say Syria told the United States last month it did not want to attend regional talks between Israel and Arab states on issues like water sharing and arms control until Israel shows willingness to withdraw from occupied Arab territory.

Saifur

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parently referring to donors' continued pressure for faster reforms.

He pointed out that reforms pushed too hard and too fast, may become counter-productive and defeat the very objectives of the reforms.

The Finance Minister in his speech, touched upon the political and economic objectives of the new government of Bangladesh, progress of various structural reforms agreed with donors and urgent needs of the poor developing economies in broader global perspective.

Alongside affluence, eighties have been a lost decade to many, he said. The imperatives to respond to the increasing resource-flow requirements of the poorest nations is stronger than ever."

Nobel Prize

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Sciences said in awarding him the one-million-dollar Nobel Prize in Physics. Some of the Academy's judges called him "Isaac Newton of our time."

Richard Ro Ernst of Switzerland, 58, won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his contributions to the development of high-resolution nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy.

The Nobel Prizes are to be presented in Oslo, Norway and Stockholm on December 10, anniversary of the death of Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel, who endowed five of the prizes in his 1896 will.

Tinbigha

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Patgram.

But the West Bengal government opposed the total handing over of the corridor. It agreed to allow the land to be used by Bangladeshis on condition that the residents of Kuchibari would be allowed to visit Mekhliganj easily.

The process of transferring the 175-metre long and 85-metre wide corridor was delayed when the Forward Bloc raised objections to it with the full support of the BJP on September 29.

According to foreign office sources the handover of Tinbigha was now a matter of time and "The Indian government is very much aware of the problem." The sources added, "It has now become a problem of the Indian government, because the Indian government needs political steps to solve its internal problems before handing over the corridor."

Meanwhile, a section of Indian politicians initiated a move to link the ULFA problem in Assam as a bilateral issue when the Indian Home Minister S Y Chavan made a statement in a parliament session that Pakistan, China and Bangladesh were responsible for harbouring ULFA guerrillas.

But Bangladesh Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman strongly refuted the allegation and said, "India should find solutions to its own problems rather than blame us for those."

However, according to Foreign Ministry sources, the Indian government has already been convinced that the Assam problem is a completely separate one and has no link with the handing over of Tinbigha.

Different Indian newspapers have also written articles supporting the Indian government's move to settle bilateral disputes with Bangladesh and in the process they made comments that the handing over of Tinbigha could be a milestone in developing the relations between the two countries.

Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh K Srinivasan recently went to Delhi to make the Indian government aware about Bangladesh's attitude regarding handing over of Tinbigha. Srinivasan also tried to convince the Indian leadership that the handing over of Tinbigha would help strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

The foreign office sources said that Bangladesh Prime Minister Khalea Zia now attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Harare is scheduled to meet the Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao today at 10.30 pm Bangladesh time (Harare time 6.30 pm) to discuss bilateral issues including the handing over of Tinbigha.

Foreign office sources said that the meeting which may continue for half an hour would be followed by another summit-level meeting during the SAARC summit to be held in Colombo next month.

The sources however said that the prospects of the Bangladesh Prime Minister's visiting India this year were bleak. However, if the disputed issues were resolved, the Prime Minister's visit to India would take place next year, the sources added.

The Midnight File

Benazir's plea to transfer corruption case rejected

ISLAMABAD, Oct 16: Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto lost a court battle today but kept up a tirade against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government over a multi-million-dollar loan scandal. The Supreme Court rejected a plea by Bhutto that her corruption trial be transferred from a judge whom she says is biased against her. The verdict was issued in a one-sentence order after a five-day hearing in Rawalpindi, near Islamabad. The five judges said a detailed order would be issued later, reports Reuter.

KLF sets Oct 19 deadline for Radu-militants swap

JALANDHAR, Oct 16: The Khalistan Liberation Force (KLF), has set October 19 as the deadline for the release of the three militants, including Bhai Jinda and Bhai Sukha, for safe return of the kidnapped Romanian Charge d' Affairs, Liviu Radu. A statement containing the threat by the militants was found in the letter box of the Jalandhar Bureau of PTI this evening, reports PTI.

Zaire's crisis govt sworn in

KINSHASA, Oct 16: Zaire's crisis government was sworn in here today at a brief ceremony in the presence of President Mobutu Sese Seko. There were no speeches as Prime Minister Etienne Ishaqeki and his 22 ministers signed their oaths of office and shook hands with Mobutu, reports AFP.

Diarrhoea claims 44 more

Diarrhoea claimed 44 more lives and attacked another 3,077 in 29 flood affected areas of the country Wednesday, reports UNB.

Officials said the death toll due to diarrhoea rose to 1,642 and the cumulative attack since September 1 stood at 1,08,025.

Of the 44 deaths, Pabna had the highest number of casualties of 7, followed by Habiganj-5 and Tangail, Kurigram and Naogaon 4 each and Nilphamari 3.

Officials said that reports of deterioration of the diarrhoea situation were still pouring in from Netrokona, Kishoreganj, Jamalpur and Pabna while it is spreading in certain areas of Bogra and Noagora.

The situation, however, is reportedly improving gradually in the northern districts, they added.

Delhi tells UP govt not to breach HC order on Babri Masjid

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: The Home Minister, S.B. Chavan, has asked the Uttar Pradesh government not to take any action which might constitute a breach of the High Court order on the Ayodhya temple dispute, reports PTI.

He wanted to know from the state government the steps it had taken for protection of the disputed structure saying that the centre was concerned about the protection of the Babri Masjid.

The centre has also asked the Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh, to take a fresh look at the desirability of the proposed acquisition of land around the disputed shrine in view of pending court cases and the sensitive nature of the controversy.

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Political freedom

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fire lines and helped reconstruction efforts in the Gulf.

The Prime Minister said Bangladesh had helped monitor elections in Namibia and Zimbabwe and had striven to project the concern of the least developed countries and to keep alive the commitment for preferential treatment of the poorest of the poor.

She said, "We have sought to address solution to global problems of drugs, terrorism and environment damage in the light of our own experience."

Begum Zia described the Commonwealth as powerful forum to pursue political dialogue and consensus-building because of its diversity. She said the Commonwealth's political role was illustrated by its tenacity to end apartheid. The goal remained paramount — to promote negotiations for the future constitution of a democratic and multi-racial South Africa, she said adding, her government fully supported the decisions of the Commonwealth foreign ministers to relax sanctions in phases as concrete objectives were made.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister said: "All states in Southern Africa must be supported in achieving security and sustained development." Bangladesh, like all other peace loving states, wants just and peaceful solution of the Palestinian issue, she said adding "we welcome the recent initiative in this regard."

PSC opposed to office shifting

By Staff Correspondent

A recent government decision to transfer the office of the Public Service Commission (PSC) from the old airport building at Tejgaon to the Ganabhaban complex at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar may put the PSC in trouble, it is learnt.

According to the decision, the Ministry of Defence, which has been asked to vacate the old High Court building for use by the Supreme Court, is to be transferred to the old airport building.

Commission sources said that over the last eight years the PSC spent over Taka one crore and change the structure and design of the building to suit its purpose. Buildings proposed to be given to the PSC at the Ganabhaban complex would be inadequate even to accommodate the 285 PSC officers and employees, not to talk about spaces for taking regular examinations.

It is gathered that the PSC has over the years developed a 600-seat examination hall at the old airport building which is more or less adequate for taking four mandatory examinations each year — two departmental examinations of 30 cadres, and two senior scale examinations. Besides examinations of non-cadre officers are also held at the same hall. And examinations are held almost throughout the year.

Moreover, under a development project, about Taka one crore worth of modern machinery and equipment are being installed at the building for ensuring more efficient and speedy disposal of examinations.

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