

SAARC ministers' meet

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noted. The inaugural session was attended by, among others, members of the cabinet, MPs, members of Parliament, senior civil and military officials, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives of various international organisations and NGOs.

Among the Opposition MPs, Suranjit Sengupta of Ganatantri Party and Shahjahan Siraj were also present.

The attending ministers elected Bangladesh Finance Minister Saifur Rahman chairman of the conference.

Welcoming the visiting delegates, the SAARC Chairperson said: "Like the monsoons, your coming together bears a message of renewal. It reaffirms our collective commitment for the good of the people of our region."

Begum Zia said that the consensus reached at the Seventh SAARC Summit specifically stressed that each of the national pro-poor plans has to be harmonised with the open economy and structural adjustment strategies.

The Prime Minister said: "Indeed as has been said, there are two sides of the same coin. Our finance and planning ministers have initiated and carried forward the programmes of structural adjustment and liberalisation. It is thus appropriate and natural that they now actively concern themselves with the national pro-poor plans, review the progress achieved so far, exchange relevant experience and devise a coordinated approach across the region."

The Prime Minister, who left the meeting early because of indisposition, expressed the conviction that a coordinated approach will widen the spectrum of joint efforts and lead

to regional cooperation on a broad front.

Calling upon the SAARC finance ministers to get together at regular intervals, Begum Zia concluded her address by saying: "It is on you, the finance ministers — the architects of reform and regeneration — that we depend to found our joint enterprise on a firm institutional basis."

Those who spoke at the inaugural session were Bangladesh Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, Finance and Economic Affairs Adviser to the Pakistan Prime Minister V A Jaffrey, Nepalese State Minister for Commerce and Civil Supplies Surendra Prasad Chaudhury, Deputy Minister for Planning, Human Resources and Environment of the Maldives Dr Abdul Sattar Yousuf and Planning Minister of Bhutan Lyonpo C Dorji.

Sri Lanka was represented by Finance Secretary N V K K Weragoda since its Finance Minister could not come because of preoccupation at home.

Later, the finance and planning ministers began discussions on the recommendations for evolving a common strategy for poverty alleviation in the member-countries of SAARC.

The recommendations, worked out by senior officials, were presented at the first working session of the ministerial meet that started immediately after the inaugural session.

The ministers will resume their discussions during a river cruise on board M V Ostrich this morning.

The recommendations are likely to be finalised and adopted at the concluding session in the afternoon.

SKOP observes strike in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, July 10: The Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) observed a day-long strike in the city today in support of its various demands including reinstatement of retrenched workers.

The other demands include implementation of the national minimum wages commission award, increased bonus, gratuity and stopping the deduction of Taka 250 from their monthly wages.

During today's work stoppage thousands of workers brought out a procession that paraded the city roads.

The mills and factories in Nasirabad, Kalurghat, Patenga and Sitakundu industrial belts did not operate, sources said.



Bangladesh's first Chief of Army Staff Maj Gen (Retd) K M Shafiqullah, BU, presenting a bouquet to Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina at her Minto Road residence yesterday, marking his formal joining of the party. — Star photo.

Gen (ret) Shafiqullah joins AL

Former Army chief Major Gen (ret) Shafiqullah, BU, yesterday joined the Awami League with a mission to implement the ideals of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports UNB.

A leading Sector Commander of Bangladesh's Liberation War, Shafiqullah met Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina at 29 Minto Road, presented her a bouquet and formally joined the party.

He said the Awami League had successfully wrested the country's independence under the leadership and directive of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Welcoming the first Chief of Army in independent Bangladesh, Hasina said the spirit of the Liberation War and the hard-won democracy are facing threat and conspiracy.

Hasina hoped that the joining to the Awami League by a veteran freedom fighter like Gen Shafiqullah would inspire the country's independence and democracy loving people.

Hanif urges PM to open talks with Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

The Dhaka city mayor Mohammad Hanif yesterday urged Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to resolve the existing political impasse by opening a dialogue with the Opposition leader in Parliament Sheikh Hasina immediately.

The mayor said, "Move a constitutional amendment bill in the Jatiya Sangsad for elections under a caretaker government to resolve the present crisis."

Addressing a rally in the capital Hanif, also president of the Awami League city branch, called upon the Prime Minister to accept the demand for a caretaker administration to avoid, what he said, an exit from the seat of power in the face of popular agitation.

"You have only two options — to accept the caretaker issue for ensuring free, fair and neutral elections or to face a disgraceful exit like Ershad," the mayor told his audience amid cheers.

The rally was organised by the AL as part of its nationwide programme to drum up support for holding elections under a caretaker government. Party sources said, similar programmes were arranged at the districts and thanas across the country.

Chaired by Hanif, the rally in the city was also addressed by the AL general secretary Zillur Rahman, presidium members Tofael Ahmed, MP, Abdul Razzak, MP, Hossain secretary Mofazzal Hossain Paltu, health secretary Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and central leader Nurul Islam Nahid. Besides, 16 leaders of the party's city unit also spoke on the occasion.

Opposition

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The Opposition in Parliament led by the late late night.

Those present at the meeting included Salauddin Yusuf, Tofael Ahmed, Rahmat Ali and Mohiuddin Ahmed of Awami League, Moudud Ahmed, Monirul Huq Chowdhury and Fazle Rabbi of Jatiya Party, Sheikh Anser Ali and Maulana Abdus Sobhan of Jamaat-e-Islami, Salauddin Kader Chowdhury of NDP and Suranjit Sengupta of Ganatantri Party.

Monirul Huq Chowdhury and Rahmat Ali were with Nasim at the press briefing.

SAARC IGG meet

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The reason for delay in preparing the request lists, an official of the Commerce Ministry said, is that most of the South Asian economies are complementary to each other. The member-states have almost the same products to offer to each other for export and tariff concessions.

The economies of Bangladesh, Pakistan and India are complementary to each other as the economies of Nepal and Bhutan are. So what can Pakistan offer to India and Bangladesh or Bhutan to Nepal, the official asked.

That's why the member-countries are looking for supplementary products for offering to each other, he said. It would not, however, affect timely implementation of the trade accord, he added.

He also said that although the scheduled time for implementing the SAPTA is 1997, it may even be implemented much earlier time.

According to sources the request list submitted by Bangladesh to India contains 56 items, while the lists submitted to the Maldives, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan contains 56, 55, 51, 23 and 22 items respectively.

The Midnight File

Tunis will bid farewell to Arafat today

TUNIS, July 10: Tunis will bid a final farewell to Yasser Arafat on Monday with two official ceremonies before the PLO leader heads for the self-rule areas of Gaza and Jericho, a presidential spokesman said today. Arafat is due to end his 12-year exile in Tunis on Monday on his way to the new autonomous areas where he will head the new Palestinian authority, reports AFP.

US, DPRK agree to suspend N-talks

GENEVA, July 10: North Korea and the United States agreed today to suspend talks on Pyongyang's controversial nuclear programme so the head of the Korean delegation can attend the funeral of the late President Kim Il Sung, a North Korean spokesman said. The talks will be resumed at a date to be fixed through bilateral contacts in New York, the spokesman said, following two hours of talks between the North Korean delegation head Kang Sok-Ju and his US counterpart Robert Gallucci, reports AFP.

Singh for cooperation

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condition of the nearly one-fourth of humanity that lives in the South Asian region, said Indian Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh yesterday.

"The nations of South Asia have a common shared destiny. I firmly believe that India cannot prosper unless her neighbours prosper. The reverse is equally true," he told the opening session of the 2-day SAARC conference of the Finance and Planning Ministers. Manmohan felt the urgency for intensifying cooperation among the SAARC member states to meet the common aspiration of their people for a life of dignity and self-respect.

He suggested that inter-country analysis of experience, on a variety of poverty alleviation programmes initiated by the individual countries, can be extremely useful in devising more effective strategies for the future.

He also stressed the need for exchange of views among the SAARC states for improving the design of their respective economic adjustment and structural reform programmes as well as poverty eradication initiatives.

"We can learn a great deal both from our success as well as our failures," said Manmohan, who spearheaded the Indian economic reforms. Saying that the concern for the poor has been one of the guiding principles of development planning in India, he outlined a multi-faceted approach to deal with the problem of mass poverty, including a labour-intensive growth process, targeted programmes for raising the incomes and productivity of people living below the poverty line and as a measure to protect the poor against inflation, a revamped public distribution system for supply of essentials. He also emphasised the need for involving people's effective participation in poverty related programmes.

Manmohan noted that the Indian government had recently provided constitutional status, through a constitutional amendment, to local self-government institutions through the 'panchayat raj' in the rural areas.

The Indian government, he said, has also initiated steps to involve NGOs in grass-root development programmes in a 'true partnership'. The public distribution system, he added, is designed to provide essential.

The proposals were made by V A Jaffrey, adviser to the Pakistan Prime Minister for Finance and Economic Affairs, while making an opening statement at the inaugural session of the conference of SAARC Finance and Planning Ministers that began here yesterday. The 2-day meeting, the first of its kind, aims to devise a common strategy for poverty alleviation.

Noting that efforts to alleviate and eventually eradicate poverty continue to claim top priority in Pakistan, he said that comprehensive programmes have been launched for providing basic facilities in the rural areas and for strengthening the agricultural base. Additional allocations are being made to improve physical and economic infrastructure and services to the poor to enable them to raise their output and increase their savings, he said.

The entire focus of poverty reduction schemes, he added, would emphasise on providing primary education, basic health, population planning and drinking water while the food stamp scheme, to support the lowest income groups, has been suggested for expansion.

He called for renewed efforts by the SAARC member states to cooperate and collaborate in the vital and urgent mission for eradicating poverty from South Asia by the year 2002, as envisioned by the leaders during the Seventh SAARC Summit held in Dhaka last year.

While it achieved the highest per capita income (465 US dollar) among the SAARC economies, Sri Lanka's literacy rate (85 per cent) can be comparable to that of any developed economy.

Interview with Pak finance adviser

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Asked about the present conference of the finance ministers, Jaffrey felt that it would be able to identify key areas of thrust for the reduction of poverty by focussing on removal of illiteracy, improvement of the health sector and stress on pro-poor plans.

Speaking about the economic relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, Jaffrey underlined the scope for greater expansion of trade between the two countries.

He said Pakistan relied heavily on Bangladesh's jute and tea exports. The 17 jute mills of Pakistan were dependent largely on raw jute from Bangladesh.

Similarly, he said, cotton particularly cotton fabrics, were being imported in great volume by Bangladesh.

Given the initiative by the governments of the two countries and the private sector, the volume of trade which now hovers around 150 million US dollars could go up considerably.

He mentioned that the then inter-wing trade in the late Sixties was in the neighbourhood of nearly one billion US dollars. Improvements in communications between the two countries, particularly in the air services and shipping sector, may be able to bolster the scope of trade, he said.

The minister, who will also be participating in the fifth meeting of the Bangladesh-Pakistan joint economic commission beginning here July 12, is likely to discuss further expansion of trade between Dhaka and Islamabad.

"More trade and more economic exchanges are necessary. And definitely we can diversify further."

"And since open regimes exist in both countries, we could take advantage of that," the minister emphasised.

Responding to a question on ECO, Jaffrey said the organisation has been extended to include the central Asian states and that now more discussions were continuing.

Tk 10cr damage suit against Ittefaq

A Taka 10 crore damage suit has been filed against the Ittefaq Group of Publications, the Chairman of its Board of Editors, Mainul Hossain and Printer-Publisher of the daily Anwar Hossain, reports UNB.

Md Nurul Haque Sikder, an industrialist, yesterday filed the suit in the First Sub-Judge's Court, Dhaka.

The plaintiff stated that the daily Ittefaq, in its November 17, 1993 issue had published a news under the heading, "Jatir Baggae Talashi Laiya Biman Bandare Tulakam Kando", which is "false, scandalous and distorted."

"This has injured my character and reputation, and has brought me into public scandal," Sikder said in his plaint.

Koirala

From Page 1 Col 5

nation to King Birendra and recommended that Parliament be dissolved to pave the way for fresh elections, Radio Nepal said.

Opposition lawmakers demanded that Koirala, 70, resign after a motion of thanks to King Birendra's address, which outlined the government's policies, was defeated because 36 dissident members abstained from voting. The motion was defeated 74-86.

With 36 members refusing to back Koirala, the government lost its majority in the 205-member House, where it had controlled 114 seats. The Communists and their allies have 82 seats.

The parliamentary defeat, which meant a rejection of government's policies by Parliament, came at a time when Koirala was facing opposition from his one-time allies, the Communists and from rivals within the ruling Nepali Congress Party.

Koirala came to power in 1991 in the first multiparty elections in 30 years after King Birendra was forced to lift a ban on political parties and share power with Parliament.

Interview with Pak finance adviser

"Although we have not reached a landmark here, gradually we are thinking of plans like expanding trade facilities and better communication."

Speaking about the economic reforms in Pakistan V A Jaffrey said greater emphasis was now being put on privatisation of state-owned industries. Only recently 31 nationalised industries have been put up for sale and efforts were underway to privatise another large bank, which would be the third to be sold to the private sector out of five banks nationalised earlier. The minister said a number of incentives are being offered in Pakistan's efforts to hasten the process of privatisation and for attracting foreign investment.

A new energy policy has been announced to attract foreign investment in power generation, gas exploration and oil refining, which he would now

all stations on a major route has been awarded to a private party through tender. The operator can sell tickets at the maximum rates fixed by the government.

V A Jaffrey said lowering of tariffs is a very important condition for opening up the economy and making industrial products competitive. The maximum level of tariff in Pakistan now is 70 per cent with the average ranging around 33 per cent.

"We intend to lower tariffs further," he stated.

Speaking about foreign investment, Jaffrey said there has been a 65 per cent increase in inflow of overseas investment in the last ten months. While a major portion of foreign inflow has gone into portfolio investment, around 200 million US dollars have been directly invested in industries during the period.

He said there was now more transparency in the financial front and every effort was being made to sell off state-owned industries, particularly through offering large portions for public subscription. Strengthening of the stock exchange was also being given due attention.

Jaffrey explained that stress was being laid on transfer of resources to the rural areas. This has been made possible because of the inflow of a huge volume of earnings by the expatriate Pakistanians.

Stating that government initiatives and immigrant incomes have reduced Pakistan's poverty level from 50 per cent to 21 per cent in the last 20 years, the minister said, more needs to be done by Pakistan and the countries of the region to reduce poverty.

"Poverty affects all our countries. Some more, some less. We must all strive to eliminate poverty."

SPGRC observes hunger strike

A group of stranded Pakistanis observed token hunger strike in front of the National Press Club yesterday to highlight their plight due to non-repatriation to their land of choice for long 22 years, reports UNB.

Saifur outlines strategy

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"It is a process which relies on both static and dynamic efficiency and allows full exploitation of our endowments, particularly the surplus labour," the minister said while making a country statement at the inaugural session of the SAARC Finance and Planning Ministers' Conference in the city yesterday.

He said this development strategy calls for sound macro-economic fundamentals and economic liberalisation. The government has, however, been continuing its efforts through wide-ranging reforms to contain fiscal deficit and inflation, maintain viability of external sector and replace impediments to private initiatives in industry, trade and investment by 'pro-active public policies', he added.

"We are aware of the limitations of these broad strategies in satisfactorily addressing the many dimensions of poverty," he said. The government's efforts may not yield desired results because of bureaucratic inefficiency, inflexibility and lack of innovations.

Market mechanism may fail because of the lack of access, entitlement and imperfections, Saifur said and stressed the need for institutions for establishment of efficient markets.

"And all these deficiencies of the government and the markets hurt the poor most although they are efficient users of resources", the Finance Minister said and stressed the need for designing specific programmes for the poor to augment their income and overall economic growth by harnessing their entrepreneurship, hard work and credibility. Saifur also said 'not doles but the economic graduation of the poor should be the focus of all poverty alleviation

Champions Germany exit

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The ball was quickly fed back to Stoichkov, who neatly turned inside a defender and pulled it back to Krasimir Balakov, whose low left-foot shot curled past Illgner but hit the post.

The German defence suddenly looked shaky and Thomas Helmer and Wagner both were shown the yellow card for fouls in the space of 60 seconds.

In the 24th minute, Klinsmann squandered a chance to score his sixth goal of the tournament.

Thomas Haessler swung over a centre from the right and Klinsmann, with only Mihailov to beat from six meters, produced a diving header which was straight at the keeper. Mihailov could not hold the ball first time, pushed it upwards and then grabbed it before it could cross the line.

Some more enterprising play by Haessler set up a shooting chance for Andreas Moeller, whose fiercely hit 25-meter shot was so hard it knocked over Bulgarian defender Trifon Ivanov.

The Germans opened impressively at the start of the second half and took the lead in the 49th minute.

Klinsmann pulled away from his marker, Zlatko Ivanov, and went to collect a cross from the left wing. Letchikov made a high challenge and, as Klinsmann collapsed near the penalty spot, Colombian referee Jose Torres pointed to the spot.

Matthaeus planted the penalty kick confidently wide of Mihailov with the goalie moving in the wrong direction.

The goalkeeper and the Linesman's offside flag prevented Germany going further ahead in the 74th minute.

Moeller's firm drive hit the post with Mihailov beaten and then Rudi Voeller netted the rebound from an offside position.

Two minutes later it was 1-1. Stoichkov was fouled 25 meters from the German goal and the Barcelona striker decided to take the free kick himself.

He floated the ball left-footed over the defensive wall and Illgner never moved as it flew past him into the net.

Three minutes later, the Germans were stunned again.

Iankov lofted a centre from the right and Letchikov dived for it with Haessler, got there first and directed a well-placed header between the diving Illgner and the right hand post.

The Bulgarians, who had never won a match at the World Cup finals before coming to the United States, danced on the pitch at the final whistle, while a small group of their fans waved the white, green and red national flag.

Triple champions Germany could scarcely believe they were out after appearing to

Champions Germany exit

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have the match won. They will argue long and hard about an incident in the 74th minute when striker Rudi Voeller netted from a rebound after Andy Moeller had rifled a shot against the post.

What could have been the clincher at 2-0 was ruled out by Colombian referee Jose Torres for offside.

Matthaeus, 33, may never get the chance to better the World Cup appearance record while the Bulgarians, beaten 3-0 by Nigeria in their opening group game, are one match away from a dream final.

TEAMS

GERMANY: Bodo Illgner, Lothar Matthaeus, Thomas Berthold, Juergen Kohler, Thomas Helmer, Thomas Haessler (substitute: Andreas Brehme, 83rd minute), Guido Buchwald, Martin Wanger (Thomas Strunz, 59th minute), Andreas Moeller, Rudi Voeller, Juergen Klinsmann.

BULGARIA: Borislav Mihailov, Ilian Kirjakov, Petar Houbchev, Tsanko Tsvetanov, Trifon Ivanov, Yordan Letchikov, Nasko Sirakov, Krasimir Balakov, Zlatko Yankov, Emil Kostadinov (Boncho Guentchev 90th), Hristo Stoichkov (Ivaylo Jordanov, 85th).

Referee: Jose Torres, Colombia.

Yellow cards:

Germany: Thomas Helmer (15), Martin Wagner (16), Thomas Haessler (50), Juergen Klinsmann (51), Rudi Voeller (90).

Bulgaria: Trifon Ivanov (28), Hristo Stoichkov (83), Borislav Mihailov (86).

Russian troops to leave Latvia by Aug 31

NAPLES, Italy, July 10: Russian President Boris Yeltsin said Sunday that all Russian troops will leave the Baltic republic of Latvia by Aug. 31, but that withdrawal from neighbouring Estonia is more complex and will take longer, reports AP.

Yeltsin, appearing at a news conference with US President Clinton, said that at the urging of the US leader, he would consult soon with Estonian President Lennart Meri to resolve disputes over final withdrawal.

"One the 31st of August, we will withdraw from Latvia," Yeltsin told reporters.

"Estonia for us is a more complex question. There have been crude violations of human rights. I have in mind violation of the human rights of pensioners," he said.

Russian troops already have pulled out of Lithuania, the third former Soviet Baltic state. The three Baltic republics were annexed by the Soviet Union during World War II, and won their independence after the Soviet collapse in 1991.

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