

# Dhaka Day by Day

## An Essential Reading on SAARC

By S M Ali

There would be quite a few, perhaps more than half a dozen or so, former Secretaries of Foreign Affairs and several ex-foreign ministers who watch the Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) from the sidelines with nostalgia. Then, there would be diplomats, now posted abroad as ambassadors, who were probably directors at the Foreign Ministry during the planning of the SAARC, doing all the paperwork on what was still then an elusive dream of creating a new regional alliance in South Asia.

Many of them would be now asking themselves, "Where did we go wrong in giving the framework a slightly bigger push at the start?" Others, taking a more optimistic position, would suggest that the charter as designed by founder-members could not be better.

This journalist, then visiting Dhaka in 1977-

word, with its Sanskrit origin, was known to several countries of the region. However, for some reasons, they settled for another name. The ASEAN was born.

Now, all this is history, at least as far as the SAARC is concerned, poorly recorded and probably undocumented, unless we get an access to the archives of the Foreign Ministry.

Here, I am delighted to note a major exception. It is the "Bangladesh in International Politics" by Muhammad Shamsul Huq, an eminent educationist and what's most important in the present context, he served as the Adviser on Foreign Affairs to President Ziaur Rahman during 1977-78 and then as his Foreign Minister from 1978-82. The book which also focused on the dilemmas of the weak states is published by the University Press Limited. It was launched late last month just when the stage was set for the SAARC Summit.

As far as the seven-nation alliance is concerned, the strength of the book lies in its 25-page chapter, almost exclusively devoted to the planning of the SAARC and its implementation. It is a straightforward account, which is far from marred by high-sounding opinions. There are good anecdotes, carefully chosen records of one-to-one conversations and a detailed analysis of what Bangladesh was looking for in the new framework.

The chapter on SAARC merges into one, titled, "International Cooperation for Development" and widens the scenario for the battle in Bangladesh for survival and progress.

How did Prof Huq achieve this remarkable feat at an age when a Bangladeshi personality, after a full career, goes into retirement? Perhaps the former Foreign Minister is not the man to sit idle.

However, there is another reason. During his long professional career, especially at the Foreign Ministry, Prof Huq kept a diary, obviously a comprehensive one, which eventually provided him with all the materials that we now find in this remarkable book, one that should be in libraries in all the seven SAARC countries.

78, was fortunate enough to have a fairly comprehensive briefing from one of the senior officials of the Foreign Ministry, who then probably occupied the rank of a director, on what was undoubtedly the brainchild of President Ziaur Rahman.

The official who spared the time for the briefing was none other than the present Foreign Secretary, Reaz Rahman.



Prof Huq with Mr Rao, then the Indian Foreign Minister, in Dhaka in 1980.

There were several unresolved questions relating to the project. There were doubts if the alliance should have a well-structured secretariat, unlike the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and, if there were one, where it would be based.

There were a few other unsettled issues. Rahman had spent them out for me, more for background information than for writing a report. I respected his wish, thus sacrificing one good story.

If I recall correctly, it was about the name of the proposed alliance. Did the Foreign Ministry toy with the idea of calling it "ASA", standing for the Association of South Asia, which could also mean "Hope", provided we could take a bit of liberty with the spelling? (One had to spell it as "Asha".) At that stage, I had pointed out that South East Asian Nations too, at one time, had thought of "ASA" for their alliance, since the

## Programmes to observe Bengali 1400 yrs

By Staff Correspondent

The national committee of the council for celebrating Bengali 1400 years has chalked out a three-day programme in a meeting held yesterday attended by Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in the Parliament Sheikh Hasina.

The meeting presided over by its Joint Convener Shamsur Rahman decided that the programme will begin by hoisting the national flag by Sheikh Hasina at Suhrawardi Uddayan at 9 am on Baishakh 1, the first day of the Bengali new century.

Hasina would release 14 pigeons and 1400 balloons from the dias at the Uddayan from where Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered the Historic March 7 speech, while Poet Begum Sufia Kamal will hoist a 1400 years celebration commemorative flag and inaugurate a 1400 years plaque.

A colourful rally will be brought out from Bahadurshah Park.

The rally will finally end at Bangabandhu Bhaban after visiting the Central Shaheed Minar. It will place floral wreath at the portrait of

Sheikh Mujib.

Afterwards, 14 eminent personalities will plant 14 traditional trees of Bengal at the Bhaban premises.

Other programmes will be announced later, the meeting decided.

### Abritti Samannaya Parishad

Bangladesh Abritti Samannaya Parishad has chalked out elaborate programmes to welcome the Bengali new year 1400, says a press release.

According to the press release, the Parishad will hold a rally of the members of different recitation groups and individuals at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of the Dhaka University and bring out a colourful procession to mark the opening day of the new year on Baishakh 1 at 4.30pm.

Other programmes of the organisation include: "Baishakh" festivals at the Bahadur Shah Park at 4 pm on Baishakh 3, at the Mohammadpur Town Hall premises on Baishakh 4 at 4 pm, at the German Cul-

tural Centre on Baishakh 15 at 6 pm, at Kamalapur Railway Station on Baishakh 18 at 8 am, and at Mirpur "Golchakkar" on Baishakh 25.

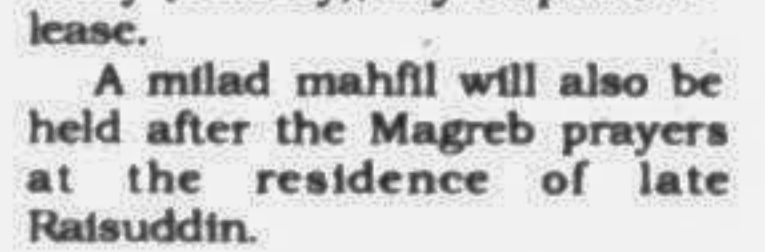
Recitation groups and individuals from all over the country will participate in the festivals, the press release added.

### Ustad Raisuddin's anniversary of death today

The 20th death anniversary of noted artist of classical music Ustad Munshi Raisuddin will be observed today (Sunday), says a press release.

A milad mahfil will also be held after the Magreb prayers at the residence of late Raisuddin.

All the relatives, friends, followers and students have been requested to attend the Milad mahfil.



The General Secretary of Jatiya Gonatantri Party Shafiqul Alam Prodhan was arrested by police in front of the National Press Club yesterday while leading a procession demanding solution to Farakka problem.

## Bangladesh Editors Council seminar on Farakka Immediate construction of Ganges Barrage urged

A seminar on "Farakka" organised by Bangladesh Editors Council at the Jatiya Press Club here yesterday demanded immediate solution of the Farakka issue by ensuring the due share of Ganges waters with Bangladesh, reports BSS.

In a number of resolutions the seminar urged the government to start construction of Ganges Barrage without further delay as a long term perspective to save the areas affected by the Farakka Barrage. India is diverting Ganges waters to the Vaghrathi through Farakka Barrage for keeping Calcutta port navigable.

Eminent water expert of Bangladesh BM Abbas AT was the chief guest at the seminar, while President of Editors Council Sanaulah Noori was in the chair.

The seminar appealed to the leaders of India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh for a joint effort to develop the water resources of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra basins for multiple use which would immensely contribute to the economic development of these countries.

It also appealed to three other leaders of the SAARC countries to utilise their goodwill and motivate the concerned leaders of SAARC countries for joint development of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra basins.

The seminar also urged the government of Bangladesh to raise the issue of sharing of Ganges waters and other international rivers to the world forum and launch a strong diplomatic drive to mould world opinion in favour of Bangladesh.

Abbas said it was the bounden duty of the governments of Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan to launch a joint effort for development of the water resources of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra basins to improve the standard of living of the teeming millions in these countries.

Referring to the Ganges Barrage to be built by Bangladesh, he said the government must take immediate action to build it. He said even if there is an agreement with India regarding sharing of Ganges

waters, after 10 years there will be no water to share due to upstream use in other states in India. He said in that case even West Bengal will be deprived of its due share.

He said in the hilly areas like Nepal, India and Bhutan water could be stored by making reservoirs but in flat lands like Bangladesh construction of barrages was the only solution to store water for dry season use.

The seminar also urged the leaders of Bangladesh and India to solve the issue of water sharing at the highest political level without further delay.

The speakers at the seminar observed that there was no use of discussing the Farakka issue and the sharing of Ganges water at expert level as it was not a technical problem, rather a political issue.

They expressed concern at the harrowing effects of the Farakka Barrage on the economy and lifestyle of the people of Bangladesh.

Political leaders M Ayenuddin, Jamir Ali, Barrister Korban Ali, and Anwar Zahid, educationist Dr Tojammel Hossain and Prof Abdul Gafoor also spoke at the seminar.

## Different bodies hail PM as SAARC Chairperson

Leaders of Zia Parishad yesterday congratulated Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on her election as Chairperson of the seven nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), reports BSS.

Thirteen members of Zia Parishad and its unit members including Kabir Murad and Taranga Anwar, President and General Secretary respectively and eight-member Advisory Parishad including Reazuddin Ahmed, Editor of Daily Telegraph, Chief Reporter of BSS Gias Kamal Chowdhury and Syed Zafar, Editor of Dainik Dinkal in a statement said Begum Khaleda Zia with her election as Chairperson of SAARC, which was a dream of late President Ziaur Rahman,

was going to open a new era for future.

They expressed the hope that SAARC programmes would bring welfare, happiness and prosperity to the 120 crore people of the member countries in the days to come. They requested the SAARC leaders including the head of the Indian government to come forward in the welfare of the 12 crore people of a SAARC country by resolving the water problem through discussion.

NETA

National Federation of Teacher Association (NFTA) yesterday felicitated Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia on her election as the chair person of SAARC.

Dr Enamul Haq Khan and Prof M Shareful Islam, President and Secretary General of the Federation in a statement here said SAARC which was the brain child of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman would find further direction under and paved the way to serve the purpose for which it was floated under the able and dynamic leadership of SAARC chair person Begum Khaleda Zia.

The NFTA urged the leaderships of SAARC countries to evolve a uniform and discrimination free system of education including taking positive steps for removal of illiteracy, check of population boom and improve the living standard of people through consolidated action programmes.

Happy Birthday

to



**Priti**  
from  
Salam Mama & Mami

## One gets 10 yrs RI for mugging Railway earns Tk 63 lakh

CHITTAGONG, Apr 10: Anti-terrorism Tribunal Judge Abu Bakar Siddique today sentenced one Dildar Habib Pappo to ten years rigorous imprisonment and fined Taka five thousand, in default to suffer two years more RI for snatching away money in broad daylight, reports BSS.

CHITTAGONG, Apr 10: Bangladesh Railway (East zone) earned Taka 63 lakh by transporting 1352 containers from here to Dhaka in March last, reports BSS.

According to BR press release here today, the earning of the BR from the source was Taka 38 lakh during the same month of the last year.

**NOTICE TO CONSIGNEES**

The containerised cargo ex. M.V. HOECHEST EXPRESS V-08409 from Rotterdam, Le-Havre, ex. M. V. GENOVA V-08408 from FOS, ex. M. V. NANTA BHUM V-133 from Bangkok, ex. M. V. KATSURAGI V-14311 from Hongkong, Bucan, ex. M. V. OCEAN CENTAURUS V-438 from Karachi, ex. M. V. VAAL V-9265 from Moji, ex. M. V. ELBE V-15112 from Nagoya, ex. M. V. NORTH SEA V-07411 from FOS, ex. M.V. MONT BLANC MARU V-17077 from Kobe, Nagoya, Yokohama, ex. M. V. RHINE MARU V-27512 & PACIFIC BRIDGE V-46169 from Keelung, have been relayed to M. V. NGS EXPRESS V-1493, Imp. Plot. No. 270/93 is due to arrive Chittagong on or about 10-4-93 from Singapore.

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**Sunday**

4.20 Opening announcement, Al-Quran, Programme summary

5.00 Live telecast of 7th SAARC summit concluding session.

6.30 Mayeder Janriya

6.50 Open University

7.20 Tagore songs

8.00 News in Bangla

9.00 The Wizard

10.00 News in English

10.30 Chhaya Chhanda

11.30 Khabar/The News

11.40 Tomorrow's programme summary

11.45 Closing

**Weather**

**No change in temperature**

By Staff Correspondent

Weather forecast for the next 24 hours commencing 6 am today says, rain or showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind may occur at a few places over Barisal, Chittagong divisions and at one or two places over Khulna, Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions.

The Met Office forecasts, day temperature is likely to remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The maximum temperature of the country recorded yesterday Saturday of 37.5 degree was reported from Rajshahi and the minimum of 15.4 degree was reported from Sylhet.

The sun sets today (Sunday) at 6.19 pm and rises tomorrow (Monday) at 5.40 am.

The maximum and the minimum temperature and humidity of some of the major cities and towns of the country yesterday were:

Cities/Towns	Temperature in degree Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	9 am	6 pm
Dhaka	33.6	24.2	75	68
Chittagong	31.2	22.0	74	73
Rajshahi	37.5	21.7	71	35
Khulna	34.4	24.4	78	77
Barisal	32.5	24.4	82	78
Cox's Bazar	32.0	22.5	74	74
Dinajpur	32.4	19.8	71	62
Sylhet	27.4	15.4	53	72

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