<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0630 – 0800</td>
<td>Breakfast at respective hotels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0810</td>
<td>Assemble in Hotel Lobby for departure to Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0900 – 1300</td>
<td>General Assembly, Election of Chairperson of the Executive Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venue: Hall of Fame, BICC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closing ceremony including presentations of Plaques to retiring Officers and Regional Representatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>1030 – 1045</td>
<td>Morning Tea/Coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venue: Foyer in front of Hall of Fame, BICC</td>
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<tr>
<td>1300 – 1400</td>
<td>BUFFET LUNCH</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venue: Celebrity Hall, BICC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400 – 1530</td>
<td>Meeting of the new Executive Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venue: Windy Town, BICC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>Refreshments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Venue: Foyer in front of Hall of Fame, BICC</td>
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<tr>
<td>1715</td>
<td>Delegates depart BICC for respective hotels</td>
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<tr>
<td>1400 – 1730</td>
<td>SOCATT Meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Venue: Room Harmony, BICC</td>
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<tr>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Call on Hon'ble Prime Minister Heads of Delegation and Executive Committee Members only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Dinner at Bangabavan (Official Residence of the President) hosted by Hon'ble President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for Heads of Delegation and Executive Committee Members only</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For all the other Conference participants’ dinner in respective hotels</td>
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Assalamu Alaikum and a very good morning to you all.

Excellencies,

Hon’ble Members of Parliament,

Hon’ble Chair of the inaugural ceremony,

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Hon’ble Chair of the inaugural ceremony.

Hon’ble Speakers of CPA Member Parliaments,

Hon’ble Members of Parliament,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The cherished desire of the people of this land to establish a sovereign and an independent democratic country has been materialized through huge sacrifices. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had led the struggle from the forefront. As a consequence, he had to endure confinement in jail for half of the Pakistan’s 24 years’ regime.

The Pakistani military junta conceded to arrange general elections in 1970 after a long and unbridled struggle waged and headed by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh Awami League earned an absolute majority in the election. But the then rulers had tried to impose an undemocratic rule through exercising power instead of handing over power to the elected representatives. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his historic speech on the 7th March aroused the Bangali nation to get freedom and he called for a noncooperation movement. As the Pakistani military force started genocide through ‘Operation Search Light’ on the night of the 25th March in 1971, Bangabandhu declared the independence in the first hour of the 26th March. We earned an independent Bangladesh by sacrificing 3 million lives and innocence of 2 hundred thousand women in the nine-month bloody war with Pakistani forces.

When Bangabandhu was engaged in reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war-ravaged country, the reactionary defeated forces assassinated Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with most of his family members on the 15th August 1975. Me and my younger sister survived as we were abroad on that fateful night. We had been barred to return home. With the killing of Bangabandhu, the democracy was assailed and the era of military dictatorship started.

While in exile, I engaged myself in the struggle for restoration of democracy. Ending six years in exile, I returned home in 1981. I had to endure huge sufferings while struggling for establishing people’s rule. Repeated attempts were made on my life along with house-arrest and internment.

We didn’t restrain ourselves from the struggle for the restoration of democracy despite thousands of workers and leaders became victims of massive repression. We think that only a democratic polity can ensure uplift of people’s living standard through fulfilling their basic needs.

After long 21 years, my party Awami League returned to state power in 1996 and we engaged ourselves to fulfill the basic needs of people not as a ruler but as a public servant. After an interval of 8 years, my party again came to the state power in 2009.

Our main aim is to build a hunger and poverty-free Bangladesh through strengthening the foundation of democratic rule in the country. Aiming to fulfill the goal, we framed Vision 2021 and now are implementing the same devising specific plans.

Excellencies,

Friendship to all, malice to none - is our policy in maintaining relations with foreign countries. Especially, we are eager to maintain good relations with our neighbors. We have resolved long-standing problems of Ganges Water Sharing and Land boundary with India through signing treaties. Similarly, maritime boundary problem with India and Myanmar was also resolved amicably.

But the inhuman persecution meted out on the Rohingya population in the Rakhaine state of Myanmar and their forcible expulsions from their homeland have created instability in the region and beyond. Over 622 thousand Myanmar nationals fled to Bangladesh to escape persecution. After 1978, another 5 hundred thousand Rohingyas came to Bangladesh at different times.

We have given temporary shelter to this huge number of people on humanitarian grounds. I would like to request you all to discuss the Rohingya issue with utmost importance and exert pressure on the Myanmar government to stop persecution on its citizens and take them back at the earliest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A new campaign of facing militancy and terrorism has been added to our efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty. Thoughtless acts of a section of people are claiming innocent lives.

We Parliamentarians being the people’s representatives have the first and foremost obligations to preserve and maintain the faith of the people in democracy and Parliamentary Institutions.

Due to the pragmatic and far-reaching thinking of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, decision to join the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association’s (CPA) membership was taken in 1973. Our Hon’ble Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP made Bangladesh proud when she became the first women to be elected as the Chairperson of CPA in 2014. This is a testimony by the Hon’ble Members of the Parliament across the Commonwealth towards our commitment to democratic practices and values.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangladesh has been a journey through the roads of poverty and hunger-free democratic society. We have been practicing the SDGs in continuation of the successes of the MDGs. The subjects of SDGs have been incorporated in our 7th 5-year plan.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

A new campaign of facing militancy and terrorism has been added to our efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty. Thoughtless acts of a section of people are claiming innocent lives. Militancy is not a problem of a particular country, rather it became a global phenomenon. A few days back, 8 precious lives were claimed on a New York road. We have to unite to get rid of this menace.

We are the worst victim of the climate change. This year we experienced excessive precipitation and recurrence of flooding that washed away our vast localities and damaged standing crops. We expect immediate implementation of the promises made at different times to offset the adverse impacts of climate change.

In Bangladesh, we have been striving hard to build a poverty and hunger-free democratic society. We have strengthened various democratic institutions, including national parliament and local government bodies. Elected representatives have been heading the local bodies from Union Council to Upazilas (Sub-districts), Municipalities, City Corporations and District Councils. Bangladesh now stands at the top among its South Asian neighbors in terms of women empowerment and achieving gender parity.

Independent and strong mass media are the vigilant watchdog of democracy. In the past few years we witnessed huge expansion of mass media. The freedom of mass media and people’s right to information have been ensured.

We have been implementing the SDGs in continuation of the successes of the MDGs. The subjects of SDGs have been incorporated in our 7th 5-year plan.

Bangladesh has been in a journey through the roads of peace, democracy, development and prosperity. We have already been elevated to a lower middle income country. We expect that Bangladesh will emerge as a country of middle income on the Golden Jubilee of our Independence in 2021 and as a developed one by 2041. Let us make this planet a peaceful, happy and prosperous abode for the entire humanity. I wish, your stay in Bangladesh will be joyful and memorable one. I also wish all success of the conference.

With these few words I declare the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference open. Thank you all again.

Khoda Hafeez.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangbandhu

May Bangladesh Live Forever.
Official Message from
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Patron of the CPA
Head of the Commonwealth

As Patron of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I am pleased to send you and all delegates present at the sixty-third Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference my warmest wishes for your meeting in Dhaka.

I was interested to learn that representatives from approximately one-hundred and eighty Parliaments and Legislatures from across the Commonwealth will be attending the Conference and I note with interest that the theme for this year’s discussions is ‘Continuing to enhance high standards of performance of Parliamentarians’.

I much appreciate your kind message and hope that this year’s Conference is productive and successful for all those who are present.

ELIZABETH R.

Hon’ble Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP., Chairperson of the Executive Committee, The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The official opening of the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) took place on the 5th day of this eight-day long international conference. As well as the important welcome address by the Hon’ble Prime Minister of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, there were also votes of thanks by international delegates, an opening speech by the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and notably, an opening address by the CPA President and Chairperson of the CPA Executive Committee, Hon’ble Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, Speaker of the Parliament.

Hon’ble Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, began her speech by remembering the invaluable sacrifice of the martyrs, the blood of those that developed this prospering nation. “It is a matter of immense pride and joy in hosting the 63rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. I extend a warm welcome to all the international guests, delegates, representatives and Members of Parliament who have graced us with their presence,” began the CPA President. She then mentioned how the enduring values of the Commonwealth are maintained in the CPC gatherings and how Bangladesh, since 1973, has been a part of the enormous family of the CPA.

The CPA President emphasized how important international trust is in ensuring unity among the many nations in the CPA. The trust between regions in promoting parliamentary democracy is what ensures the success the CPA has achieved so far. She also talked about how far Bangladesh has progressed in the 45 years of its existence as an independent nation. “Bangladesh is currently a lower middle income country, we have the second largest garment industry and show prominence in many industries worldwide,” the CPA President used the current position of the Bangladeshi economy as an example, which has been quite impressive recently with a rise in GDP and success in many sectors such as remittance, human development and ICT.

Hon’ble Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP, graciously credited the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for all the success Bangladesh has faced in recent years. “Under the visionary leadership of the Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh is engaged in ensuring poverty eradication, gender equality, food security and the attainment of sustainable development goals (SDGs),” stated Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP. She added that parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh is essential in nurturing the fundamental freedom and human rights of the people, and aims to create an inclusive and equitable society for the benefit of everyone; as per the dream of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
The Inaugural Ceremony of the 63rd CPC
Bangladesh, as a responsible and responsive nation, then the influx is taking place in regular intervals. The repatriation was unilaterally halted in 2005 and since was closely involved in the negotiation of the repatriation. I Rohingyas in 1978-79 & 1992-93. Each time Myanmar took Bangladesh had faced a massive wave of influx of Before the present crisis unfolded on 25 August 2017, recently in March 2015, they have been further franchise rights in all national and local elections. It is only Shan”. Even until 2010, Rohingyas exercised their nationality with Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Mom Rakhine and "National Registration Certificate” with full legal and political rights. In this regard, I would like to refer to the recommendations of Kofi Annan led Rakhine Advisory Commission which received overwhelming acceptance by the international community. Bangladesh believes in the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Even on the issue of Rohingya, we have been persistently engaged with Myanmar for a permanent solution to this protracted problem. We would urge the esteemed members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to take a united stand against all discriminatory policies and activities that run counter to human rights and good relations between countries, and that any such policies are thwarted and not allowed to thrive for upholding democratic principles globally. In the 1947 Constitution of Burma, Rohingyas were given “citizenship” of the Rohingyas and giving them treatment as “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing”. The UN Secretary General in his address termed the crisis as “the world’s fastest developing refugee emergency and a humanitarian and human rights nightmare”. In the 1947 Constitution of Burma, Rohingyas were given “National Registration Certificate” with full legal and voting rights. In 1954, the then Prime Minister said in a public speech: “Rohingya people have the equal status of nationality with Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Mom Rakhine and Shan”. Even until 2010, Rohingyas exercised their franchise rights in all national and local elections. It is only recently in March 2015, they have been further disenfranchised. Before the present crisis unfolded on 25 August 2017, Bangladesh had faced a massive wave of influx of Rohingyas in 1978-79 & 1992-93. Each time Myanmar took back their residents followed by bilateral negotiations. I was closely involved in the negotiation of the repatriation. The repatriation was unilaterally halted in 2005 and since then the influx is taking place in regular intervals. Bangladesh, as a responsible and responsive nation, remained bilaterally engaged with Myanmar to ensure a safe, sustainable and dignified return of these forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals. This problem needs an immediate and durable solution. Myanmar needs to resolve the root cause by restoring “citizenship” of the Rohingyas and giving them treatment equal to other citizens, and ensuring equal civil and political rights. In this regard, I would like to refer to the recommendations of Kofi Annan led Rakhine Advisory Commission which received overwhelming acceptance by the international community. Bangladesh believes in the peaceful settlement of international disputes. Even on the issue of Rohingya, we have been persistently engaged with Myanmar for a permanent solution to this protracted problem. We would urge the esteemed members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to take a united stand against all discriminatory policies and activities that run counter to human rights and good relations between countries, and that any such policies are thwarted and not allowed to thrive for upholding democratic principles globally. The world community is aware of the extreme violence and persecution in the western Rakhine State of Myanmar causing more than 10 lakhs (1 million) Rohingya people, an ethnic minority, to flee their homes in search of safe haven. Allegation of extrajudicial killings, arson, rape of women and girls, forced displacement, arbitrary arrests, torture, ill-treatment during interrogations, deaths in custody, summary executions, destruction of mosques, burning of paddy fields and crop storage during the “Clearance Operation” had raised serious concern throughout the world. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) called the situation a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing”. Our government has made arrangements for shelter, food and medical care for them and that they will remain in the assigned accommodations until returning to their country as a citizen with honour, security and dignity. History says Rakhine Muslims have been a settled community in the Rakhine State of Myanmar for centuries. The Rohingya people’s rights were recognized in the first constitution of Myanmar. After independence, Rohingyas were initially given National Registration Certificate (NRC) under the generational provision. During that time, several Rohingyas also served in parliament. After the 1962 military coup in Myanmar things changed dramatically for the Rohingya people. Successive Myanmar Governments stripped the Rohingyas from basic rights step by step and finally made them stateless. We believe the five-point proposal that the Leader of the House and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made at the 72nd UNGA session on September 21 can resolve the Rohingya crisis. The five-point proposal is as follows: First – Myanmar must unconditionally stop the violence and practice of ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine State immediately and forever. Second – The Secretary General of the United Nations should immediately send a Fact-Finding Mission to Myanmar. Third – All civilians irrespective of religion and ethnicity must be protected in Myanmar. For that “safe zones” could be created inside Myanmar under UN supervision. Fourth – Ensure sustainable return of all forcibly displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh to their homes in Myanmar. Fifth – The recommendations of the Kofi Annan Commission Report must be immediately implemented unconditionally and in its entirety. The United Nations and the international community should be allowed to assist in line with international standards. Bangladesh needs support from the international community and sustained and concerned political engagement and action to resolve the huge humanitarian crisis and to ensure a durable solution to the protracted Rohingya problem.
A Brief Chat with Hon. Anthony Michael Perkins, MP

Hon. Anthony Michael Perkins, MP is the Speaker of the National Assembly of St Christopher and Nevis. He is a CPA Executive Committee Member for the Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic Region. In this interview, he talks about his experience and opinion about CPC 2017 and how it is helping to address the current issues surrounding the Caribbean islands.

Thank you for your time Sri! Please share your experience of being in Bangladesh for CPC 2017.

It is my first visit to Bangladesh and I am really enjoying it. It is a very interesting and different land. I have done some beautiful site seeing and they are aesthetic in looks and structure. I have been to the biggest shopping mall in Southeast Asia and I found it magnificent. Overall, this is a beautiful country with amazing history and architecture.

Could you please tell us briefly about your parliamentary system?

Our parliament is of one chamber. I am the Speaker of the Parliament. I was elected about a year and half ago by the members of the parliament. We have fifteen members in the parliament; ten from the government side and five from the opposition bench. Including me, we are sixteen members.

In the 63rd CPC, what are the problems you addressed from your region and what are the recommendations you made for the betterment of the Caribbean islands?

All the regions of the Caribbean attend these conferences especially CPA for various reasons including learning a lot about proper procedures of development. I have learnt quite a lot in the last one and half years. It is not only me but the other officials who also do this. CPA is a very good opportunity to meet other colleagues from all the commonwealth countries. We talk and share our experiences about how to deal with particular problems. In my opinion, it is a learning process and I have been able to share so many good things from my experience. The most important thing of CPC is, we get to have face to face talks rather than passing electronic messages to other representatives. It definitely helps in terms of networking and communication.

As we know, the Caribbean islands were hit by extreme hurricanes two months ago. So, what have been your opinions and recommendations about climate change of the 63rd CPC?

From the stand point of us, yes, we are affected by climate change. But the irony of this situation is, for us, in the Caribbean, we do not feel we are contributing anything that affects climate change in any significant way. Two months ago, a number of islands were ravaged by hurricanes and wind forces that we have not seen in our history. We feel that it is the result of what is happening in the larger and developed countries. That is why we have been employing more developed countries to help us mitigate natural disasters and help with financial and technical issues.

Do you have any special message to the CPC participants of this year?

It is clear to me that we as a country need to come up with a resolution which speaks specifically about assisting the less developed countries with ways and means to go forward. Also, it is required to present resolutions that help countries that are suffering from climate change, so many lives can be saved.

Unlike a lot of the developed countries, Bangladesh does not have an ageing population, rather more than 50% of the people are dynamic youths. Around 158 million people are below the age of 24. It is a very significant and critical phase of life as youths are among the most energetic and productive segments of the total population. Thus it is very important to reach out to this large section through initiatives like the Rural Social Service (RSS) launched in 1971 by the government of Bangladesh. The programme includes functional education and vocational training that can create jobs with the usage of local raw materials, training on home-management, childcare, nutrition, and family planning. The programme is implemented through Youth Club and it works to train the unemployed youths to create investment and generate income. Another remarkable initiative was taken through the National Youth Convention in 1977 under the Department of Social Welfare (DSW). This project focused on non-formal education, socio-economic projects to improve social and economic capabilities of the youths. Apart from these, there are other government organizations and NGOs such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Department of Youth Development in order to help them with improved education, skill development, micro-credit and other means. The Government of Bangladesh has allocated a large amount of finance to facilitate youth empowerment. The government organizations (GOs) like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labor and Manpower, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministry of Local Government and Cooperatives have undertaken various programmes to empower youths so that they can play a pivotal role in national and international development. Other NGOs like BRAC, Proshika, Association for Social Advancement (ASA), Grammen Bank and a lot of other NGOs both in the urban and rural areas are working for the youths to make them become “resources” of the country. These organizations provide training and opportunities to make the young generation skilled, competent and confident in their approach. Along with these facilities, our government also offers logistical, infrastructural and financial help to encourage youth entrepreneurship and start-ups. Bangladesh also ensures mass participation of youth in the decision-making process and plans to incorporate at least 50 percent participation of women in the youth empowerment process. Various skills development training are some of the important programs in the field of youth development. The government also adopted training programmes as a human resources development strategy to make the youth industrious and skilled man power on various aspects. The objectives of the training programmes are to raise awareness about society and their rights, to make youths more positive towards life and career, and to create consciousness about the surroundings. Regarding women empowerment, Bangladesh tries to make young women conscious about family law, dowry law, marriage and divorce law, reproductive law, law of prevention of violence against women and many more. Along with training, Bangladesh also offers self-employment opportunities like micro-credit programmes. Most of the young people have managed to make profits from this programme. Using all the available resources and opportunities, youths of our country are hoping for a sound and better future.