

**Next Saarc summit in Delhi Apr 3-4**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India yesterday formally announced to host the 14th summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) in New Delhi on April 3-4 next year.

Indian External Affairs Secretary Shyam Saran announced this while briefing journalists on the outcome of the Saarc Council of Ministers meeting that ended in Dhaka yesterday.

Saran termed the two-day meeting "very successful and substantive."

He said the Council of Ministers has decided to organise Saarc Car Rally in the run-up to the 14th summit. An organising committee will be formed with representatives from the member states to select routes and arrange fund and other things for the rally.

The Saarc Council of Ministers and Standing Committee would meet before the 14th summit in New Delhi, Saran said speaking at

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SAFTA

**Indo-Pak trade dispute to be reviewed before next summit**

UNB, Dhaka

The Saarc Council of Ministers yesterday unanimously agreed that the commerce ministers of the member states would review the India-Pakistan trade disputes under Safta framework agreement before the 14th summit of the regional forum.

The council granted Saarc observer status to the USA, South Korea and the European Union. They will be invited to participate in the 14th summit to be held in India on April 3-4 next year.

Earlier, China and Japan were made observers of the South Asian forum that adopted Afghanistan as its 8th member.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan who chaired the 27th session of the Council of Ministers that concluded here yesterday told a press briefing that India and Pakistan raised different issues relating to the implementation of Safta.

The council, comprising the foreign ministers of Saarc countries, discussed the issues and eventually agreed that the regular meeting of the Safta Ministerial Council of Commerce Ministers would consider the issues and report to the council.

Morshed said the meeting considered removal of para-tariff and non-tariff measures, harmonisation of standards, testing quality and

measurements across the region. The Saarc commerce ministers will further discuss the matter and report to the council.

On economic integration in South Asia, the council advised the Saarc finance, comprising the governors of the central banks of the member states, to continue its work to further expedite economic and financial integration in Saarc.

On easing visa regime among the Saarc countries, he said customs officials of the member states will hold a meeting to discuss the matter and work it out.

The council welcomed the Indian proposals for setting up South Asian university, Saarc

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**Alliance to use black money in polls**

Fears Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday apprehend that BNP-Jamaat alliance might use muscle and black money to snatch people's mandate and voting rights in the upcoming parliament election scheduled for early next year.

"BNP-Jamaat will use black money and muscle power to snatch voting rights in the next election, but they will have to be aware, so they can't do that," Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League, said urging the

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**7 JMB MILITANTS Hearing of death reference case continues**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hearing of the death reference case of seven militants including JMB kingpin Abdul Rahman and Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai continued yesterday while the state counsel completed reading half of the 325-page paper book (history of the case).

In the daylong hearing Deputy Attorney general (DAG) Helal Uddin Mollah read out the lower court's verdict (50 pages), FIR (First Information Report), charge sheet, charge framing, and deposition of

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A bird's eye view of the Dhaka City BNP's rally at Muktangan in the capital yesterday. BNP organised the rally protesting 'conspiracy of the opposition to destroy the upcoming national election'.

PHOTO: STAR

**FRESH AGITATION 14-party to hold road march in 8 districts**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 14-party opposition combine yesterday announced fresh anti-government agitation programmes including road march programmes in eight districts which are considered to be ruling BNP's strongholds.

The 14-party announced their programmes to press home their demands for electoral reforms and execution of the verdict of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman killing case. Fourteen-party Coordinator Abdul Jalil in a press conference, following a brief

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**2 indigenous people shot dead in CHT**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Unknown assailants opened fire and killed two indigenous people, an 11-year-old child and his elderly grandfather, in the early hours yesterday at Robindra Karbari Para, a remote village in Matiranga upazila.

Golaphi Bikash Tripura, 11, and his grandfather Tuparam Bikash Tripura, 70, died after a group of 18-20 indigenous armed criminals entered Tuparam's house by cutting the fence at around 12:30am and shot the victims, family sources said.

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**Hezbollah showers rockets into Israel after commando raid**

AFP, Baalbek

Israeli commandos struck deep into Lebanon early Wednesday and snatched five suspected guerrillas in a helicopter raid that provoked the heaviest rain of Hezbollah rocket fire in the 22-day-old conflict.

"We have carried out this operation to prove that we can hit everywhere in Lebanon," army chief of staff Dan Halutz told reporters in the Israeli border town of Kiryat Shmona after the raid on Baalbek, 100 kilometres (60 miles) to the north.

Minutes later, a missile fell near Beit Shean, some 60 kilometers (37 miles) south of the border, Hezbollah's deepest strike yet into Israel.

Police said at least 160 rockets had slammed into northern Israel in what was by mid-afternoon already the biggest single-day barrage from Lebanon since the Jewish state launched its offensive against Hezbollah on July 12.

At least 36 rockets struck populated areas, killing one person and wounding 19 others.

Israeli warplanes meanwhile roared back into full-scale action, destroying two bridges in northern

Lebanon and killing three Lebanese soldiers in the southern port of Sidon.

Israel had called a 48-hour partial halt to air attacks after a raid on the Lebanese village of Qana on Sunday which killed 52 civilians, most of them children.

The deaths caused worldwide outrage and prompted calls for an immediate ceasefire.

But Israeli Premier Ehud Olmert dismissed the calls and on Tuesday, Israel broadened its offensive on the ground, pouring thousands of crack infantrymen, paratroopers and reserve units into southern Lebanon.

Olmert told British television on Wednesday that Israel would continue to fight Hezbollah until an international force -- "an effective force made of combat units" -- is deployed in south Lebanon.

Reflecting international disagreement about how to end the fighting, France described as premature a meeting of potential contributors to a multinational force in Lebanon scheduled for

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**JMB REGROUPING Home alerts police, local administration**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday instructed field-level police and administrative officials to ensure a sound law and order situation in the country during the remaining days of the ruling coalition's government so that it enjoys a positive effect on the next general elections.

The home ministry alerted them of reorganisation of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) under different banners in parts of the country. It also directed the officials to handle the extortionists and illegal toll collectors

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**Non-govt pry teachers start indefinite strike**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Registered non-government primary school teachers went on an indefinite strike at their educational institutions and non-stop sit-in at the Central Snaheed Minar in the capital yesterday.

They join the non-government

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FAILURE TO REAP FOREIGN AID BENEFITS

**Faulty projects, donor conditions blamed**

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh has failed to take advantage of foreign aid for poverty reduction programmes due to faulty project designs, corruption and donor conditions, a recent study finds.

The study mentioned that around 250 missions of different donor agencies visit Bangladesh annually either to prescribe new conditions or monitor whether the pre-conditions are being properly complied with.

Though the Paris Declaration of the OECD prevents donor agencies from setting any prior conditions, Bangladesh still has to swallow such measures as it has failed to check corruption and also due to lack of timely, transparent and reliable reporting on budget execution.

Economic Research Group (ERG), headed by Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, conducted the study sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

The study was based on interviews with a large number of government officials, political and business leaders, officials of donor agencies, NGO personalities and researchers. The draft of the study will be placed before a civil society gathering next week in Dhaka before finalising it to be sent to the next meeting of the Commonwealth finance ministers.

The report said a timely and transparent budget execution is a must to get rid of conditions by donors as per the Paris Declaration. The government will have to open up its budgetary operations for independent experts to monitor. For these to happen, the Official Secrets Act has to be repealed, the study says.

The study says the Planning Commission does not have the expertise to scrutinise projects according to the Poverty Reduction Strategy priorities. "On the top of it, there are well-known adverse political incentives that are liable to distort public spending priorities," it says.

The ERG study quotes a top Bangladesh government official who said there is little incentive within the government to prepare aid-worthy projects because the officials are used to spoon-feeding by the donors.

The study also reveals that donors often do not know what to do with their funds. "The Australian aid agency was recently interested in providing funds in certain development areas but did not know what to do as the ministries allegedly could not help them to prioritise the use of funds," says the ERG study.

About the faulty-design of

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**1st expert group consultation session today**

STAR REPORT

Nagorik Committee 2006, which has identified eight goals for Vision 2021 for Bangladesh, is organising separate expert group consultation sessions for each goal throughout this month.

The first consultation session will be held today at Cirdap Auditorium in Dhaka.

The eight goals are: i) To become a participatory democracy, ii) To have an efficient, publicly accountable and transparent government, iii) To become a poverty-mitigated middle-income country, iv) To have a skilled and a creative workforce, v) To become a health-endowed nation, vi) To be globally

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Prayer Timing		
August 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation