

Global trading system

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Professor Rahman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), chaired the inaugural session, while Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the think-tank conducted the working session.

The speakers demanded special and differential treatment (S&D) as pledged by the developed nations in favor of LDCs.

The governments of LDCs must not go for any further negotiation under the WTO until and unless the earlier commitments are implemented, they added.

The civil society members alleged that the multilateral trading system was not working amid privileges given to developed countries by the WTO rule and denial of the legitimate rights of the LDCs.

They also demanded unconditional duty- and quota-free market access of commodities from LDCs to developed countries.

Twenty-six overseas representatives from 17 international organisations and local civil society members attended the meeting.

The forum will adopt a declaration today ahead of the trade ministers' meeting of the LDCs from May 31 to June 2.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya said the LDCs' global trade share declined from two per cent in 1960 to one per cent in 1970. It has now dipped to 0.4 per cent due to marginalisation of poor countries, he added.

He said the special and differential treatments, pledged at different ministerial meetings of the WTO, were yet to be delivered to the LDCs.

Debapriya demanded duty- and quota-free access of all LDCs' products to the markets of industrialised nations.

He also demanded a moratorium on anti-dumping duties on the products originating from the poor countries.

Dr Sothi Rachagan, regional director of the Consumer International, Malaysia, said the LDCs were not able to cope with international standards often imposed by rich countries at the time of exporting their products.

He demanded mandatory duty- and quota-free access of goods from LDCs to developed countries and early implementation of S&D to help avert further marginalisation of poor countries.

Max Van der Sleen, head of the secretariat of EU-LDC Network of the Netherlands, said the LDCs should demand duty-free access and preferential treatment from the next ministerial meeting.

Murray Gibbs, project coordinator of Asia Trade Initiative of Vietnam, said the multi-lateral trading system was not working due to the developed countries. The interest of LDCs has been kept out from the WTO, he said.

Ruth Mayne, policy adviser of the Oxfam International, UK, said rich countries controlled the International Monetary Fund

(IMF), World Bank (WB) and the WTO. They rigged international trading rules in favour of them, she observed.

She demanded a comprehensive ban on export dumping originating from the LDCs.

Professor Rahman Sobhan said there remained a gap between the official voice and voices of the common man in different rounds of the WTO's ministerial meetings.

Due to unequal global trading system, the poor countries have been suffering from development deficit, he observed.

Former Ambassadors Faruq Sobhan and Waliur Rahman, Director General (DG) of Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Toufiq Hasan, Director of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) Monzur Ahmad, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Vice-President Zinnat Ali and Director Anisul Hoque and President of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association M A Awal also spoke on the occasion.

Terrorism

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law and order in Iraq and protect the country's heritage.

Morshed hoped that the United Nations (UN) would play its due role in the post-war Iraq situation.

Referring to the tragedy in Palestine, he said Bangladesh has always felt that a permanent and just peace in the Middle East can only be established with the full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Referring to different aspects of activities of the OIC, he said it is time to pursue the concept of an Islamic common market proposed by late president Ziaur Rahman over two decades ago.

The foreign minister said Bangladesh welcomes the recent road map which envisages an independent, sovereign and democratic Palestine by 2005.

Dwelling at length on South Asia, Morshed said, "We cannot but express concern at the tension that has been all pervasive in South Asia in the recent years. We, however, are optimistic to see some winds of change hinting at better times for our region."

He said Bangladesh welcomes the recent rapprochement between Pakistan and India and the decision of the leadership of the two countries to engage in dialogue to resolve their problems.

Referring to areas of cooperation between OIC members, he said Bangladesh is open for it.

Morshed concluded his statement stressing the need for revamping the OIC to make it more meaningful and effective, focussed and result oriented.

"The OIC has provided the Islamic countries with a forum to make our voice heard in the international community. If we can convince them the strength of our unity, our collective voice will not only be heard but also be heeded," he said.

Wife happy with verdict

FROM PAGE 1
Mondol was shot dead in front of his house at Banogram, his widow Nilufar yesterday said in an emotion-choked voice justice had finally been done.

She could not go to the court due to illness of her three-year-old son, Fahim Mondol.

"I am very satisfied with the speedy trial of the killers. I hope that the verdict would be executed at the same pace after the High Court and Supreme Court proceedings," said Nilufar, 30.

Urging the government to ensure speedy trial for all the killing cases like her husband, she said, "I would like to see how now fast the government proceeds on to execute the death sentence of the culprits."

Mother, sister and other relatives of Mondol, waited with bated breath at the magistrate court premises since the morning. Police had to beef up security, as people gathered outside the court to know about the verdict.

The 65-year-old mother of Mondol, Rabbi Nur Bibi told The

Daily Star she was pleased with the verdict and thanked Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for the speedy justice.

"We have got just judgement in due time. I want the death penalty to be executed as quick as possible," said Nur Bibi.

Mondol's sister Nurun Nahar Shefali said the prime minister assured them of justice and they were happy for this just sentence.

Abdul Hai Bhuiyan, complainant of the murder case, claimed that the advocate was gunned down by the killers of the past government. "We are now expecting that the verdict would be executed by the High Court and Supreme Court quickly."

One of the person at the court premises said, "Commissioner Saidur Rahman Shahid got away committing many crimes in past. But this time he could not."

Relatives of the convicts meanwhile broke down in tears hearing the verdict. While their relatives wailed, the commissioners and other convicts showed no sign of emotion.

strong at the moment in the international currency market, this may be an appropriate time to float our exchange rate."

Mamun Rashid, chief executive officer of Citibank NY, said taka was almost running on a free float for the last 12-15 months as rates were decided according to demand-supply situation and liquidity in market. The central bank was also not virtually selling any dollar.

"This means the market has already factored in floating exchange rate and we don't expect any turbulence since the central bank has decided to closely monitor the market," he pointed out.

Khondakar Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank, said when India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka introduced free exchange rate, the market was volatile for some time. "But this is unlikely in case of Bangladesh as the official and kerk market dollar rates are now very close."

Exchange rate

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in the foreign reserve movement. The present step will only complete this process of market-based determination of the exchange rate," he observed.

"In the present context, there is no reason why floating the exchange rate should destabilise the market," Prof. Mahmud asserted. "The existing restriction on capital account transaction will remain, which means that one can buy forex only for import and other legitimate needs."

"There is therefore no scope for capital flight or speculative currency swap which are the usual causes of exchange market volatility in many other countries," he maintained.

"We are not going for such full convertibility of taka since most of the foreign currency outside Bangladesh Bank is held by the nationalised commercial banks. They will initially lead the market in getting the foreign currency prices on a daily basis.

"Besides, the Bangladesh Bank can intervene in the forex market to ensure a managed float of the exchange rate. But even that kind of intervention may not be necessary given the present situation in the forex market. Since dollar is not



PHOTO: STAR

Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf hands over the first consignment of relief for Iraqi people to Head of the delegation of International Federation Anthony Ronald Maryann yesterday.

Zia's Anniversary of death

FROM PAGE 1
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) -- the party he founded -- and its front organisations have chalked out a 10-day programme that began yesterday.

The programme includes laying wreaths at the grave of Ziaur Rahman, Qurankhwani, milad mahfil, feeding the destitute, discussions, photo exhibitions, blood donation and cultural programmes.

Besides, different socio-cultural groups, student and professional bodies have also chalked out elaborate programmes.

National dailies will bring out special supplements while state-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar as well as private satellite channels will air special programmes highlighting the life and works of the late president and his contribution in national the development.

In a message, President Iajuddin Ahmed said Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in 1971 declared independence of

Bangladesh and urged the confused nation to participate in the War of Liberation. He said people of all walks of life and patriotic soldiers were inspired by the call of Shaheed Zia when they took part in the liberation war.

The president said the contribution of President Zia in establishing multiparty democracy in the country has finally determined his status in history.

On the eve of the day, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia released a commemorative stamp of Tk 4 denomination and first day cover of Tk 6 denomination.

The BNP will hoist party flag at half mast and black flag atop its central office and party offices all over the country in the morning. Leaders and workers of the BNP and its front organisations will visit the grave of Ziaur Rahman, place wreaths, offer fateha and participate in a milad mahfil there.

Daylong Qurankhwani will begin in the morning at the BNP central office and at the grave premises while leaders and work-

ers of the ruling party will start placing wreaths at 9:30am today.

Khaleda will offer fateha and place wreaths at the grave on behalf of the government and the BNP at 9:45am today. She will then take part in destitute feeding throughout the capital city.

As parts of the announced national programmes, the BNP began a three-day programme at divisional headquarters yesterday, and will begin a two-day programme at district level and one-day programme at thana level today.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has also taken up a 3-day programme, including screening of a documentary on life and works of Zia, milad mahfil, discussion meeting and poetry recitation session, to be held at the National Museum and Shilpakala Academy auditoriums.

Bangladesh Shishu Academy will organise a discussion on "Shaheed Zia" at the newly constructed lecture theatre at 10:30am today.

AL dares govt

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People would force the present 'autocratic and corrupt' regime to step down through a tough movement if they do not quit immediately, the AL leaders said.

They called upon their workers to strengthen the party to unseat the government.

The BNP-Jamaat regime is inviting its own fall through its misrule and misdeeds, and there is no alternative to movement to free people from the clutches of alliance regime, the AL leaders observed.

The leaders were addressing a rally in front of party's central office at the Bangabandhu Avenue, which was organised by the AL city unit to protest 'disgraceful' comments on Sheikh Hasina by cabinet ministers and BNP leaders.

They said people would topple the government very soon, as they are fed up with the government's nearly 19-month rule which has been marked by violence, murder, rape, corruption and price hike of essentials.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina censured the 'anti-people and anti-country' activities of the government at home and abroad, they said, maintaining Hasina never said anything against the country's interest.

The government must realise that opposition's criticism of ruling party activities is a part of democracy, they said.

witnesses out of 46 were cross-examined.

Special public prosecutors (PPs) in the case Nazrul Islam and Abdul Latif Talukder said they were satisfied with the judgement.

Lawyers of Shahid said they would appeal to the High Court against the Judgement.

Advocates Mahbub Ahmed, Saidur Rahman Manik, Emdadul Haq Lal and Jakaria defended the accused.

Additional police forces were deployed on the court premises to avert any untoward incident. All the collapsible gates of the court were closed at 9:00 am and lawyers, Journalists and others were checked before they were allowed to enter the court.

Earlier, a group of people raised slogans on the court premises for release of Shahid and another group chanted slogans for his execution. At one stage, a clash broke out between the two groups. Police charged batons on them to bring the situation under control and arrested four persons. They are Selim, Shahjahan, Kabir and Shahid. Later, Selim and Shahjahan were released.

BCL strike cripples CU

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University (CU) was paralysed due to a strike called by the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) protesting the new initiatives regarding eligibility for the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations and fees hike by the university authorities.

No scheduled class or examination was held and the central library remained closed. However, the shuttle trains and university buses plied.

Nirmul Committee protests SQ Chy's OIC nomination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A committee against Liberation War collaborators in a joint statement yesterday lashed out at the government's nomination of an alleged 'war criminal' for the prestigious position of an important international grouping.

In a statement, Ekattarer Ghatat Dalal Nirmul Committee (Committee for the Elimination of the Killers and Collaborators of 1971) strongly protested against Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury's candidature for the secretary general of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

Signatories to the statement included Advisory Council Secretary General of the committee, Prof Kabir Chowdhury and its Acting Secretary General Prof Muntasir Mamun.

Businessman

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Demra area, sources said.

On March 29, three armed elements with flowers and fruits in their hands and posing as visitors entered the clinic where he was admitted. As they were about to attack him, relatives and others resisted and drove them out. Police arrested one of the gang members injured in the exchange of fire.

Meanwhile, Khan along with six others was arrested near the Dhaka Medical College with firearms about 15 days ago. But they were released later as the arms were licensed.

Shyampur police said uniformed and plainclothes police were deployed in the area to detect and arrest the criminals. No case was filed till the filing of this report last night.

Another shot dead

In another incident, a man aged about 30 was gunned down at Rankin Street in the city yesterday.

Sources said the victim was a witness in the Advocate Habibur Rahman Mondol murder case. It could not however be confirmed.

Other sources said he was an accused in another murder case and was released from jail recently.

Police recovered some bullets from the spot. Some visiting cards, a note written in code and Tk 4,432 were found in the victim's pocket, they said.

Another person injured in the incident, Sajib, 20, was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

No case was filed till 9:30 last night.

Shazneen case

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Shamsul Haq , who was the first investigation officer of the Shazneen murder case, said he had investigated the case for four days.

The tribunal is hearing the Shazneen rape case and hearing of the murder case has been stayed by the High Court.

Haq told the court he had collected a list of 15 invitees to the party from the residence of Latifur Rahman (Shazneen's father) on April 24, 1998.

All the six accused -- Shahid, Hasin, Badal, Shaniram, Minu and Parvin -- now in jail custody, were produced before the court yesterday.

Special public prosecutors (PPs) ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul and Arfan Uddin Khan appeared for the state. Advocates Mosharraf Hossain Kajol, MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam and Mizanur Rahman defended the accused.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Ltd., was raped and murdered at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Mondol

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for him. An armed gang of four at age between 18 and 20 was tailing him.

The gunmen sprayed bullets on him from a close range and fled. Mondol died instantly. His clerk Arshad escaped unhurt. The incident took place at 9:15am.

The killers fired again on a mourning procession locals and colleagues brought out after Mondol's nama-j-e-janaja on the Supreme Court premises. Four people, including two policemen, were injured in the desperate attack.

The killing sent a wave of shock among lawyers. Activities at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, the Dhaka District Sessions Judge's Court and the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court came to a standstill.

A joint secretary of the city BNP and leader of the Jatityatabadi Ainjibi Parishad, Mondol was a defence counsel for Col (ret'd) Sultan Sharier Rashid, a convict in the Bangabandhu murder case. He had also served as assistant public prosecutor and special public prosecutor during the BNP rule.

Alim, Fazil, HSC exams

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cameras at examination centres. This year, 6,31,300 examinees have been sitting for HSC examinations. Of them, 3,88,248 are males and 2,43,052 females.

One hundred and twenty-five examinees were expelled under the Dhaka Education Board, said board officials yesterday.

Four examinees were expelled in the capital, four in Munshiganj, five in Narayanganj, 15 in Narsingdi, seven in Gazipur, 12 in Mymensingh and Netrokona each, 39 in Jamalpur, six in Tangail, four in Sherpur, one in Faridpur, four in Madaripur, three in Shariatpur, seven in Gopalganj and one in Rajbari.

Eighty-three examinees were expelled from the Chittagong Education Board centres: 40 in Chittagong, 31 in Khagrachhari, seven in Rangamati, three in Bandarban and two in Cox's Bazar, said our CU Correspondent.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haq Milon visited some centres in Chittagong, including Hathazari, Rauzan and Ghohira, and caught 25 examinees cheating.

The Rajshahi Education Board expelled 356 examinees: 52 in Gaibandha, 51 in Kurigram, 35 in Dinajpur, 33 in Thakurgaon, 30 in Bogra, 18 at Naogaon, seven in Pabna, four in Natore, 18 in Sirajganj, seven in Joypurhat, nine in Rajshahi, 47 in Rangpur, 13 in Nilphamari, and eight at

Panchagarh.

As many as 25 students were expelled under the Sylhet Education Board, with 15 in Sunamganj, five in Moulavibazar, three in Sylhet and two in Habiganj.

The Comilla Education Board recorded 50 students as expellees, with 30 in Noakhali, eight in Comilla, four in Laxmipur, three in Chandpur and Brahmanbaria each, and two in Feni.

The Jessore Education Board expelled 59 examinees: 10 in Jessore, seven in Meherpur, Bagerhat and Khulna each, two in Narail, three in Jhenidah and Chuadanga each, 12 in Kushtia, four in Satkhira and Magura each.

The Barisal Education Board expelled 74 students. Twenty-seven students were expelled in Bhola, 17 in Barisal, 16 in Jhalakathi, nine in Patuakhali, four in Pirojpur and one in Barguna.

Nazrul Islam, a teacher of the Muladi Arif Mahmood College, was forced to seek apology from two examinees he punished for cheating at the Dumki Janata College examination centre, reports our Barisal Correspondent. Islam came under physical assaults by the two along with their accomplices on his way back home.

The Bangladesh College Teachers Association expressed concern at the incident and demanded security of on-duty teachers and punishment to the attackers.

Sun claims 5

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moderate heat wave might parch the city.

The number of diarrhoea patients at the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh, at Mohakhali surged over the last three days.

There were 280 patients, mostly children, at the hospital as of yesterday evening, doctors said.

The number may climb further if the hot spell continues, they said.

Most people of Dhaka took the easiest way out yesterday-- they stayed indoors. But there was little respite, as power supply appeared mercurial.

Dhaka suffered a shortfall of 30 megawatts (MWs).

Taps ran dry in many localities, adding to the woes. The Dhaka Water Supply Authority (WASA) official said the residents of Mirpur and the old quarter were hard-pressed for it.

The searing heat paralysed life

in Rajshahi where the mercury jumped to 41.2 degrees Celsius.

Day labourers were the worst victims as a few of them could dare outing for work.

The selling of green coconut, cold drinks and watermelons marked a remarkable rise. Sufferings of HSC examinees also went beyond description.

Many people of Rajshahi, fed up with the daylong sultry weather, hit the streets just after sunset and gathered on the Padma bank.

Khulna and Barisal divisions were also hit by the scorching.

The meteorological office said thunderstorms accompanied by temporary gusty to squally wind is likely to sweep a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 24 hours till 6:00pm today.

A moderate to severe heat wave may continue over Khulna division and the region of Rajshahi and Ishwardi and a mild to moderate heat wave over Dhaka division, they added.

AI report one-eyed

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watchdog, now headed by a Bangladeshi woman, said in its report that Bangladesh authorities have tortured both common criminals and members of the opposition.

It also criticised Bangladesh for not releasing details of a promised investigation into reported anti-hindu violence after Khaleda Zia's alliance government came to power in October 2001.

The first official reaction to the report came from Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury yesterday.

Speaking to newsmen at the weekly briefing at foreign ministry, Chowdhury said, "We have seen Amnesty's report. One has to see things in proper perspective. A report should reflect realities and has to be objective and unbiased."

Turning to the SAARC issue, the foreign secretary said the SAARC Standing Committee might meet in Kathmandu sometime between July 1 and 15.

Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury referred to the agenda of Arab and Middle East peace process in the

ongoing Tehran meeting of foreign ministers of OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) member states as very important.

"It is important for us as we have a candidate to run for the post of secretary general of the OIC," Chowdhury said.

He said Senegal has already lent its support to Bangladesh's candidate Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury while the initial response from most of the OIC member countries including Saudi Arabia is also positive.

When asked about the controversial background of Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury, the foreign secretary said government had made the choice after considering all factors.

On the frequent incidents of firing on unarmed Bangladeshis nationals by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF), Chowdhury said Bangladesh had hoped that the recent summit-level meeting between BDR and BSF would ease things up.

"Dhaka is airing its concerns to New Delhi," he said.

World Heritage Site

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istration suspended work on the expansion.

The khadem covered the original steps into the lake in front of the mosque with white tiles.

"The so-called renovation by the khadem is a breach of the rules of a World Heritage Site. The shrine should be preserved as it was in the past," said Wolfgang Vollmann, Bangladesh representative of the UNESCO.

"If one compares the present structures with those in old photographs, they will find the difference. To some extent, the aesthetic appeal of the place has gone," he said during a recent visit to the mosque.

One of the frustrating aspects is that the khadem tried to go for more expansion and threw up some concrete structures destroying the aesthetic aspects of the historic relic, said an official of the Department of Archaeology.

Referring to the suspension on the repairworks, a district administration official said the construction might not be stopped because of the religious sentiment in the locality.

"The exterior of the mosque and mazar needs urgent renovation. Its walls are in a dilapidated condition. The caretakers themselves may initiate a project and carry out renovation which will be a total disaster," said an official of the department.

The khadem have already threatened Lovely Yasmin, official

custodian of the World Heritage Site from the Department of Archaeology, that they would go for the construction defying the administration's order.

Every day a large number of visitors flock into the mazar and are subjected to whimsical rules laid down by the khadem.

Some allege that the rule of the khadem does not mirror the true values of Islam and is bent raising 'pots of money' from visitors for themselves.

"At least 30 families make a living on the gifts donated to the mosque by visitors," said an official of the department, on condition of anonymity.

The attendants of the khadem aggressively announce that those who have brought gifts for the mazar should put them only in the designated areas and must not go inside with them.

They ask the visitors to drop money into an iron box and not to forget to take taze (talismans) from them.

Women are entirely prohibited from entering the mazar and mosque. The entry of foreigners is also frowned upon.

They have even barred Yasmin from entering the shrine.

"The access of women has been restricted to the mosque and mazar. They can offer prayers from outside," said one of the attendants, defiantly.

"It has been done to uphold the sanctity of the place."