

Probe body fails to submit report on anthem glitch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The three-member probe body constituted to investigate the technical glitch that stopped playing the national anthem on audio at the launch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference on October 7 could not submit its report in time.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who ordered the probe, gave the committee 48 hours to come up with its report, but it could not make any headway before the deadline yesterday.

Officials of the chief whip's office said they did not get any instruction until yesterday and could not name other members of the probe body.

"I am busy here (Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre) throughout the day, when will I investigate the matter?" asked Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain, head of the probe body, yesterday evening.

Spanish diplomat, 11 others die in attacks in Iraq

REUTERS/AP/AFP, Baghdad

Triple attacks in Baghdad killed a Spanish diplomat, a US soldier and at least ten Iraqis yesterday, exactly half a year since the American troops occupied the city.

A suicide car bomber crashed through the gates of a police station, killing at least three policemen and seven civilians and wounding scores in the blast, Iraqi police said.

"It was definitely a suicide bomb," one policeman said at the scene.

"We found the head of the attacker. It had been blown off his body. He was bearded, and his body was charred."

In another part of town, Jose Antonio Bernal, a Spanish air force sergeant attached to the embassy, was gunned down after apparently answering the door at his residence. He was described as an information attache in the Iraqi capital.

"The attackers arrived at the home of Bernal in a car bearing foreign licence plates and fired

several times at the attache when he opened the door," a Spanish foreign ministry statement said.

Security has been tightened outside the Spanish embassy in Baghdad.

Near the town of Baquba, about 40 miles northeast from the Iraqi capital, an American soldier was killed in a rocket-propelled grenade attack on a military convoy early yesterday, a US military spokeswoman said.

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CPA workshop denounces attack on Syria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commonwealth lawmakers yesterday emphasised identifying and understanding the root causes of proliferation of terrorist activities for effective anti-terrorism measures across the globe.

Non-resolution of the decades-old Middle East conflicts was identified by them as a deterrent to defusing spill-over tensions at various places all over the world.

At a workshop titled 'Anti-Terrorism Legislation: Have We Achieved Any Tangible Results,' many lawmakers also denounced the recent unwarranted Israeli attack on Syria.

Sri Lankan lawmaker GL Peiris moderated the workshop held at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre as part of the 49th Conference of the

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Bangladesh among 12 with no freedom of information law

REAZ AHMAD and SHAKHAWAT LITON

Bangladesh figures on a list of 12 countries without the freedom of information law and the 'habits of secrecy' contributes to corruption that leeches away economic lifeblood, a Commonwealth rights group said.

The 'Open Sesame', the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) report, 2003, says 42 others of 54-member Commonwealth either have specific law that guarantees access to information or explicit constitutional guarantees.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of

the report from Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) headquarters officials yesterday.

"Research shows... countries with access to information laws are... perceived to be the least corrupt. In 2002, of the 10 countries scoring best in Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index, no fewer than eight have effective legislation enabling the public to see government files," the report said.

"Of the 10 countries perceived to be worst when it comes to corruption, not even one had a functioning access to information regime."

Bangladesh was pegged as the

most corrupt country for three straight years from 2001 to 2003 by the Transparency International.

The CHRI report says a guaranteed right to access to information is an essential, practical anti-corruption measure.

"Corruption undermines democracy. It creates a culture of impunity destroying the rule of law and creating a class of overlords who need secrecy to keep their dark deeds hidden in dark places."

"Crooked politicians care little for their representative duties and serve those who can pay rather than those who elected them. In the worst

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Inadequacies in two private universities found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The high-powered inquiry committee formed to assess the status of private universities found 'inadequacies' in both the universities it visited yesterday at Dhanmondi in the city, sources said.

The committee members, led by University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Prof Mohammad Asaduzzaman, visited the People's University of Bangladesh and the Darul Ihsan University.

"There are inadequacies in both the universities, and their sponsors seemed to be driven by business motive, rather than charity for education," a member of the committee told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

But the university authorities tried to explain why they could not fulfil the UGC criteria, he said.

"During the visit, we tried to assess infrastructure, classroom conditions, laboratory and library facilities, the number of teachers, their educational qualifications and the methods of teaching at the universities," the member added.

The UGC formed the nine-

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PHOTO: STAR

Gulshan Lake turned into a sea of death yesterday as scores of fish died from suspected high toxicity in the water. Recent rains have increased pollution of the lake water, washing in toxic waste from nearby factories and drains.

Alliance toasts two years in power today

PM's address to nation at 7pm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led ruling alliance of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia celebrates today its two years in power, mixed with successes and failures.

The BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and Islami Oikya Jote (IO) forged coalition during their movement against the Awami League government and contested the October 1 general election combinedly. The coalition roared into power, bagging over two-thirds seats in parliament.

Though there was a commitment to form a 4-party coalition government, the BJP and the IO have not yet been included in the cabinet.

To highlight the occasion, the prime minister will address the nation over Bangladesh Television and Betarat 7:00pm.

Inclement weather meanwhile forced the government to defer a meeting scheduled for Wednesday to October 19.

The BNP has not yet implemented much of its 32-point election pledges.

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Crime, corruption mar success of ruling alliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Corruption, crime, price hike of essentials, government's indecision, excessive dependency on bureaucracy and administrative sluggishness have largely marred the achievements of the two-year-old government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia.

It appears that corruption has pervaded all sectors as Bangladesh was pegged as the most corrupt country in the world for the third straight year by a sleaze watchdog.

The government took more than 200 steps to improve law and order, but murder, kidnap, rape, extortion and a spate of other crimes continued to be the prime concern of people.

The setting up of special tribunals, quick disposal of sensitive cases and passage of tougher laws against acid attacks and repression on women and children have brought some relief to people.

Conflicts in policy decision, rivalry among senior ministers, discord between ministers and state

ministers, conflict between ministers and bureaucrats, inner-grouping and war of attrition among ministers are affecting government activities and presenting a drag on development.

Apparent dual rule, dominance of a youngsters, lack of tested leadership, inadequate number of skilled and experienced politicians are slowing down the activities of the government that took office with over two-thirds majority.

Compared to the previous BNP administration that ruled from 1991 to early 1996, the present government seems to suffer from serious lack of dynamism as the mainstream leadership has been cornered by inexperienced youngsters.

Nowadays, most cabinet ministers and senior BNP policymakers, marginalised in the past two years, apparently hesitate to own the government and take responsibility for government actions. They feel everything depends on two power centres -- one at Nakhla (the Prime Minister's Office) and the

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BoI chief's money link with Shinepukur under question

Mahmudur Rahman still gets Tk 5 lakh a month, benefits from the company; he 'issues' office memos, gives 'technical support'

STAR REPORT

Allegations have been raised against the executive chairman of the Board of Investment (BoI), Mahmudur Rahman, a high profile government functionary, that he continues to receive huge financial benefits from

Shinepukur Ceramics, even two years after he had left the company as its managing director and chief executive officer.

Reliable sources have come up with documents to prove that the company still bears Mahmudur Rahman's various expenses includ-

ing his expenses on credit card, cellphone and utility bills and even house rents.

But the most controversial allegation is that Shinepukur Ceramics still transfers Tk 5 lakh every month to his account at IFIC Bank. Sources

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Saarc members meet Oct 14 to discuss free trade area

Dhaka to ask for waiver on anti-dumping measures for regional LDCs

STAR REPORT

Seven South Asian countries will sit in Kathmandu October 14 to discuss details of the measures needed for establishing a free trade area in the region.

A three-member Bangladesh delegation representing the foreign and commerce ministries and Bangladesh Tariff Commission will

participate in the four-day expert committee meeting.

Bangladesh's position for the meeting was finalised yesterday. It basically wants that the four regional least developed countries (LDCs) Bangladesh, the Maldives, Nepal and Bhutan -- be kept out of anti-dumping, countervailing and safeguard measures.

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UN peacekeeping not enough

CPA workshop told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reforming the United Nations has become imperative to maintain global peace, as the existing mechanisms to preserve world order are inadequate, a workshop of the 49th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) conference was told yesterday.

British lawmaker Cheryl Gillan, moderating the workshop, "Do We Have Adequate Peacekeeping

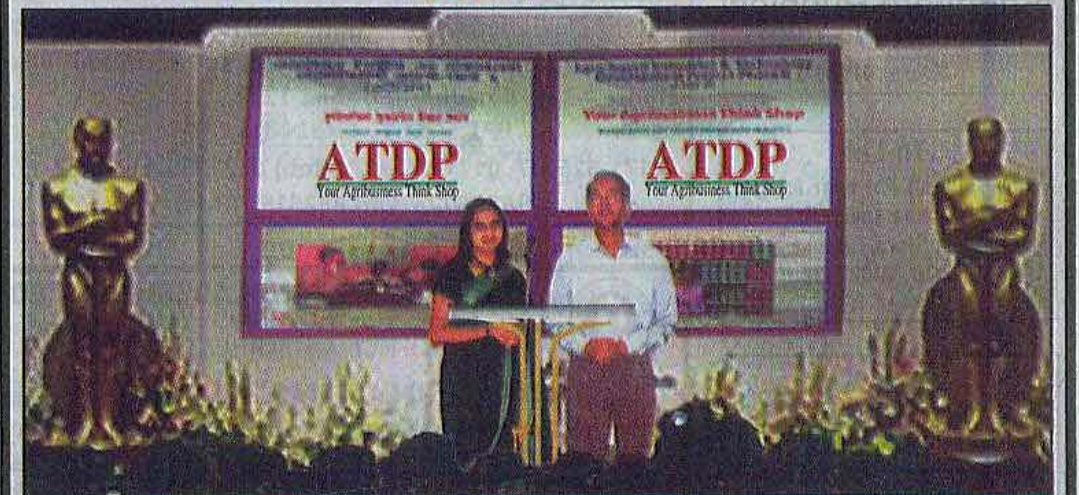
Mechanisms for Preserving World Order" at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, told newsmen the CPA delegates viewed the present peacekeeping instruments as insufficient for global peace.

"The UN is well aware of its own failures. The secretary general (UN) has himself emphasised reform within the world body," she said.

"The UN is extremely valuable an

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Announcing the Nominees for Women's Agripreneur Oscars!



Tina Salem and Nazrul Islam of ATDP announced the nominees

And The Nominees Are....

- Rahima Mahmood, Tahmina Jinat, Daly Halder, Kamrun Firoze, Raoshan Ara, Zeba Rasheed Chowdhury, Sabina Yesmin, Sarker Selina Rahman, Nusrat Bari, Selina Quader, Jahanara Begum, Bilkis Chowdhury, Farida Yasmin, Aparna Paul, Bilkis Mortuja Pervin, Saleha Akhter, Nasima Sultana, Farhana Rahman Nina, Shahida Khanam, Krishibid Fatema Iqbal, Mahfuza Ahmed, Rahena Khanam, Monika Mustari Arju, Shamim Ara Begum, Akhter Shamsi Ara Parvin, Shahjadi Begum and Fakrun Nahar Sheli

ATDP announced the nominees for the 1st Women's Agribusiness Plan Competition on October 9, 2003. The judging panel comprised of CEO's of Total Lubricants, Banoful & Co., M M Agha Ltd, Adcomm Ltd., Wimpy and AIUB selected the nominees after evaluating more than forty entries received nationwide.

Coming Attraction: Announcement of the Semi-finalists!

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