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RISING STARS

To accommodate coverages of SAARC Summit we could not publish the regular weekly page on date. This, however, will be published tomorrow. Inconveniences caused to our young readers are regretted.

NEWS BRIEFS

Satellite symposium tomorrow

An hour long Worldnet satellite symposium on 'Investment versus Foreign Assistance' will be held tomorrow (Tuesday) at the auditorium of United States Information Service (USIS) at 5.15 pm. Bangladesh, Colombo and Calcutta will join the satellite programme, said a USIS press release. James D. Berg, Acting President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and Robert Bakley, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Bureau of Private Enterprise, US Agency for International Development (USAID) will reply the questions through satellite, reports UNB.

Two Nepalese held in HK for smuggling

HONG KONG, Apr 11: Two Nepalese men were arrested at Hong Kong's Kai Tak airport for allegedly smuggling in 1.54 kilograms (3.39 pounds) of heroin into the British colony, the government said here today. The two men, aged 20 and 24, were arrested Saturday after their arrival on a flight from Manila when customs officers found heroin concealed in the soles of their shoes, the government information service said, reports AFP.

Quake hits New Zealand

NAPIER, New Zealand, Apr 11: An earthquake of magnitude 6.2 on the Richter scale hit here today night causing widespread alarm but little known damage so far. Seismologist Terry Webb said the quake, which hit just after 7:00 pm (0700 GMT) was apparently centered in the Hawkes Bay region of North Island and was 30 kilometres (20 miles) deep. The earthquake lasted for around 30 seconds, reports AFP.

Dhaka Summit ends with pledge to eradicate poverty

Bold move for peace, amity : Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

The Seventh SAARC Summit ended Sunday with the adoption of the Dhaka Declaration and a solemn pledge from Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to sustain the momentum generated at the meet.

"We have definitely made a bold attempt to work for the cause of peace, amity and co-operation in South Asia," Begum Zia, the Chairperson of

the summit, observed in her concluding speech.

The two-day summit, held at the International Conference Centre, concluded amid an atmosphere of goodwill as leaders of the seven nations pledged to provide a further dynamic impetus to activities in core areas of economic, social and cultural cooperation.

The leaders also pledged to take initiatives to eradicate

poverty from the region within the shortest possible period.

Addressing the session, Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao expressed his appreciation for the gesture made by member states in entrusting India with the chairmanship of the Eighth SAARC Summit.

The summit leaders endorsed the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement

(SAPTA) immediately after the concluding session began with the sound of the bugle at around 5:05 pm.

Prime Minister Begum Zia called for sharing the benefits of SAPTA "equally and equitably by all", while terming it as a landmark agreement to boost economic ties among the member nations.

Leaders of the seven South Asian Association for Regional

Cooperation (SAARC) then went on to adopt the Dhaka Declaration.

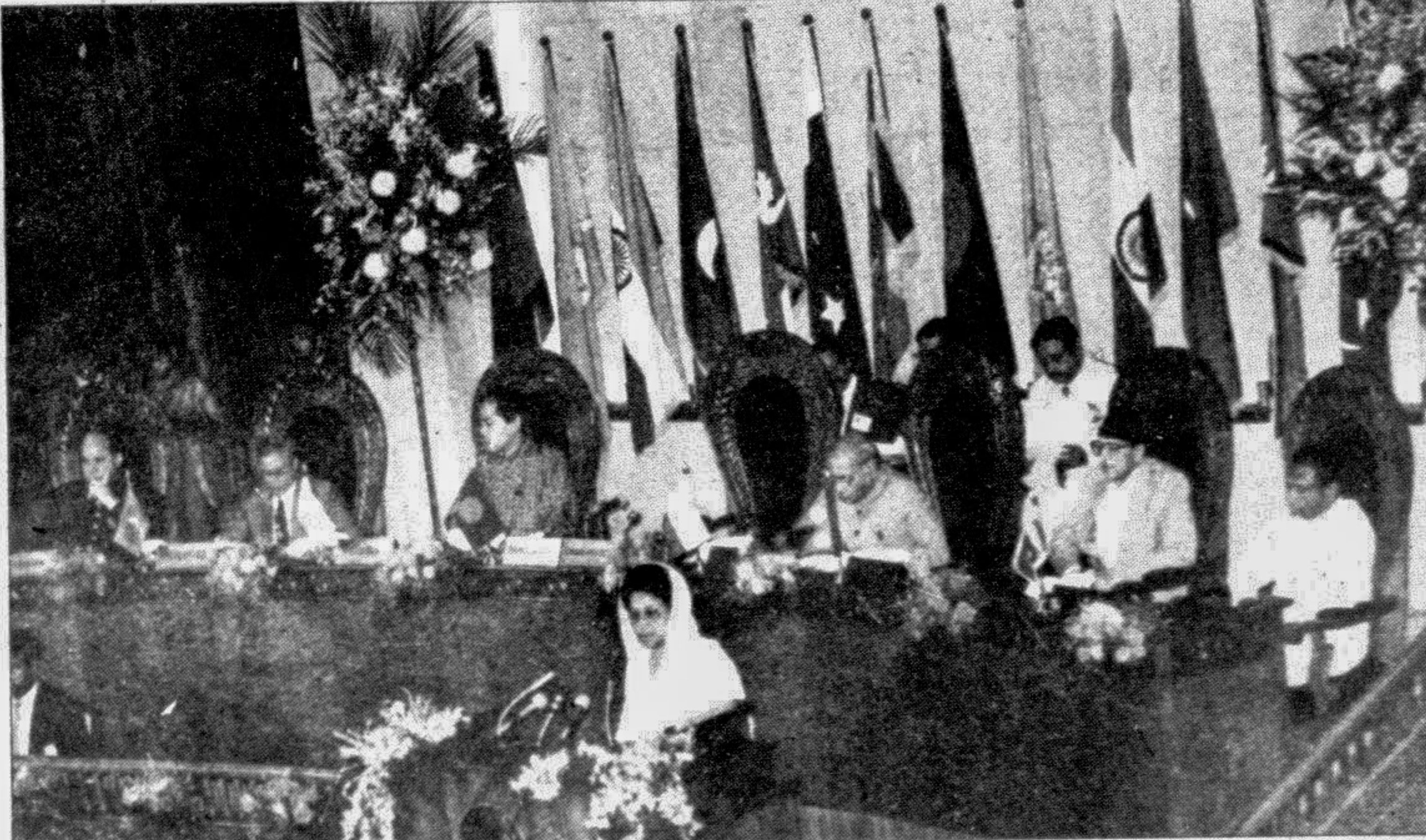
"This declaration symbolises our strong resolve to work together for the promotion of peace, progress and stability in our region, we have adopted many important decisions," Begum Zia pointed out.

Expressing satisfaction over the outcome of the summit, the Prime Minister said the

meet provided an important occasion for self-assessment and renewal — an occasion to take a hard look at the state of cooperation among member nations and draw practical lessons for the future.

The decisions coming out of the summit, she added, "will strengthen our efforts to make SAARC more vibrant, dynamic and action-oriented for our

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SAARC Chairperson and Prime Minister of Bangladesh Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the concluding session of the Seventh SAARC Summit at the International Conference Centre yesterday. — Star photo

Dhaka Declaration

By Staff Correspondent

The declaration of the Seventh Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been adopted Sunday after a two-day summit of the seven South Asian leaders stressing priority on poverty alleviation, regional trade and cultural cooperation.

The 23-page 63-point Dhaka Declaration was prepared on 25 major issues with agreement on much-talked about South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA).

The other priority areas identified in the declaration included Integrated Programme of Action (IPA), more business-like and functional approach in the conduct of SAARC meetings, environment, population, shelter, children, youth, women in development, plan of action for disabled persons, science and technology, terrorism, drug trafficking and drug abuse, security of small states, South Asian Development Fund, international economic issues and projection of collective

positions.

In the declaration, the seven leaders expressed their deep satisfaction over the positive outcome of the two-day summit and gratefully accepted the offer of India to host the eighth SAARC Summit.

They also expressed their firm conviction that the summit would greatly contribute towards strengthening the policies and cooperative actions of the member states in response to the challenges of the 1990s and beyond in areas where SAARC has a distinct contribution to make.

The SAARC leaders reiterated their determination to strengthen and enrich SAARC as an instrument, endowing it with a clear set of forward looking goals and objectives as well as all the requisite institutional capacities, to work to enrich not only the lives of its own members but also promote peace, progress and stability in South Asia in a larger context.

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SAARC is in safe hands, says Rao

By Staff Correspondent

The Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao extended all support to SAARC's new Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia saying "the future of SAARC over the next year is in safe hands".

Addressing the concluding session of Seventh SAARC Summit yesterday afternoon, Rao said, "any support that she requires will come unflinchingly from us in India as it will, I am sure, from all other member states."

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Leaders to hold more talks to solve bilateral issues : PM

By Staff Correspondent

Chairperson of SAARC Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said Sunday the SAARC leaders would hold frequent talks to solve the bilateral and regional issues.

Addressing a press conference after successful completion of two-day summit Begum Zia said that although the SAARC Charter does not permit discussion on bilateral issues "we will have more bilateral talks for better cooperation."

"The more such summit will take place, the more the leaders will have chance for bilateral talks to resolve the irritants," Prime Minister told the crowded press conference at the Hotel Sonargaon where a media centre was set up on the occasion of the Summit.

Begum Zia said that Shri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, who is now in the city, personally told her to convene meeting at any time

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Delhi won't back tribal insurgents Rao to sit with Khaleda soon for solution to Ganges issue

Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao said here yesterday that he would soon sit with his Bangladesh counterpart Begum Khaleda Zia with concrete proposals for short and long-term solution to the Ganges water sharing problems, reports BSS.

Briefing newsmen on the outcome of over 30 minutes exclusive talks between the two Prime Ministers, an official said the Indian Premier told Begum Zia that after their meeting on the Ganges water sharing proper directives would be passed on to the concerned officials for the implementation of the meeting's outcome.

The Indian Prime Minister, met the Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at Hotel Sheraton.

Rao expressed his willingness to remove the irritants between India and Bangladesh saying he would do everything possible to resolve all the existing bilateral problems between the two countries in the spirit of SAARC.

At the meeting Begum Zia made Bangladesh's position clear on the Ganges water sharing and briefed the Indian Premier in details about the affects on Bangladesh and its people due to the unilateral withdrawal of Ganges water by India.

Begum Zia told her Indian counterpart about the im-

mense sufferings of nearly four crore people of the northern parts of Bangladesh due to the affects of Farraka Barrage.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister said the unilateral withdrawal of the Ganges water by India had affected Bangladesh's agriculture, pisciculture, increased salinity of water and caused desertification.

The official said Begum Zia also invited the Indian Prime Minister to visit the Hardinge Bridge site to see the affects of Farraka barrage.

Begum Zia said the Ganges water flow came down to 9000

Rao, Sharif hold closed-door meet

Indian and Pakistan Prime Ministers had a closed-door meeting here Sunday afternoon but refused to disclose what transpired at the dialogue, reports UNB.

Narasimha Rao and Nawaz Sharif were seen coming out smiling from the 35-minute meeting in a room adjacent to the International Conference Centre, the venue of the seventh SAARC summit.

Relations between India and Pakistan worsened recently. New Delhi had accused Islamabad of the bombing blitz in Bombay that killed more than 300 people last month.

Indian External Affairs

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cusec in the current dry season but as per the last agreement Bangladesh deserves 27,600 cusecs water.

She apprised the Indian Premier that a national consensus had been forged in Bangladesh to press for the realisation of Bangladesh's due share of the Ganges water.

Other bilateral issues including push-in, Shantibahini insurgency in the hill tracts and demarcation of the maritime boundary also came up for discussion.

Begum Zia regretted the violation of maritime boundaries by India and said India had floated international tender for the exploration of oil and gas in the Bay of Bengal without demarcating the maritime boundaries.

About the insurgency of the out-lawed Shantibahini in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Begum Zia said there existed peace in the Hill Tracts and the Chakma refugees, who crossed the border, should return to their homeland.

Responding to Begum Zia's remarks, the Indian Premier said his country would not back the tribal insurgents.

The two leaders also discussed trade deficit between Bangladesh and India which is now 1.3 billion, the spokesman said adding that the Indian Premier agreed to take measures to remove the trade deficit between the countries.

Repatriation will be completed soon, hopes Sharif

Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and Pakistan during exclusive talks yesterday agreed on all-round cooperation between the two countries, reports UNB.

The talks at Hotel Sheraton focussed mainly on economic cooperation, but also touched other bilateral issues, including repatriation of stranded Pakistanis, officials said after the meeting which lasted for more than half an hour.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia mentioned that there is wide scope of further expanding economic relations between the two countries.

On the repatriation of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh, Begum Zia described as a good gesture the rehabilitation of 50 families in Pakistan recently and said the entire process of repatriation of about 2.5 lakh people should be completed soon.

The ice has broken on the issue," Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was quoted to have said referring to the recent repatriation of 50 families to Pakistan and hoped that the process will be completed soon.

As the new Chairperson of SAARC, Begum Zia sought cooperation of the Pakistani Prime Minister in strengthening regional cooperation.

She hoped that Pakistan will further prosper under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

SAPTA signed

By Staff Correspondent

The leaders of the SAARC states Sunday endorsed the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) at the concluding session of the Seventh SAARC Summit.

SAPTA was signed at the session by the Foreign Minister of the SAARC countries giving way to liberal trade flow within the member countries.

Hailing the signing, the SAARC Heads of state or government expressed their deep satisfaction over the signing of the 'umbrella agreement' as officials termed it.

The leaders also stressed that all necessary steps should be taken to begin the first round of trade negotiations to exchange trade preferences among member states under the agreement.

Chairperson of the SAARC Begum Khaleda Zia said, "the agreement would constitute an important landmark in our cooperation."

She said the benefits of SAPTA must be shared "equally and equitably by all."

The agreement was signed in the concluding session of the Seventh SAARC Summit in the International Conference Centre.

Officials said this was an umbrella agreement and trade among the member countries under its framework would be through negotiation.

Prior to the signing of the agreement, SAPTA faced differences on procedural stipulations for the implementation of the arrangement among the seven members of the SAARC.

The tangle that obstructed drafting of the paragraph of the trade agreement relates to the question whether the member countries would sign the broad-based umbrella accord on SAPTA along with a schedule for negotiating tariff concessions on a product by product basis or to sign them separately.

However, the latter point was not included in the final declaration. Initially, there was a proposal for a 10 per cent tariff concession on imports of specific products from member nations and that no new non-tariff barriers would be introduced for intra-SAARC trade.

The Dhaka Declaration on SAPTA said: The Heads of State or government reaffirmed the need to liberalise trade as early as possible through a step by step approach. They underscored that this should be done in such a manner that all countries in the region could share the benefits of trade expansion equitably.

The signatories to the agreement were: Indian External Affairs Minister Dinesh Singh, Bangladesh Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Harold Herat, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan Siddique Khan Kanju, Maldives Foreign Minister Fathullah Jamil, Foreign Minister of Bhutan Dawa Tsering and State Minister for Finance Mahesh Acharya of Nepal.

Hasina, 3 SAARC leaders talk common issues

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday met with Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa and King of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuk and discussed with them matters of mutual interest, reports UNB.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President exchanged views with the SAARC leaders on various issues of common concern during the meetings party sources said.

They stressed the need for further strengthening regional cooperation to eradicate poverty from the SAARC member countries and help them achieve self-reliance. They also hoped that the existing friendly relations among the SAARC countries would be further strengthened in the days ahead.

Hasina was accompanied by Awami League leaders Abdus Samad Azad MP, Zillur Rahman, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury MP, Mohammad Nasim MP and Abul Hossain MP.

Gen Asif's death a political murder, says wife

RAWALPINDI, Apr 11: The widow of Pakistan's former Army Chief General Asif Nawaz who died in January, said today he had been poisoned in a political murder, reports Reuter.

Mrs Asif Nawaz made her allegation at a news conference, but was unable to say exactly how her husband had been killed or by whom.

Nawaz, 56, died last January of a heart attack during early morning exercises at his home in Rawalpindi, headquarters of Pakistan's powerful military.

Senior military sources said his widow's charges had no substance.

"I am sure that this unnatural death was a political assassination," she said, adding that she was considering whether to bring charges but declined to say against whom.

She said her husband first fell ill on November 24 last year during an army meeting and was taken to hospital where doctors said he had food poisoning. She said he was constantly unwell until his death.

"Expert medical opinion collected by US reinforces our suspicion that his death occurred

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NATO enforces NFZ over Bosnia today

VICENZA (Italy), Apr 11: NATO fighters take to the skies over Bosnia on Monday, ready to shoot down Serb or other aircraft who violate a United Nations ban on flights over the war-ravaged region, reports Reuter.

Pilots and ground crews with US, French and Dutch fighters, at airbases dotted across northern Italy, made final preparations for the mission as Church bells pealed to celebrate Easter Sunday.

The operation will mark the first Western military intervention in former Yugoslavia, with UN blessing. It will also be the first mission in a combat zone for NATO since the alliance was founded in 1949.

The first of more than 50

fighters will begin patrols at 1200 gmt on Monday. No one is sure whether they will be fired on by anti-aircraft guns or missiles, or whether they will be opposed by planes from the former Yugoslav air force.

There have been few recent violations of the no-fly zone imposed by the United Nations last October, but Bosnian Serb military commanders have called the NATO mission an act of war that will worsen the conflict.

The year-old conflict in Bosnia has claimed tens of thousands of lives and created the worst refugee problem in Europe since World War Two.

NATO, worried that UN troops delivering aid in Bosnia could be attacked when the

no-fly-zone is enforced, has ordered pilots to act with care when they start their patrols.

They will be able to fire cannon or air-to-air missiles only after repeated warnings to intruders that they should leave Bosnian airspace, or in self-defence.

AFP adds: Officials acknowledge enforcement of the flight ban will have little impact on the military situation in the ex-Yugoslav republic, where Serbs, Muslims and Croats have been embroiled in a bloody year-long war.

But they said it would show the West's determination to bring peace to Bosnia, where some 7,000 UN troops are guarding relief deliveries, and pressure the Serbs to accept

an internationally-brokered settlement.

The Serbs, the only Bosnian group with warplanes, reacted with fury to the planned operation, but as NATO agreed Friday on a start date, Serbian military commander Ratko Mladic called for another ceasefire in Bosnia.

NATO diplomats said the fighters would first conduct simple patrols but could move to other action such as close surveillance of Serb airfields and electronic naming.

A later stage would authorise allied pilots to fire warning shots or eventually shoot down violators who fail to respond to repeated warnings to quit the zone.

Armenian troops capture 18 Azeri villages

BAKU, Azerbaijan, Apr 11: Azerbaijan said Sunday that Armenian forces had captured 18 villages in southwestern Azerbaijan, while Armenia said it lost five soldiers and 12 Azeri fighters died in heavy combat near Nagorny-Karabakh, reports AP.

The Iranian news agency Irna reported that the Azeri ambassador in Tehran had asked Iran for help to prevent the fall of the strategic town of Fizuli, which is under heavy bombardment from Armenian forces.

The five-year old undeclared war recently has entered a new phase, with Armenia seeking to enlarge its land corridor with Nagorny-

Karabakh and further isolate the Azeri enclave of Nakhichevan. So far, Azerbaijan has been unable to repel the Armenian offensive.

The Azerbaijan Defence Ministry said Armenian forces had penetrated 15 kilometers (9 miles) into Azerbaijan during fighting over the previous two days and had seized 18 villages in a triangle of Azerbaijan land bordering Iran, Armenia and Nagorny-Karabakh.

The defence ministry also said Armenian fighters continued to shell the strategic Azeri city of Fizuli from the mountains outside the town. On Sunday, the city

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