

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 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 Wallur 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 and 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.

Morshed at length on South Asia, 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, focused 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.



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

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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, Qurankhwan, 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 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.

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 development.

Daylong Qurankhwan will begin in the morning at the BNP central office and at the grave premises of 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.

Back in Britain, claims the British parliament and public may have been duped into believing Iraq's alleged lethal weapons post-Saddam "we can do that now in a completely different atmosphere."

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