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Premadasa, Sharif, Gayoom may come Dec 12

By Toufique Imrose Khaidi

In a repetition of history that Colombo, the host to the Sixth SAARC Summit, witnessed, President Ranasinghe Premadasa of Sri Lanka and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan and President Mamoun Abdul Gayoom may come to Dhaka December 12.

Highly-placed diplomatic sources indicated yesterday that the three leaders' trips were being planned on a bilateral plane in the backdrop of the postponement of the Seventh Summit scheduled for December 12-13.

Last year, after the scheduled Sixth Summit of the seven-nation forum was put off, three leaders responded to the request of the host President to visit his country on bilateral invitations.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister Nawaz Sahrif and Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala travelled to Colombo to honour the host head of state's wish that they come and make use of the arrangements he made for the summit.

Shri Lanka later held a one-day summit, on December 21, after hosting those bilateral visits earlier in the month when the summit was originally scheduled.

The Bhutanese monarch's inability to attend the initially planned meeting had led to the postponement, much to the displeasure of the Sri Lankan government.

On the regional plane, the 1991 event was widely interpreted by critics as a ploy by India, using Bhutan as a pawn, partly to ensure Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's stay at home to campaign for his crucial by-election and partly to embarrass Sri Lanka.

President Premadasa is particularly unpopular with the Congress (I) government for his strong opposition to the Indo-Lanka accord on New Delhi's involvement in the Colombo's fight against the Tamil rebels.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, however, did not say whether formal invitations from Bangladesh Prime Minister to the leaders for bilateral trips had already been sent or not.

The officials of the Press Information Department (PID) are taking preparations and have asked the newspaper authorities to name reporters to cover a visit of a head of state who will be arriving December 12, without naming who the leader is.

However, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman, who briefed the Press last evening as part of his regular briefing as the Summit spokesman, did not mention or indicate any such probability.

The sources said that Premadasa's visit was almost certain, but described Sharif and Gayoom's coming as just a possibility.

They said that the Sri Lankan President's trip would be dubbed a visit in his capacity as the current Chairman of the SAARC.

According to a source, Premadasa is expected to come with a large delegation that he planned for the summit. See Page 12 Col 2

A two-day SAARC summit agreed

Star Report

The SAARC will hold a two-day summit in Dhaka in the period between January 9 and 14 next month according to the convenience of the seven heads of state and government, Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman said yesterday.

There is an agreed period between January 9 and 11... and it has also been agreed that the meeting will be a two-day one... and of course in Dhaka, Rahman told reporters. See Page 12 Col 3



SAARC cricket postponed
 Sports Reporter

The first SAARC cricket tournament comprising India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh has been postponed with the completion of the match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

According to a Bangladesh Cricket Control Board (BCCB) press release, the nine-day long meet of over-limit cricket that began on December 3 has been suspended in view of the postponement of the seventh SAARC summit earlier scheduled to be held in Dhaka on December 12 and 13 after the final of the tourney on Dec 11.

Yesterday, in a one-sided match, Pakistan ensured a berth in the final with a huge nine-wicket victory. Explosive batting by man-of-the-match Bost Ali helped Pakistan wrap up the match in 17.2 overs after having bowled witless Sri Lanka out for 125 in the 45 overs-a-side match.

Peace processions in city call for maintaining communal harmony



Dhaka city BNP yesterday brought out a procession calling for maintaining communal harmony. —Star photo



Sheikh Hasina addressing a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday. —Star photo

'Uphold peace thwarting design of vested quarters'

Information Minister Barrister Najmul Huda yesterday called for maintaining peace and harmony in the interest of ensuring the march of democracy in Bangladesh, reports BSS.

Addressing a peace rally as chief guest, the Information Minister said that the people of Bangladesh had once again proved their respect to all religions by maintaining communal harmony despite provocations by vested quarters in the wake of destruction of Babri Mosque.

The peace rally was organised by the city unit of Bangladesh Chhatra Dal at the Jatiya Press Club square.

Mayor, Dhaka City Corporation Mirza Abbas MP, Salauddin Ahmed MP, Niamat-Ullah Sabu MP, DUCSU Vice President Amanullah Aman MP, BNP Students Affairs Secretary Advocate Mojibur Rahman, DUCSU AGS Nazimuddin Alam, Chhatradal leaders — Abul Khair Bhuiyan, Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu, Fazlul Huq Milton, Moniruzzaman Monir, Kamruzzaman Ratan and Aulad Hossain Farooq also spoke at the rally.

Barrister Huda stressed the need for maintenance of peace and discipline by all with patience to help implement the democratic steps of the government.

The Information Minister said, as citizens of a democratic country, the people want peace and fraternity among the people under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. See Page 12 Col 4

'BJP, Jamaat jointly designed destruction of Babri Mosque'

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina said yesterday the extreme fanatic groups of India including BJP had been designing construction of temple destroying the Babri Mosque at Ayodhya and their ill-design took shape following a recent meeting of BJP with Jamaat-e-Islami in that country.

"India's operation push-in began soon after our Prime Minister's visit to India", she said, "the Babri Mosque issue took place as a result of the BJP-Jamaat meeting."

Addressing a public meeting in the capital, organised by AL to appeal to the countrymen for maintaining peace in the wake of demolition of Babri Mosque, Hasina castigated fundamentalist forces in Bangladesh including Jamaat saying "they won't dare to destroy the Mosque unless supported by Jamaat."

"The AL leader clearly stated Jamaat and its communal allies have again come to the forefront to destroy religious harmony by damaging shrines and resorting to arson and looting in 71 style."

Islam does not teach us to do such inhuman acts, she said adding rather it taught tolerance and respect for others' religious practice and freedom.

Criticising the silence of the world Muslim community over the Babri Mosque issue, the opposition leader called for unity among Muslims to foil the conspiracy to eliminate Babri Mosque, reports UNB.

Bhatia, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon to attend the meeting of the Council of Ministers of SAARC countries, told reporters at the airport that the postponement would not affect the spirit. See Page 12 Col 1

Postponement of summit won't affect SAARC spirit: Bhatia

Indian State Minister for External Affairs, Shri Yashwantrao Chavan said that the postponement of the 7th SAARC summit because of the situation triggered by demolition of Babri Mosque, reports UNB.

Bhatia, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon to attend the meeting of the Council of Ministers of SAARC countries, told reporters at the airport that the postponement would not affect the spirit. See Page 12 Col 1

India has failed to protect religious rights: Kanju

Pakistan State Minister for Foreign Affairs Mohammad Siddique Khan Kanju arrived here last evening to attend the SAARC Council of Ministers meeting beginning today, reports UNB.

Foreign Minister SM Mostafizur Rahman received him at the Zia International Airport.

Bangladesh High Commissioner in Pakistan Anwar Hashem and Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh. See Page 12 Col 6

NEWS BRIEFS

SAARC cultural function postponed

The cultural evening at Osmani Memorial Hall arranged in honour of the SAARC Foreign Ministers scheduled for today (Thursday) will not take place. The programme has been cancelled in view of the postponement of the 7th SAARC summit, reports UNB.

Hasina visits Hindu areas

The Awami League chief and leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited different Hindu populated areas and damaged temples in the city. She enquired about the welfare of the minority community and called upon the members of all communities to maintain religious harmony and discipline, reports BSS.

UNAB symposium today

In observance of Human Rights Day the United Nations Association of Bangladesh (UNAB) will hold a symposium today at 4.30 pm at the auditorium of the United Nations Information Centre, House No-25, Road No-11, Dhanmondi Residential Area, Charles Road, Dhaka. Resident Representative, UNDP will be the guest speaker, reports BSS.

Babri Mosque demolition

2 more killed, 130 hurt as protests continue

By Staff Correspondent

At least two people were killed and 130 people injured in continued violence around the country on the third consecutive day Wednesday during protests over the demolition of Babri Mosque in India.

Two people were killed when BDR opened fire to disperse a mob ransacking two Hindu temples at Madhabpur Thana under Habiganj District.

More than 100 people were injured in clashes with police at Dhamrai. Curfew was reimposed in Bhola and Section 144 was imposed in Sunamganj and Sherpur.

A Hindu temple was set on fire in Jessore as retaliation of Sunday's Babri Mosque demolition in the Indian town of Ayodhya.

However, in the capital and in most other places across the country, life returned to normalcy after two days of violence and tension.

UNB adds from Habiganj: Ashraf (30) died on the spot during shooting at noon and another young man, Matin (28), succumbed to bullet wound at Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital later in the afternoon.

Additional District Magistrate Shobur Rahman confirmed the two deaths and said at least 10 people, including a magistrate, were also injured in the melee.

One of the seriously injured, Shahed Mia (24), was admitted to the Brahmanbaria Hospital with bullet injury.

Officials said that the firing took place after several thousand people, after a protest gathering, had attacked Krishnamandir and Kalmandir at the thana headquarters. Our Staff Correspondent

adds: Savar Thana sources said that at least 100 people, including 11 policemen were injured in clashes between police and mob near Dhamrai Thana Parasad.

The injured included two local journalists.

A mob of several thousand people clashed with police when they tried to prevent the mob from setting the biggest Rath of the country on fire at about 10 am.

Police used tear gas shells, charged batons and fired rubber bullets to disperse the rampaging mob who exploded 30 patrol bombs and over 200 cocktails during their two-hour clashes. Tension was prevailing in the area.

Earlier, a protest meeting was held under the auspices of Dhamrai Thana Islami Chhatra. See Page 12 Col 3

Riot toll climbs to 700

Rao seeks to broaden alliance against BJP

NEW DELHI, Dec 9: Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao Wednesday sought to broaden his political support against Hindu nationalists to help quell the religious riots that consumed India for the third straight day, reports AP.

The death toll in Hindu-Muslim fighting climbed close to 700 in the escalating violence that followed the destruction of an ancient mosque by Hindu extremists on Sunday, news agencies reported. More than 200 people died on Wednesday alone.

The government put the official toll at 560 dead and 2,475 wounded. The news agencies compiled their tolls from local police stations and were likely to be more accurate.

Bombay and other cities were silenced by a nationwide strike called by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, or BJP, to protest the arrest of its leader on charges of instigating the mosques demolition.

In towns and city neighborhoods across the nation, millions of people remained in their homes under curfew enforced by army troops who, in some places, were empowered to shoot violators on sight.

Rao met leaders of the National Front, a leftist opposition coalition, to appeal for an alliance against the BJP. He accused the BJP of "extreme perfidy" by encouraging the zealots who tore apart the mosque in the northern holy town of Ayodhya.

Rao's Congress Party falls short of a majority in Parliament, and he appeared to be suggesting a broadened coalition to isolate the BJP.

The Front did not announce a response. It previously had accused Rao of responsibility for allowing hundreds of thousands of Hindu fanatics into Ayodhya and demanded that he quit.

Meanwhile, stories of brutality and desecrations began to emerge from the backlash of the Ayodhya incident.

The town of Nuh, 50 miles (80 kms) north of New Delhi, was one of the first to feel Muslim wrath. On Monday, 2,000 Muslims stormed into the town in trucks, armed with daggers and iron bars. They ransacked 10 Hindu temples and several businesses, shouting "kill the Hindu dog," said a 78-year-old priest, Rameshwar Nand.

Bombay's massive slum district, Dharavi, a patchwork of Hindu and Muslim colonies has. See Page 12 Col 7

Govt sidelines Attorney General in sub-judges case

By Staff Correspondent

The Writ petition, moved by 12 members of the Bar from around the country, challenging the government decision on the promotion of sub-judges was partially heard yesterday. The hearing was later adjourned until early next month.

In the morning session, senior Supreme Court Advocate Dr Rafiqur Rahman submitted that he had been engaged by the government for the case, thus replacing the Attorney General.

To which, the Court, consisting Justice Anwarul Haque Choudhury and Justice KM Hasan, expressed surprise and enquired about what had happened to Attorney General Aminul Haq.

The court expressed the desire to hear the Attorney General, not present at the time, at 2pm and said that the Court had a right to hear the Attorney General as an 'Amicus Curie' — as a Court Counsel — if not as a government counsel.

Later, in the afternoon session the Court sought clarifications on the 'locus standi' of the petitioners as aggrieved persons while the Attorney General, moved for adjournment saying that due to ill health he could not make contact with higher ups and the matter that it needed 'sound deliberation'.

The case will be considered as 'part heard' and will appear on January 3 after the court reopens following the vacation which begins today.

Hearing of the petition, moved on behalf of the petitioners by Barrister Amirul Islam in the Divisional Bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court November 29, was rescheduled as it could not be heard on Tuesday due to the hartal.

Saying that the petition dealt with "very unusual matters", the Court asked questions with regard to the 'locus standi' and cited an earlier judgement given by Justice Mustafa Kamal which said: "One must be directly an aggrieved person" to file a Writ petition.

Barrister Islam submitted that this case was not in any representative capacity but that the petitioners themselves were the aggrieved party.

"And they being conscientious citizens and prominent members of the Bar and practicing in the subordinate courts feel aggrieved as they are experiencing the interference and perceived impression of the litigant people about the subordinate judiciary."

It is therefore, he added, most vitally submitted that the subordinate judiciary needs to be protected which is a condition precedent to protection of rule of law.

"The petitioners are also directly aggrieved in context of the society and I am also affected directly as I have to appear in the court everyday,". See Page 12 Col 8

Joint efforts a must to ensure water sharing: Nepali Minister

Nepalese Minister for Tourism Ram Hari Joshi yesterday stressed the need for joint efforts of Nepal, India and Bangladesh for harnessing waters of the common rivers for the benefit of the people of this region, reports UNB.

"It will be good if the three countries sit together for ensuring the best use of waters", Joshi told a correspondent on arrival at Zia International Airport in the evening. See Page 12 Col 6