

Defence budget cuts essential to make SAARC effective

A three-day international seminar on "New imperatives for regional cooperation in South Asia" concluded here Sunday with a call for removal of mistrust and urgent solution of lingering problems for effective regional cooperation, reports BSS.

The concluding session was chaired by World Peace Council President Ramesh Chandra and was addressed by Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Chairman of the Board of Editors of The Daily Ittefaq Motnu Hossein and Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP in Bangladesh Winston Temple.

The seminar, jointly organised by the World Peace Council and the Bangladesh Peace Council, was attended by delegates from several South Asian countries and peace council headquarters.

The statement adopted at the seminar and read out by its Co-Chairman Ali Akhsaid said the seminar during its several sessions discussed the issues and problems in the region and felt that confidence building was necessary for a sound cooperative system.

The seminar stressed the

need for greater people-to-people contacts in South Asia as well as role of the NGOs in strengthening the SAARC spirit.

The seminar also made manifold suggestions to make SAARC a effective forum including reduction of military expenditures, freezing of arms purchases and trade, prevention of development of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and lifting of restrictions on movement within South Asian region.

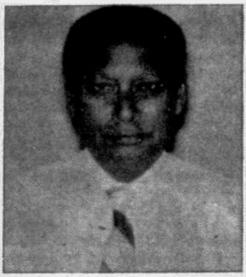
It urged Myanmar government to sort out its problems and help return of democracy in the country.

Speaking at the concluding session, the Foreign Minister said, that the SAARC was today moving ahead despite the traditional mistrust that be devilled bilateral ties of member states for a long time.

Rahman said that the progress made by the SAARC was no doubt modest but it set an irreversible trend of mutual cooperation in the region.

G A Mannan dead

Noted Dance-Director G A Mannan died at the early hours of Sunday at a city clinic after suffering from acute illness for the last seven years. He was 60, reports BSS.



He left behind his wife, two daughters and a host of relations, friends and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Three separate namaz-e-janazes of the deceased were held at Bara-Magbazar Jame Masjid, Baitul Mukarram National Mosque and Shilpakala Academy. He will be buried at his village home at Saktala, Comilla.

The qul khwant of the late Dance-Director will be held on March 4 after Asr prayer at his Magbazar residence in the city.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, from where Mannan retired last year as a deputy director after serving ten years, will hold a condolence meeting at its auditorium on March 3 at 10 am.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof. Jahana Begum expressed her profound shock at the death of Mannan.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Artists Association and 'Dibya', a cultural organisation, in separate statements, expressed condolence at the death of Mannan.

Concern over fresh influx of band items

An eight-member team of Bangladesh Shopowners' Federation held a meeting with the Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury at his office on Saturday and expressed concern over fresh influx of contraband items during the past one week.

The team led by Federation chairman Amir Hossain Khan urged the minister to take necessary action immediately to check smuggling.

The Federation chairman also said that the anti-smuggling drive would prove futile unless the prices of locally made commodities were controlled.

The shopowners informed the minister that contraband items were flooding market through some new channels.

The minister assured the Shopowners' Federation leaders of taking all possible measures to curb smuggling.

Among others, M A Zaman Monju, Md Amir Ullah and SA Kader Kiron, senior vice-chairman, vice-chairman and secretary general respectively of the Association were present at the meeting.



Zahana Imam addressing a rally organised to garner support for Golam Azam's trial yesterday.

—Star photo

KAFCO

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When the first MOU was signed in 1981, a barge-mounted plant was planned. Financing for the project was also supposed to come from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), an affiliate of the World Bank. But later the IFC backed out citing non-viability of the project.

According to the 1990 agreement, the subscribers to the projects' equity are: Government of Bangladesh (through BCIC), KAFCO, Japan Investment Company (formed by OECF, Chiyoda Corporation and Marubeni Corp), Haldor Topsoe A/S of Denmark, Commonwealth Development Corporation, UK, IFU of Denmark, Public issue syndicated by Bangladesh Shipka Bank, Stamicarbon of the Netherlands, DANIDA and Nordic Development Fund (via GOB/BCIC).

While the Chiyoda and Marubeni are covered by non-commercial risk insurance by MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency) of the World Bank, others including another major shareholder Haldor Topsoe A/S do not have the guarantee.

Milon murder

Another witness examined

By Staff Correspondent
One witness in the trial of Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milon murder was examined and cross-examined in the court Sunday.

Dr Mozaffar Hossain, the 24th witness in the trial, told the Second Additional Sessions Judge, M. Ismail Mia, that he was not an eyewitness of the murder.

Police, courts

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Incomes of poor households are found to benefit positively from primary education but are relatively unaffected by secondary or higher education. Nevertheless, 55 per cent of all the poor and 60 per cent of the hard core poor have no formal schooling. Moreover, primary education has a generally empowering function which impact heavily on the income of the poor.

On the state of women the report says that the 'burden of poverty fall disproportionately on the females half of population.' It has been seen that, on an average, females have a nutritional intake only 88 per cent of that of males and 46 per cent of the wage rate earned by males.

Emphasizing the need for infrastructure the report observes 'the growth potential of existing urban centres may be overwhelmed by poverty-led rural-urban exodus if sufficient economic opportunities fail to materialise the countryside.' A focus on decentralised urbanisation may be crucial in which upazila facilities may play a useful role, the report adds.

Justifying the need for local self-government the report argues 'such structures need to be conceived not as subordinate arms of administration but as the key foundations of a participatory political process with a countervailing supervisory potential over executive and allocative decision making upto the district level.'

Muktijoddha leader's comment creates uproar in anti-'razakar' rally

By Staff Correspondent

Jahana Imam, Convener of the Committee for Elimination of the Killers and Collaborators of 1971, Saturday urged the people from across the country to attend the trial of Golam Azam, in people's court, in the city on March 26 for 'war crimes'.

Addressing a big public rally near the National Press Club in the city, she also called upon all to make tomorrow's public gathering in the Baitul Mukarram premises at 3 pm a success. The meeting has been arranged to mobilise mass support for the trial of Golam Azam, chief of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

The audience became agitated while Mahfuzur Rahman president of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad in his speech blamed the 'post-independence regime' for giving the 'rajakars'. He, however, managed to leave the dais unhurt with the help of the organisers.

In her presidential speech, Jahana Imam also called for maintaining unity of the pro-liberation forces to ensure that all the 'war criminals' be tried in the 'people's court' by phases. 'Disunity among the pro-liberation forces has led to the alarming rise of the enemies of the country's independence,' she said.

'We are now passing through a crucial period when

Drug ring Dhaka may seek help of Interpol

By Staff Correspondent

An international racket of drug-traffickers is using Bangladesh as a transit-point.

A Detective Branch (DB) source said Sunday that the government might seek help of the Interpol to unearth the ring.

A high official of DB police said, Eliadah McCord, an American girl arrested on Tuesday last in connection with heroin trafficking, in her confessional statement to magistrate in Dhaka Saturday disclosed names of several foreign nationals allegedly involved in drug trafficking through Bangladesh.

Another high level source of the Detective Branch said that they had some 'surprising informations' from Eliadah but declined to disclose for the sake of investigation.

Meanwhile, Robert Blanksom who was also arrested on Thursday in connection with drug-trafficking, passed the first day of three-day remand but police failed to get any substantial information.

UNB adds: Investigating officers may go abroad in search of fresh clues for the heroin case.

A source close to Detective Branch of Police investigating the case said yesterday that some Lebanese and Colombians are most likely involved in this particular case of heroin smuggling.

Hasina

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aware of conspiracy against AL by different political quarters.

Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury of Chittagong (South) while deliberating on the organisational affairs of the party regretted 'the moneyed men are getting hold of the party leadership in the different part of the country at the cost of sincere organisers' effort.

In Bangabandhu's time real organisers could make their way into the party leadership Chowdhury reminded the central leadership of the party adding, 'this should be considered as the secret of gearing up the party rank and file.'

Today's session, according to the insiders, will witness deliberations on some sensitive issues that include intra-party conflicts and Kamal Hossain's move for floating a democratic forum without consulting the party.

UNB adds: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina also accused the BNP government of failure in running the country due to its 'mismanagement, inefficiency and dishonesty, depriving people of the fruit of democracy.'

Three arrested with counterfeit banknotes

By Staff Correspondent

Police of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) seized counterfeit banknotes of Taka 1,63,000 and arrested three persons in this connection from Dhaka and Chittagong on Tuesday and Friday.

A special CID police team seized 60 counterfeit banknotes, 16 of five-hundred Taka and 44 of one hundred Taka notes, from a room of hotel Parabat, at Fakirapole in the city and arrested Nurul Afsar on Tuesday in this connection.

Following the statement of Nurul Afsar, CID police raided several places in Chittagong on Friday and arrested Mohammad Sarwar and Nazrul Islam Amin and recovered counterfeit banknotes of one-hundred Taka and five-hundred Taka valued 1,50,600 Taka.

Police said, they also seized equipments of making counterfeit banknotes from the arrested persons.

None dies in JP meet violence, Press Note says

The government Sunday categorically said that none had died in the unpleasant incident that occurred Saturday at a Jatiya Party meeting at Sayedabad in the city, reports BSS.

Referring to the report of death of three persons or more at the JP meeting published in different newspapers, a Press Note issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs said, the news item was false and motivated.

Proper investigation has been made in this regard, the Press Note said.

The government also expressed the hope that with this clarification all sorts of confusion would be removed, the Press Note added.

The Midnight File

Lockerbie: Libya ready to extradite 2 accused

CAIRO, Mar 1: Libya today said it was ready to extradite two Libyan national accused of involvement in the Lockerbie bombing for trial in a neutral country. 'Libya agrees to the extradition of the accused Libyans to a neutral country, on condition that their trial is fair and without interference from any party.' Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Beshari told reporters here after a meeting with Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid, reports AFP.

Anti-govt rally in Moscow

MOSCOW, Mar 1: Thousands of hard-liners and Russian nationalists staged anti-government demonstrations in Moscow and St Petersburg on Sunday to protest the policies of President Boris Yeltsin. About 1,000 people, many chanting anti-Semitic slogans, gathered at Moscow's television center on the outskirts of the city demanding the establishment of all Russian television programming, reports AP.

PM: flood projects

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day conference will hear deliberation from local and foreign experts.

The five-year Flood Action Plan (1990-95) was developed by the World Bank in 1989 and endorsed by the government and donor agency representatives after 1987 and 1988 floods.

The Prime Minister said although the people of the country had adopted to the challenges of floods, cyclones and tornadoes, it cannot remain unchanged with advancement of knowledge, science and technology.

'Improvement of living standard and environment is a natural instinct of mankind. We cannot, therefore, remain passive to the co-existence of our people with floods and cyclones for ages together.'

Begum Zia stressed the need for concrete measures for a permanent solution to the 'wide and complex' flood problem. But 'that does not mean that we will have to wait indefinitely.'

Trawler workers may go for gherao

Workers of deep sea fishing trawlers who are on strike since February 7 Sunday urged the government to intervene in resolving their problems, reports UNB.

General Secretary of Deep Sea Fishing Trawler Workers Union M Jahangir Hossain told a press conference that they might go for gherao if their demands were not met within one week.

Historic March

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The golden colour of the map represented the Golden Bengal dream by so many poets, not least Rabindranath Tagore; the red circle stood for all the blood that had been shed for Bengal's freedom over the years; and the green fields of rural Bangladesh was shown darkened by the martyrs' blood.

The meeting, addressed by Noor-e-Alam Siddiqui and Shahjahan Shiraz, President and General Secretary respectively of the Chhatra League, which was the Awami League's student wing, and by DUCSU General Secretary Abdul Quddus Makhani, called on the people to fly the new flag of independent Bengal and burn all Pakistani flags.

Tens of thousands roared their approval, as Jot Bangla slogans made the campus ground shake.

Throughout the city, life came to an absolute standstill at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's call for a half-day hartal. Nothing, not even planes or trains, moved. Except people, of course, as they took to the streets in processions, or individually and got inexorably sucked into the hundreds of demonstrations going on simultaneously all over the provincial capital.

Hundreds of thousands of people, carrying iron rods plucked from the boundary railings of the old High Court building and other government places, and sticks and bamboo staves, braved the bullets and tear gas of the police.

The Pakistan Observer reported the next day that 64 people were wounded, many with bullet injuries, in clashes with police.

In reality, three students met martyrdom in police firing on March 2 in Dhaka alone, while reports of barbarity of the army and the police streamed in from other parts of the country too.

While the people, spontaneously and under direction of various socio-political organisations, flooded the streets and took the struggle for freedom to a new, higher stage, Sheikh Mujib issued new directives to make the snowballing movement have maximum impact.

Bangabandhu gave a call to observe complete hartals throughout the province from 6 am to 2pm, right up to March 6.

March 3 would be observed as National Mourning Day and Mujib would lead a march out of Paltan Maidan that day following a public meeting organ-

She said there was no scope for sluggishness as it involved life and death, and the success of programmes aimed at alleviating poverty and attaining national autonomy and prosperity.

'People's participation must be ensured at the very primary stage of the projects for their long duration.'

Begum Zia said optimum utilisation of country's huge human resource was essential for the beginning of balanced and coordinated development efforts. In this context, she mentioned the countrywide canal digging programme which, she said, had opened new vistas.

OIC team arrives to look into refugee problem

A two-member high-powered delegation from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) arrived in Dhaka Sunday to see the plight of the Myanmar Muslim refugees in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

The delegation met Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman immediately after its arrival and discussed the issues relating to the refugees.

Ambassador Nasir Abdallah Hamdun, Chairman of the Permanent Council of the Islamic solidarity fund and Ambassador Abdallah Abdi Haral, Director of the OIC, make up the delegation.



The Jatiya Mahila Party, the women's wing of Jatiya Party at a press conference in front of the National Press Club yesterday.

—Star photo

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