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SAARC body fails to agree on SAPTA

By Staff Correspondent

The SAARC Programming Committee, meeting to prepare a draft declaration to be adopted at the conclusion of the ensuing two-day summit, has failed to reach a consensus on the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), disclosed Q M A Rahim, Director General at the Foreign Ministry's SAARC Desk on Wednesday.

The Seventh SAARC Summit begins in the capital April 10.

However, Rahim added that major portions of the draft declaration, prepared and circulated earlier by host Bangladesh, had been accepted

at the meeting of senior officials of the seven member countries ahead of the SAARC Council of Ministers today.

"There are a few points on which we could not agree at the senior officials' level, so we agreed to disagree and submit it at the ministerial level," he told newsmen at an evening press briefing in the Foreign Office.

The SAARC Council of Ministers, comprising the Foreign Ministers of member nations, is scheduled to meet this afternoon to finalise the declaration.

Two sessions of the Programming Committee meeting, chaired by Rahim and represented by all seven members, were held at Hotel Sheraton yesterday morning and afternoon.

The day's meeting, Rahim said, had covered very substantive parts of the draft declaration but was unable to "complete the work."

"We still have a few unsettled points, so we have agreed to meet again in a third session so that it is ready before the Council of Ministers meeting Thursday."

He, however, said that he was "very satisfied" with the outcome of the day's meetings.

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PM may press Rao to solve Ganges issue

Star Report

Bangladesh will seek a fresh political commitment from India for resolving the long-standing issue of sharing the Ganges water at the bilateral talks between Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her Indian counterpart P V Narasimha Rao scheduled this week.

The bilateral meeting is expected to take place on Sunday at Hotel Sheraton in Dhaka.

The Dhaka summit that excludes contentious bilateral issues of the member nations however offers the leaders from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives to review each other's bilateral relations outside the highest-level meeting.

Informed sources said Begum Zia will take to Rao her country's deep concern over the alarming drop in the flows of Bangladesh rivers that are fed by the Ganges.

The Ganges' flows into Bangladesh have been obstructed by the Farakka barrage India has built to divert the international river's water to the Hoogly river in Calcutta. The unilateral withdrawal of water by India, possible in the absence of a bilateral agreement, has pushed the flows at Bangladesh's Hardinge Bridge point to a record low of less than 10,000 cusecs.

The Ganges issue has assumed crucial importance for Khaleda-Rao talks after officials

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SAARC destiny for regional people: Dinesh

Indian External Affairs Minister Dinesh Singh said here yesterday that the SAARC was the destiny for the people of the South Asia and expressed his country's total commitment to the association, reports BSS.

"We attach great importance to the SAARC," he told newsmen on arrival here and said two postponements of the seventh summit would in no way affect the regional forum adversely.

"It is a matter of past and we should now look forward," Singh said and added that SAARC covered a lot of ground after it was launched under Bangladesh's leadership.

He said that the second cycle of the SAARC summits beginning with the seventh

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Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina consoling a fire victim during her visit to Pearabagh slum in city yesterday. — Star photo

Summit should take up hard core issues: Nepali Minister

Nepal looks forward to the upcoming Seventh SAARC summit with great expectations and hopes that the SAARC would now take up hard core issues of direct benefits to people, Nepalese State Minister for Finance Mahesh Acharya said here yesterday, reports BSS.

"The SAARC has made a lot of progress and we believe that the real issues will come up for the consideration of the summit," he told newsmen on arrival here to attend the Seventh SAARC summit.

The Foreign Minister is with the Prime Minister in Nepal and the State Minister for Finance will deputise as the

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Sharif, Rao to hold meet

ISLAMABAD, Apr 7: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will meet with his Indian counterpart P V Narasimha Rao during Dhaka summit, Pakistan's Foreign Office said today, reports AFP.

Sharif will leave for Dhaka Friday, he told reporters. Sharif and Rao would hold a breakfast meeting on the sidelines of the two-day summit, he said but did not give an exact date.

Saifur asks secretaries to adapt to economic changes

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday called upon the senior bureaucrats to adapt themselves to ideological change in economic management of the country, reduce wastage in housekeeping revenue expenditure of the government and work with a sense of commitment to materialize the socio-economic programmes of the government, reports BSS.

He was addressing the secretaries at a high level meeting held at the cabinet room of Bangladesh Secretariat here.

The Minister regretted that although circumstances were different, the bureaucracy has not been able to fully adjust with it. Consequently old practices are followed blindly in

many areas of the economy including budgeting.

Noting that the developed countries cannot presently do much to help developing countries like Bangladesh as the global economy is going through a recession, the Minister stressed the urgent need to curtail revenue expenditure side by side with increase in development.

We have to mobilise domestic resources in increased volume, raise volume of investment, and create employment opportunities through proper programmes, effective and efficient management, he said adding that the bureaucracy has a key role to play in the whole process.

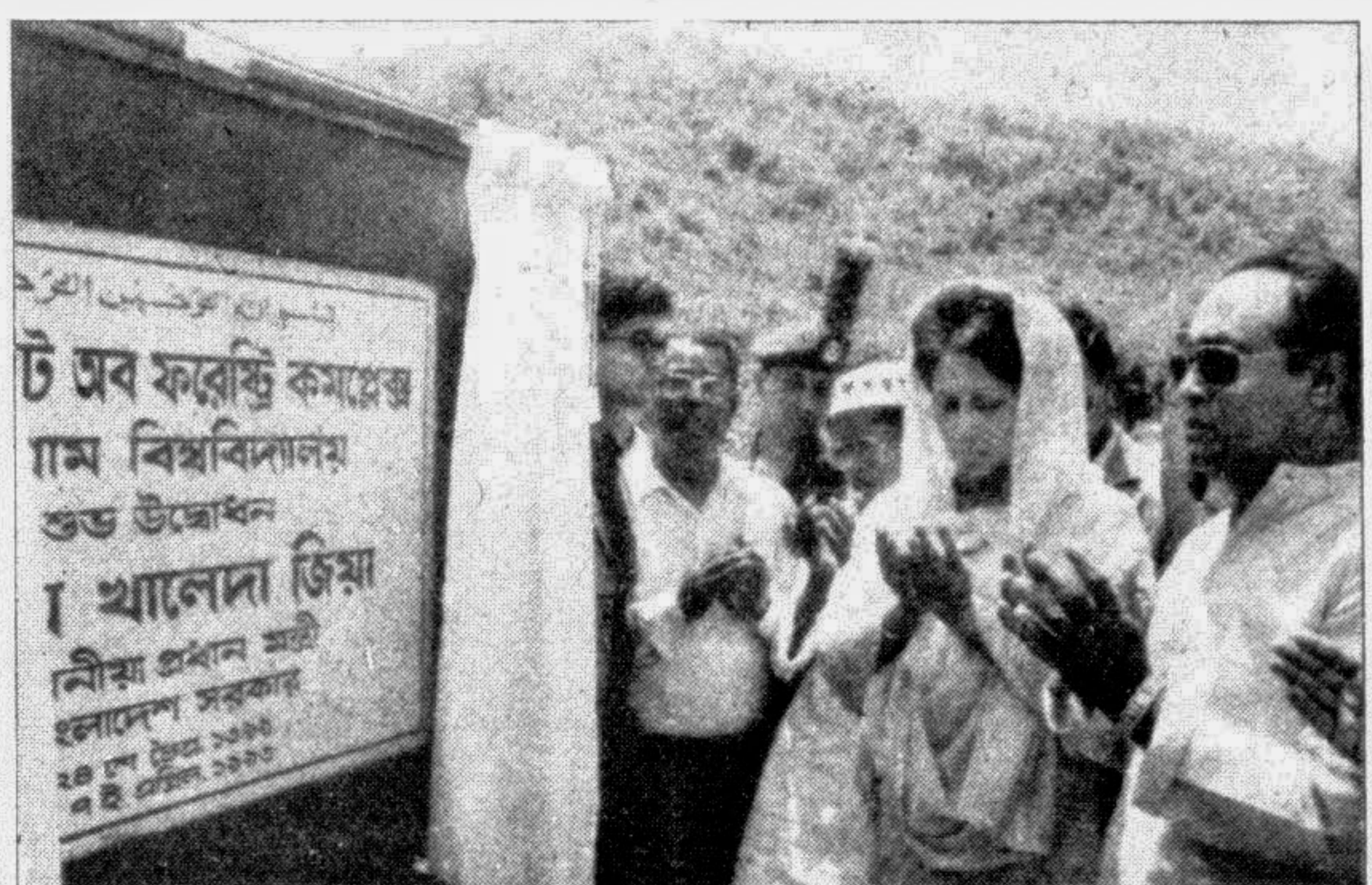
Saifur Rahman regretted

our budgeting process is still deficient and not related to actual economic programmes of the government. It should not be a mechanical exercise and should incorporate actual physical needs and programmes of the state.

The current assumption is, it is an achievement if one can raise the departmental budget. But actually credit should go to those who cut revenue expenditure or increase development budget, Rahman asserted.

The Finance Minister said the government was pursuing certain economic programmes for financial stabilization and structural adjustment. These are mutually reinforcing and

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Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia offering munajat after inaugurating the Institute of Forestry Complex at CU yesterday. — Star photo

'Keep democracy functioning'

LAKSAM, Apr 7: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today said all the mills and factories have to be kept running to cover the lost time of the past, reports UNB.

"Hartals should not be the politics of today... Our aim should be production, production and production," she told a public meeting at the Laksm Housing Estate ground this afternoon.

"Our present work should be to keep democracy functioning", the Prime Minister said reminding the people of nine years of struggle against autocracy.

She stressed the need for maintaining discipline in national life to make the economic base of the country strong and pointed out the steps of the government in this regard.

Begum Zia said the country

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Accountability in edn sector a must: PM

CHITTAGONG UNIVERSITY, Apr 7: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said here today that the present democratic government wanted to establish accountability in the education sector by ensuring that educational institutions play their due role, reports BSS.

The poor people of the country are bearing the expenses of education. In a democratic social system they (the people) have right to know whether their money are being utilised properly," said the Prime Minister.

She was addressing a function, organised on the occasion of the inauguration of the Institute of Forestry complex and foundation-laying of a residential hall for female students of the university campus.

Begum Zia said emphasis should be given on maintaining congenial academic atmosphere and advanced teaching system and asked the students to prepare themselves for taking up the future leadership to build a happy nation.

The Institute of Forestry complex will be built on a 20-acre of land with an estimated cost of Taka six crore and fifty lakh.

The Institute of Forestry at Chittagong University was established in 1976 but it could not work properly due to the lack of a complex.

The Institute is the only organisation in South Asia providing graduation degree on forestry.

The Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of a residential hall for female students

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Joint committee signs agreed minutes Massive efforts necessary to attract Tokyo traders: Ikeda

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh, in addition to improving its investment climate, will have to undertake massive efforts to overcome its disadvantageous position compared to the ASEAN countries to attract Japanese investment.

This was stated by the leader of Japanese delegation Kikuo Ikeda at a press conference Wednesday at Hotel Sonargaon after signing the agreed minutes of the Sixth Meeting of Bangladesh-Japan Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation.

Pointing to the lack of infrastructural facilities for smooth operating of industries, Ikeda said that Japan was interested to invest in the power and transport sectors to improve the infrastructure.

Ruling out any possibility of an immediate and a significant flow of investment into Bangladesh, he said that Japan was at present facing closures of a number of industrial companies because of certain reasons. And it was more engaged in bringing financial discipline at home than investing abroad.

Replying to a question of a newsmen on the trade imbalance between the two countries, the deputy leader of the Japanese delegation Masao Sawaki said that Japan retained no control on imports of anything but 11 items from any country.

He, however, suggested improving the quality of Bangladesh products for entry into the Japanese market.

Referring to Japan's New Aid Programme, Sawaki said that Japan would send survey teams to Bangladesh to point out how to improve productivity and would also help achieve it by providing expertise.

The agreed minutes was signed by FBCCI President Mahbubur Rahman and Kikuo Ikeda on behalf of their respective teams.

Total Japanese investment in Bangladesh till March, 1992 was only US \$ 65 million despite the fact that Japan is the major source of import and single largest donor to the country.

"Bangladesh's exports to Japan have not registered a significant growth, despite an overall encouraging export increase," the agreed minutes of the sixth meeting of the joint committee said and quoted the Japanese delegation as saying more intensive marketing efforts should be undertaken by the Bangladeshi entrepreneurs to enter the Japanese market.

The Japanese side also pointed out that investment was contributory towards expansion of trade between the two countries, according to the agreed minutes of the meeting.

"The success of the Japanese manufacturing enterprises already in operation in Bangladesh would certainly pave the way for Bangladesh to attract more Japanese investments," the minutes said quoting Kanji Yamada of JAIDO, one of the members of Japanese delegation who presented a paper at the joint committee meeting.

Among others, the press conference was attended by M Morshed Khan, K M Shaiful Islam, M Yunus and Rashid-ul Hasan.

Morshed Khan stressed the need for making the Joint Committee more effective in increasing the areas of cooperation between the two countries and disclosed a plan to incorporate a technical team in the committee.

BSS adds: When asked how Dhaka could improve its transportation system given the

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ECNEC okays Tk 27cr Ctg city water supply project

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) at a meeting here yesterday with Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman in the chair approved the inter-ministerial water supply and rehabilitation project under crash programme to be implemented by Chittagong Water and Sewerage Authority, reports BSS.

The project to be completed by June 1995, will cost an estimated Taka 26.80 crore.

The project is designed to cater to increasing demand for drinking water in Chittagong city for the next two years. The project components include sinking of new tubewells, and repair of damaged and under

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AL, allies hold rally today

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League-led combined opposition parties will hold a joint rally in the capital this afternoon to protest police atrocities on the Ghatk Dalal Nirml Samannaya Committee supporters March 26 and 28 and also to denounce the repression on the pro-liberation forces.

AL chief and leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina will chair the public meeting scheduled to take place at Bangabandhu Avenue at 3 in the afternoon. Leaders of the AL and its allies will also address the meeting.

The protest meeting was decided after the leaders of the 5-party combine, the four-party Patriotic Democratic Front and Ganatantri Party met

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'Shamsul's killers hatched plot in FP office'

The five youngmen arrested on charge of killing a businessman at Mohammadpur made the murder plot sitting in the Freedom Party office in the city before storming the victim's residence March 9 evening, police said, reports UNB.

The police statement was in the forwarding report submitted while producing the accused before court yesterday. They were arrested in a special police drive, launched Monday night, on charge of murdering Khandaker Shamsul Haque.

Four of them were taken on 4 days police remand for interrogation. Police prayed for a

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Student leader shot dead in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Apr 7: A student leader of KC College and a degree examinee was killed in a clash between rival groups of youths at BSSIC Industrial Area here Wednesday.

Witnesses said Abdul Kuddus, 22, president of the college unit of Jatya Chhatra Dal was shot dead as two groups from village Bhutiargati and Udaipur of Jhenidah

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Madrasha student chopped to death in Narsingdi

NARSINGDI, Apr 7: A madrasa student was chopped to death and dumped by some miscreants in the town today (Wednesday), police and witnesses said, reports UNB.

Jamaat-Shibir activists were blamed for the killing of Azimul Huq Aziz who had recently deserted Shibir. Aziz was a student of Alem class of Jameya-e-Kashemia Madrasa in the town.

Tendons of his hands, legs and throat were slit.

Local people said he had frequently opposed alleged corruption of the madrasa Principal, said to be a Jamaat supporter.

For his role, Aziz, a resident of west Kandapara in the town, was ousted from the madrasa hostel. Later, he got lodging at the house of Abdur Rouf near the madrasa.

Jamaat demands release of Azam

Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday demanded immediate and unconditional release of its party chief Prof Golam Azam who was detained under the Foreigners' Act, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram, acting Ameer of Jamaat Abbas Ali Khan said Prof Azam was detained illegally as there was no specific evidence of crime or case against him.

The High Court is currently hearing a writ petition against the government action of detaining Prof Azam as citizen of Bangladesh.

Bitterly criticising the government for its subservient policy, the Jamaat leaders said every government wants to please their 'Indian master' to stay in power.

He strongly demanded inclusion of the Babri Mosque

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Azam clung to Pak citizenship: AG

By Staff Correspondent

Attorney General Aminul Huq continuing his submission in Golam Azam's citizenship case said Wednesday that Azam clung to the citizenship of Pakistan and never renounced it.

"Golam Azam clung to the citizenship of Pakistan voluntarily, faithfully and honestly," Huq said arguing the contention of the counsel of the petitioner A R Yousuf who earlier said that citizenship was a birth right that never evaporated.

The Attorney General told the Single-Member Bench comprising Justice Anwarul Huq Chowdhury that Azam was roaming with the Pakistan citizenship having a firm belief

that the bond of Islam would not divide Pakistan but would rather cause impediments in the creation of Bangladesh.

"Therefore, the question of deprivation of the citizenship does not arise and he never renounced the citizenship of Pakistan till today," the Attorney General told the Court.

The Single-Member Bench was constituted by the Chief Justice after a Two-Judge Bench delivered a split verdict on the writ petition challenging disqualification of the citizenship of the controversial Jamaat chief Azam now in jail on charge of violating country's Foreigners' Act.

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