

Saarc foreign secretaries

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of Ministers meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation on August 1-2. Foreign ministers of the Saarc countries will attend the meeting.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will inaugurate the meeting tomorrow afternoon at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Officials said both the meetings carry special significance as the ministers and government officials of India and Pakistan will hold meetings to discuss their peace process that was stalled due to recent serial blasts in Mumbai.

The foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan Shyam Saran and Riaz Mohammed Khan are likely to meet informally today on the sidelines of the Standing Committee meeting, diplomatic sources said.

It will definitely be helpful for the two countries to resume the peace process in place since January 2004, they said.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri and State Minister for External Affairs of India E Ahamed are also expected to talk bilateral issues on the sidelines of the Council of Ministers meeting.

Besides, Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin will hold bilateral meetings with their counterparts.

India delayed the foreign secretary level talks scheduled for July 20-21 in New Delhi in the wake of July 11 blasts in Mumbai. India blamed Pakistan-backed Islamist groups for the blasts that killed about 200 people.

Afghanistan, the newest member of the Saarc, will attend the meetings of Standing Committee and Council of Ministers at the special invitation of the government of Bangladesh, current chair of the regional forum.

Afghan Foreign Minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta will attend the ministerial meeting while the deputy foreign minister will attend the Standing Committee meeting. However, they will not participate in the deliberations.

Afghanistan will formally join the Saarc family as a full member at its 14th summit to be held in India next year. The 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka had approved Afghanistan's request for the membership of the regional grouping.

The 13th summit also granted China and Japan observer status in the Saarc and the Standing Committee agreed to give USA and South Korea same status.

The Saarc Programming Committee, comprising senior officials, met in Dhaka yesterday and finalised the agenda for the Standing Committee meet.

The Standing Committee meeting will also provide guidelines for increasing activities in areas of cooperation among the member states in commerce, finance, communications and energy sectors.

Foreign ministry sources said the Council of Ministers meeting would approve the guidelines concerning Saarc observers and guests, new observers and other recommendations of the Standing Committee.

They said the Council of Ministers will also consider the formal applications of South Korea, USA and EU to become the Saarc observers.

Besides, it will review implementation of various proposals made at the 13th summit in Dhaka. The proposals include establishment of South Asian University and sponsoring South Asian Car Rally.

The council will also review the reports of Saarc ministerial meetings held since the Dhaka summit.



Chenxin Feng speaks at the orientation programme of Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, Dhaka Study Centre for the students of Intake 17, Semester 2, in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Asif Hussain Chowdhury and Chris Groom.

Skop to enforce

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announcement and implementation of the national minimum wage, stopping privatisation, reopening all closed factories in the country, providing appointment letters to the workers working in industries which are not well organised and other

facilities such as ensuring weekly holidays and maternity leave.

The government did not take any initiative to solve the problems permanently despite their repeated appeals, he added.

Wajedul Islam Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra (BTUK), said Amanullah Aman, state minister for labour and manpower, on July 27, told them that their demands were 'under process' of being implemented and urged them to withdraw the strike.

"How can he [Aman] meet the demands at the twilight of the government's tenure when he failed to do that earlier," he added.

Different district bound buses from Dhaka will not be allowed to ply during the strike, he told The Daily Star last night.

The leaders said hospitals, ambulances, newspaper vehicles, restaurants, surgical instruments shops, dispensaries, vehicles carrying bodies and wedding entourage will be out of the purview of the strike.

Nurul Islam, president of BTUK, Ray Ramesh Chandra, general secretary of Jatiya Sramik League, Shafiuddin Ahmed, general secretary of Jatiya Sramik Federation, Chowdhury Ashiqul Alam, general secretary of Trade Union Sangha were present at the conference.

The Skop leaders also held a rally at Muktangan in the city in the evening and brought out a

City witnesses

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vehicles from 3:30pm to 7:30pm, causing untold sufferings to the homebound people. Inter district buses at Gabtoli too were stranded at the terminal for at least two hours from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.

Students of different schools, colleges and universities and people from different offices and business organisations in Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Asad Gate, Farmgate, Shyamoli, Kalyanpur and other areas had to walk home before the law enforcers allowed vehicles to ply the Mirpur Road at about 7:30pm.

Besides, buses from different districts had to wait for over two hours to enter the city through Amin Bazar. The law enforcers restricted vehicular movement also in different lanes and by-lanes leading to the Mirpur Road, adding to traffic jams in the capital.

Meanwhile, some 150 garment workers held demonstrations on the Airport Road from 9:00am to 11:30am, causing tailbacks on the Airport Road.

Seminar on Cambridge diploma in business

Intimate, Institute of Training Innovative Management and Technology, organised a seminar titled "Cambridge International Diploma (CID) in Business" recently in the city, says a press release.

MH Rahman, managing partner and CEO of Intimate and former president of DCCI, explained the benefits of the diploma as it leads to admission into undergraduate degree without HSC or 'A' level courses.

Narsingdi Awami Forum formed

BSS, Dhaka

A general meeting of the Narsingdi District Awami Forum, Dhaka, was held in the city yesterday with Imam Anwar Hossain in the chair.

The meeting unanimously elected a 73-member executive committee with Prime Bank Chairman Imam Anwar Hossain as president and eminent social worker Jasimuddin Khan as general secretary for four years.

Ershad is good

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Bhuiyan, also the LGRD and cooperatives minister, made the remark replying to a journalist who asked what Bhuiyan thought about AL President Sheikh Hasina's remarks on Ershad joining the BNP-led alliance.

He noted that earlier AL had formed their government with the support of Ershad's party and JP leader Anwar Hossain Manju was made minister of their government.

The BNP secretary general said they had indication that AL wanted Ershad on their side and still a number of them hope that Ershad might switch sides during caretaker period.

Bhuiyan was briefing newsmen on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's exchange of opinions with field-level leaders of BNP at PM's 30 Hare Road office at 8:10pm.

Replying to a question, he said they would take steps against those nomination-seeking people who have allegations of corruption against them.

He said they would not give nominations to those people.

Robbers loot

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Zilani, warehouse guard Abdu Salam and sweeper Bhanu Chandra Das for interrogation. Police also formed four teams to hunt down the burglars and recover the loot.

"The gang of burglars entered the bank through a window by cutting its grills sometime Saturday night. They broke into the strong room, broke the locks and cut off the door-hinges of two iron-safes and then took off with Tk 10,02,000 in cash and the rifle," police said.