

# C'wealth aims

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point of view that within their economies they might look at the idea of accepting temporary migrants."

The Commonwealth, a club of mainly former British colonies which include rich countries like G8 members Britain and Canada as well as some of the world's poorest, like Bangladesh and Malawi.

"They say they can identify gaps in their economy where they would be in a position to accept temporary migrants," said Frendo.

The summit on Saturday produced a tough-worded statement on the need to redouble efforts at the upcoming World Trade Organisation talks in Hong Kong from December 13.

Leaders issued a 17-point statement that called on the European Union to make more concessions to cut agriculture subsidies and on rich countries to provide aid to nations that loose trade privileges such as sugar producers under a recent EU deal.

"There's some heavy demands there but I don't believe that anyone believes they are unreasonable demands. These are the kinds of things that agriculture producers around the world have been waiting for 20 years," said Common-wealth Secretary General Don McKinnon after agreement was reached Saturday.

With a third of the WTO as its members and representing a fifth of global trade, the Common-wealth sent a clear message that it was ready for a change to help combat poverty.

"We are not accepting the status quo," McKinnon told a news conference.

The Commonwealth statement set out a list of demands for negotia-

tors in Hong Kong including reaching "time-bound commitments for substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support and significant improvements in market access."

Leaders said they were committed to injecting "urgency into the work of negotiators at the WTO", adding that delegations would be instructed to "be flexible" and "place priority on a genuinely development-oriented round for the collective good."

They also called for a WTO agreement on "the elimination of all forms of export subsidies by 2010" -- a deadline that Commonwealth officials said underscored the commitment to levelling the playing field.

The talks in Hong Kong are aimed at forging a new global trade agreement, which could lift millions out of poverty, largely by getting rich countries to lower their tariff barriers blocking developing countries from their markets.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose country currently holds the presidency of the European Union and also chairs the Group of Eight club of wealthy nations, heard appeals here from Caribbean and other leaders to take up their case at the EU and in other fora, sources said.

"There is a high expectation that the EU will do more than the EU is currently saying they will do," said McKinnon.

The Commonwealth push for fairer trade came as WTO chief Pascal Lamy released a draft text in Geneva on Saturday that was to launch a series of consultations on the new WTO deal.

## Fire at Ctg oil depot

UNB, Chittagong

A fire broke out at Meghna petroleum depot in Gupatakhal in Patenga on Saturday night, burning oil worth Tk 10 lakh.

Fire brigade sources said an abandoned oil pipeline of the pump house at the depot caught fire following an explosion in an electric transformer.

Firefighters rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control at 1:30 am.

Fire brigade sources estimated the loss at about Tk 2 lakh. But the depot authorities claimed the damage could be up to Tk 10 lakh.

Meghna petroleum formed a three-member probe body to enquire the incident.

## Two killed

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under Kalihati upazila in Tangail.

Police said a Dhaka bound passenger bus of Keya Paribahan from North-Bengal ran over the motorcycle at Pathaalkandi area at about 3:30pm. Motorcycle rider Masud, a poultry farm owner, died on the spot while another unidentified rider was severely injured. He was admitted to Tangail General Hospital.

After the accident, local residents barricaded the highway and damaged 17 motor vehicles.

Later, they removed the barricade at the request of the police.

In another incident, a day labourer was killed in a road accident on the Dhaka-Tangail highway yesterday noon.

The victim is Shohrab Hossain, 63, of Kodalliar Char village under Chouhali upazila in Sirajganj.

Police said a North-Bengal bound bus from Dhaka ran over Shohrab at Beerpushia area under Basail upazila in the district at about 12:00pm.

Basail police recovered the body and sent it to Tangail General Hospital for autopsys.

The driver of the bus managed to escape with the vehicle.

## Kamrul killing

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CID sources said Jafor admitted to his involvement in the killing. Shah Alam, one of the major accused who orchestrated the murder, engaged in the assassination, Jafor admitted. Shah Alam was later arrested and killed in 'crossfire' with Rapid Action Battalion.

Police have so far arrested 17 persons in this connection out of 26 FIR-listed accused, including the key suspect Rafiqul Islam, who is now in jail.

Jafor, however, could not say anything about Rafiq's involvement in the killing, but he acknowledged the feud the family had with the former OC.

Momin, who was gunned down in front of his house at Kafrul, named Jafor and four others as his murderers before dying at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

## Hannan

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the remand. He was wearing a helmet and a bullet proof vest.

The forwarding report placed before the court by the investigation officer (IO) said Hannan gave important information about the country-wide bomb blasts on August 17, including the Jatrabari area. He needs to be quizzed further to find out more about his involvement and whereabouts of his accomplices, the report said, seeking for a further five-day remand.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Quamrunnabhar granted the remand prayer.

Mufti Hannan, who escaped arrest for several years, was already shown arrested in four other blast cases filed with the Tejgaon, Ramna, Motijheel and Demra police stations.

## Dhaka's proposal

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Communique and Valetta Statement on multilateral trade behind closed doors.

Intensive deliberations were made on the forthcoming ministerial of the WTO, governance, human rights, terrorism and the bridging of the digital divide. The WTO meeting will be held in Hong Kong in December.

## 2 bullet-hit

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Witnesses and party sources said some 8-10 armed cadres, loyal to former minister Mr Nasiruddin, went to the fair venue at the Chittagong Outer Stadium in an apparent bid to establish their control over the fair, which is now being controlled by the Noman group.

The cadres of Noman group tried to foil the attempt and chase-counter chase and exchange of 10 rounds of fire ensued, forcing the attackers to leave the scene.

Nazrul and Taher received bullets in their legs and were admitted to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital.

In the other incident, Shibir and JCD activists locked in clash at around 11:30am when the latter brought out a procession, protesting the "alleged" kidnap of its leader Ruhul Hakim Saturday night. The JCD activists chanted slogans against Shibir, blaming it for the abduction.

# Change of govt

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The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a leading independent think-tank, organised the dialogue on 'Implementing the PRSP: Civil Society's Perspective on Choices and Challenges' with former finance minister and member of CPD Board of Trustees M Syeduzzaman in the chair.

Speaking as its chief guest, Saifur said the political situation in the country now is not good and may turn more adverse in the near future, adding no significant economic development would be possible in the absence of good politics and governance.

To implement the PRSP properly, he said, "We have to improve governance, reduce corruption and strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system."

The minister also emphasised strengthening of local government bodies for a successful PRSP implementation. Otherwise, he said it would be impossible to empower people.

He said, without power, local governance is meaningless, adding, "We are already in the process of strengthening the local governments."

The finance minister felt the assistance of development partners needs to be more harmonised, where there is a major lacking. He criticised the donors for still maintaining a "driving" attitude and for often making contradictory prescriptions.

For instance, he cited the International Monetary Fund once asking to cut interest rates on loans and then for increasing the same.

Turning to the employment situation, Saifur said the perception of a stagnated job generation is incorrect.

At the dialogue, former finance minister AMA Muhith highlighted corruption as a major issue of the time and said it has not been properly addressed in the PRSP.

He also alleged that many official documents are statistically inaccurate.

Muhith, also a member of Awami League's central advisory council, said there was much improvement from the first to the fourth phase of PRSP designing, but, he regretted that the opposition political parties had not been involved in the process at all.

"You need to have a proper investment policy, but there is no policy indicated in this document on improving the roles of district and upazila councils," he maintained.

In his turn, the special guest of the conference, Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui said there must be a strong and independent monitoring mechanism in place for implementing the PRSP and the prime minister should lead the coordination and implementation process.

He sharply reacted to Muhith's allegation of inaccurate official documents, saying the leaders of the present government do not ask the bureaucrats to do so, who are allowed to work in an entirely professional manner.

"I'm not aware of any figure being doctored in any official document. We don't do that. None of our political masters -- neither the prime minister nor the finance minister -- told us to do that," he asserted.

Siddiqui pointed out that three of the eight priority issues in the PRSP are about governance, adding, "It's a moving document and will continue to change."

At the dialogue, CPD Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya

## 2 dozen MPs

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and BNP lawmakers' position in those as well as potential substitutes for them, if required.

The survey has made many BNP legislators worried over their fate in the coming days. A number of MPs from Rajshahi and Khulna region said they are uncertain about getting party nomination again.

About two dozen MPs including some ministers have not performed well and their popularity in their respective constituencies has nosedived, sources said quoting the survey.

Intra-party conflicts and rise of Islamic militancy, particularly in the northern and south-western regions of the country, have weakened the party's prospect in the next elections in around a dozen constituencies, the survey found.

The expulsion of party leader Abu Hena, MP, has also created mixed reaction within the party. A number of party lawmakers were seen in the chambers of senior ministers to have an idea about what is going to happen in the party. One lawmaker was heard telling a minister it is the long-standing grievances among many MPs and leaders that 'created Abu Hena'.

"Those who want to split the party should be dealt with a heavy hand. But leaders who are devoted to the cause of the party should be properly evaluated," he said.

Another lawmaker regretted that they do not get any opportunity to speak their minds. "Over the last four years, only six parliamentary party meetings were held. Since we do not have access to the prime minister, to whom could we express our grievances?" he said.

presented an analysis of the PRSP implementation challenges. He felt ownership of PRSP acquires a new dimension as the country moves towards another round of parliamentary elections.

According to his paper, the fate of PRSP will be defined by two factors -- the depth of its political ownership and the strength of the partnership commitments of the donors.

Debapriya said the poverty reduction strategy suffers from some inadequacies, but they are not binding constraints for realising its potentials, up to a certain degree. In this connection, he mentioned that the entire cabinet has not discussed the document, neither was it formally tabled at parliament for general discussion.

He also observed that, though the development partners want to remain involved in the country's progress on a long-term basis, they feel frustrated by the slow progress in institutional and policy reforms. In this context, he stressed mitigating the frustration that may affect the PRSP implementation.

The PRSP is ready for the civil society and the civil society is ready for it, stated the CPD executive director, "But are the political masters ready for the PRSP? We are not quite sure of it."

Taking part in the discussion, Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director Hua Du underscored the need for mobilising domestic resources and attracting foreign direct investment. She said the ADB would double its assistance to Bangladesh over the next five years.

Du also emphasised implementation capacity building of government institutions and said it is necessary to make public sector procurement procedure transparent so that foreign assistance can be released quickly.

Former secretary Mujibul Haque identified conflicting political culture as a major barrier to implementing the PRSP and called on the ruling alliance and the opposition political parties to jointly address the issue.

He also recommended setting up sectoral advisory committees with civil society's representation on all processes of PRSP implementation.

Bangladesh Economic Association President Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad pointed out that it would be very difficult to implement the PRSP if corruption and the law and order downside are not checked.

## Deputy minister's

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He was residing at Talgharia police camp since 2001 on "security grounds".

He, among others, led the Rajshahi march of Bangla Bhai group on May 23 last year. He also threatened journalists for writing against Bangla Bhai while addressing rallies in front of law enforcement agencies.

Locals blame him for harbouring outlaws. He developed rivalry with outlaws following a dispute with their leader Fartul in 1998. The rivalry resulted in murder of his two brothers -- Mostafa Ali Khamaru in 1998 and Mamtaz Ali Khamaru in 2001.

Since then, he took shelter at the police camp and joined hands with Bangla Bhai allegedly with assistance from a ruling party lawmaker.

## Rickshaw-free

FROM PAGE 1

consultation with the home ministry, meeting sources said.

DIG Sajjad Hossain said the BRTA should simplify the driving licence giving process. About 90 per cent drivers carry fake licence, mainly due to hassles in getting a genuine one.

The inspector general of police, divisional commissioners, BRTA and BRTC chairmen, high officials of RHD and other officials concerned were present at the meeting presided over by Communications Minister Nazmul Huda.

The wrong mileage measurements of different routes by the RHD have caused problems for the transport owners and workers following the recent transport fare hike, the meeting was told.

To investigate the matter, the meeting formed a seven-member enquiry committee comprising representatives from the RHD, BRTA, BRTC, transport owners and workers.

The meeting also expressed dissatisfaction over slow progress of the construction of Dhaka bypass allegedly due to inefficiency of the construction firm owned by a ruling party MP. The communications minister asked the RHD officials to look into the matter and take steps for rapid progress of the work.

The meeting was told that 1013 village markets and illegal installations on the highways were evicted.

## Court orders

FROM PAGE 1

Court of Second Class Magistrate, Dhaka dismissed the case saying that there were no elements for taking it into cognisance.

Judge Mohammad Rafiqul Islam in his October 20 order cancelled the lower court's order following a criminal appeal by the prosecution lawyers and said the case would continue according to the law.

Mohammad Abdur Rouf, secretary of Fazlur Rahman Foundation and a consultant of Beximco, filed the case with the Court of First Class Magistrate, Dhaka.

The complainant said Nazmul Huda, his brother Kamrul Huda and their accomplices on September 9 entered Fazlur Rahman Foundation in Dohar under Dhaka district with firearms, snatched valuables worth about Tk 85 lakh, and threatened officials saying that they would not be allowed to run the foundation's activities during the BNP rule.

Moreover, the accused asked BNP and Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal activists to take possession of the foundation office, which was still occupied by them, the complainant added.

Salman F Rahman on March 1 rented a house from Meher Nigar at Joypara Bazar in Dohar for the foundation named after his father in 2001.

The foundation, which works for the welfare of the destitute, had given her Tk 6 lakh in three instalments as per a contract, the complainant said.

He said he went to Dohar Police Station to file a case after the robbery but the duty officer refused to register it.

The house owner is also accused of aiding the minister and his men.

Advocate Mohammad Firoz Alam moved the case on behalf of the complainant.

## Baul songs

FROM PAGE 1

of UNESCO earlier inscribed the Mosque of Bagerhat in Khulna and the Ruins of the Baudha Bihar (Buddhist Monastery) at Paharpur on the World Heritage List in 1985 and declared the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, as a site of World Heritage in 1997.

Unesco also organised two folk festivals in 2004 and 2005, with a view to promote and safeguard traditional folk songs and forms of Bangladesh.

This was Unesco's third proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage, an international distinction aimed at raising public awareness about the value of such heritages. This includes popular and traditional oral forms of expression, music and dance, rituals and mythologies, knowledge and practices concerning the universe, know-how linked to traditional crafts and cultural spaces.

An 18-member jury, chaired by Princess Basma Bint Talal of Jordan, proposed the 43 new masterpieces to the Director-General. The jury met from November 20 to 24 to examine the 64 national and multinational candidates.

A total of 47 masterpieces were proclaimed in 2001 and 2003. Twenty-seven of them have already benefited from Unesco's support, particularly from safeguarding operations, which received financial assistance from Japan, Unesco officials said. They also hinted that this third proclamation would probably be the last of the series.

## Bill Gates

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said Gates is likely to be visiting Bangladesh after his tour in India.

It's been about eight months since Microsoft officially started their operations in Bangladesh.

In cooperation with their market development partner, Square InformatiX, they have focused on building good relationships with their certified partners locally during the past few months.

Microsoft also launched their 'Unlimited Potential' programme on June 13, one of many projects planned for Bangladesh.

The source on condition of anonymity said Bill Gates, the richest man in the world and a great philanthropist, is expected to be in Dhaka on December 9 or 10 for a day's visit on board a chartered aircraft.

He is likely to assess Microsoft's activities in Bangladesh and may announce some expansion plans, the sources said.

"His visit is very important for the national interest of Bangladesh because his visit would give a new impetus to Bangladesh's nascent IT industry," the source added.

Bangladesh has already produced a good number of bright IT professionals, including software engineers, software developers and a data-entry workforce.

Gates might call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia during his brief stay in Dhaka, and is likely to discuss how Bangladesh could collaborate with Microsoft in bridging the digital divide in the country.

He may meet key government officials, academicians and IT industry leaders and is likely to interact with the media.

Microsoft had revenues of US\$36.84 billion for the fiscal year ending June 2004, and employs more than 55,000 people in 85 countries.

Born on Oct. 28, 1955, Gates grew up in Seattle with his two sisters. Their father, William H. Gates II, is a Seattle attorney. Their late mother, Mary Gates, was a schoolteacher, University of Washington regent, and chair-

woman of United Way International.

# JMB threat

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corrupt and BNP men can become a judge at present."

It also said those who did not have proper educational certificate but could bribe have been made judges on political consideration. "Do you think that they can be protected by providing gunmen?" the letter posed the question, also answering, "No".

Six SC judges and 75 percent HC judges take bribe, the letter claimed, adding that the assistant judges give 40 percent of their bribe-money to the judges of the judges' courts after appeals against their judgements are filed with these courts.

"The High Court and Supreme Court do not know what justice is. They just uphold the judgements of the lower courts. So, these judges do not have any right to live," the letter said.

**BARISAL**

The JMB yesterday in separate letters to Banaripara correspondent of the Daily Samakal Al Mamun Laskar, special correspondent of the local daily Ajker Barta Mizanul Islam and correspondent of Ajker Paribartan SM Mainul Islam Sabuj threatened with death.

Mainul told the BDNEWS that the handwritten letter, which mentioned the name of JMB at the bottom, threatened him to leave journalism or else he will have to die.

The journalists filed a general diary (GD) with the Banaripara PS in this connection.

Earlier, the JMB also threatened to blow up the Banaripara office of the Land Department.

**COMILLA**

Anonymous callers identifying themselves as JMB members have been threatening to blow up the office of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) here for the last few days if the centre does not stop "anti-Islamic training", sources said.

Last Wednesday, the militants had sent a letter with a piece of shroud by post to BARD Assistant Director Abdul Mannan.

Security measures have been tightened at the BARD office and some important places in the town. The police searched the bags and identity cards of the BARD officers and employees at the entrance.

Earlier, the JMB had allegedly threatened to blow up Comilla Victoria Government College and Comilla Government College.

**FAKEBOMB IN CITY SCHOOL**

A guardian discovered the bunch of

handwritten letters, lying in a corner of the guardians' waiting room at around 1:15pm, cautioning that a number of time bombs were planted at different places in the school, including the office of the assistant headmistress.

Soon the teachers rushed to the office of Aloka Ghosh and found the device under her table.

"If Islamic education as per the Qur'an and the Hadith is not introduced in the school within two days, the bombs would be detonated by remote control," read the notes sent by the Khilgaon unit of the banned Islamist outfit Harkatul Jihad.

Witnesses said the incident sent a wave of panic among the students, gurdians and teachers on the campus during the rush of two shifts of examinations.

The police conducted a hectic search but found nothing else.

Headmaster Jasimuddin Bhuiyan told newsmen that someone did it "to create panic".

The day shift examinations were held under tight security.

**GAIBANDHA**

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: Gaibandha police yesterday attached movable properties of Matin Mehdi, second-in-command of Allahr Dal, a brigade of the banned JMB, from his Bridge Road residence in the town following a Jhenidah court order.

Mehdi, an accused in several cases of bomb blast and militant activities in Jhenidah, Comilla, Bogra, Sherpur and Pabna, has been absconding.

Recently Jhenidah police submitted a charge sheet against Babul Ansari, chief of Allahr Dal, and Matin Mehdi in connection with the August 17 bomb blasts.

**RANGPUR**

Our correspondent in Rangpur reports: Police have remained silent regarding the activities of Islamist militants in the district allegedly at the instruction of high-ups following the busting of the outfit's denat Noorpur, Rangpur.

Superintendent of Police Mahbub Mohshin refused to say anything but that he is unable to disclose any information about the recent operation at the Rangpur den for the sake of investigation.

Officer-in-Charge of the Kotwali thana Bazul Rashid has been trusted with the investigation, he said.

Meanwhile, a reliable police source preferring anonymity said they had been warned by the high-ups not to disclose anything about the findings of the operation to the media.

# Saddam trial judge

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judge) Raed al-Jubhi this week."

Jubhi is the chief investigative judge on the Iraqi High Tribunal which is tasked with judging former regime officials, including Saddam, for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

Kader said all the suspects were Sunni Arabs from Kirkuk, from Saddam's hometown of Tikrit or from the restive western province of Al-Anbar.

The suspects also confessed to helping to carry out suicide attacks in the Kurdish city of Sulaimaniyah in October in which 10 people were killed, he said.

Security will be a top priority when the trial of Saddam and seven former henchmen resumes Monday in Baghdad on charges of killing 148 men and youths from the Shia town of Dujaal, north of the capital, after the former leader escaped an assassination attempt there in 1982.

Saddam, 68, who refuses to recognize the court, and his former aides have pleaded not guilty to the charges. They face the death penalty if convicted.

On Monday, the court is expected to call the first witnesses for the prosecution, who may testify from behind screens or with faces masked to protect their anonymity.

Saddam is likely to face a raft of other charges, ranging from the massacre of Kurds in 1988, a brutal crackdown against Shias in 1991 and crimes committed during the wars against Iran and Kuwait.

Abdul Aziz Hakim, the leader of Iraq's most powerful Shia political party, on Sunday accused the judiciary of "weakness" because of the delay in bringing Saddam to trial, almost two years after his capture.

Hakim, who heads the Shia-based Supreme Council for the Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), blamed "the intervention of the Americans in the choice of judges, the presence of Baathists in the judicial system and the fear among judges because of the insecurity."

"This government wants to see

## Niko threatens

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He also mentioned that Petrobangla at that time had assured Niko that the price will be determined and a gas purchase and sale agreement (GPSA) signed on time for gas supply from Feni. "But it has not been done in one year."

Country's present gas demand is 1,600 million cubic feet per day (MMCFD) and Petrobangla can ensure from its own and foreign companies' fields 1,557 MMCFD. The Niko supplies 30 MMCFD from Feni.

Niko officials said its arrears from Petrobangla for gas supply from Feni in one year stood at about \$50 million. The Niko wants the price be determined at \$2.35 per thousand cubic feet while government proposes \$2.10.

However, no progress took place in bargaining in last 10 months.

Officials said Niko received \$ 4.0 million in two instalments from the government.

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were also present at that time.

A former CEC termed it unprecedented in the history of EC.

"The election commission is a centre point of all activities relating to holding elections. There should be transparency in all its activities. There is nothing to play hide and seek with," the