

Summit Outcome

Under the nuclear shadows, it is the re-commitment to the SAARC process that seems to be the net achievement of the Colombo summit.

Colombo stole global limelight for the very special reason that it offered a rendezvous for the two nuclear states in South Asia to respond to the need for an early defusion of tensions.

On the economic cooperation level we note with satisfaction that the summiters have adopted a concrete approach to the question of conversion of SAPTA to SAFTA.

What Lesson the Deluge?

On Wednesday a crack developed in the DND embankment. And by Thursday six other cracks were detected in it.

In a 56,000-square-mile picture of man being beaten by the elements, here are people who beat the waters back, without cost.

While congratulating the DND-side people we have a feeling that perhaps the capital city is being spared the hell it could be with the breaching of the Dhaka protection dam.

Rajshahi is not as lucky. The protection dam has already been eroded substantially and Padma is threatening as if to change its course and flow over parts of the town.

The floods are not a curse, it is as wonderful a boon as nothing else possibly is. But its fury has to be somewhat muffled and losses lessened.

We understand that 'flood control' is not a year-to-year thing. The present government is about half way through its term and yet we haven't had even a whiff of what it is doing in this regard.

Domestic Barbarity

Like Sohag, the young boy rescued months back in a similar state, Hawa was on the verge of literally rotting to death when the same Human rights organisation rescued her from a posh flat in the city Friday last.

We are at a loss to figure out what might have triggered such barbarity in a civilised human being. The lass, for argument's sake, might have been all the lady of the house accused her of to be: an incorrigible wetter of bed, a moron who would not or could not do what she was told to or any demerit one could think of in a housemaid.

In this connection we would like to know what happened to the family at Shahidbag whose collective torture almost killed little Sohag and robbed the father in him forever.

Postponement of SAFTA

In view of the recurrent losses incurred by the smaller members of SAARC, there is now a proposal to postpone the launching of SAFTA for ten years from its initially stipulated date of 2001.

Why should Bangladesh waste so much time and effort in trying to meet the SAFTA conditionalities to export to India and Pakistan with so little success? Isn't it a complete waste of scarce resources for Bangladesh?

Some Comments on These Issues

The points that the Minister has made are vital for the future pattern of trade and economic development of the country and hence deserve



INSIGHT by Kabir U Ahmad

Some comments. First, when he was talking about the trade gap between Bangladesh and India...

leather products which have about 25 per cent value addition or semi-manufactured items Bangladesh is now producing have an easy export market abroad and have been earning substantial amount of foreign exchange for the country.

Third, it is not the high nominal tariff rate that is blocking Bangladesh's exports to India, rather it is India's non-tariff barriers (local government's rules and regulations, officials' rejection of goods at the entry point on flimsy grounds etc.) that has become the major obstacle to Bangladesh's exports.

Conclusions

Obstacles to Bangladesh's exports to India are formidable. A friendly central government may reduce tariff substantially but the provincial government's myriad of

minor rules and regulations as well as the attitude of officials at the entry points of the ports become real hurdles to exports.

Why should the exporters break their heads against stone walls of the South Asian market?

Finally, South Asia is a poor, slow growing region producing competitive goods and its demand for Bangladeshi products will be relatively small.

Increase of exports to these countries will, in its turn, provide stimulus for faster internal growth in Bangladesh.

The future of Bangladesh lies in developing itself into a highly efficient, competitive and innovative manufacturing powerhouse for the outside world purchasing whatever raw material and semi-manufactured products are available from the region without antagonising the giant neighbour.

Will Colombo Declaration Improve Political and Economic Climate in SA?

There are problems in the region in different ways, but the SAARC will move forward since leaders have shown reasonable degree of wisdom towards its development.

THE tenth summit conference of the seven South Asian countries ended in Sri Lankan capital Colombo by adopting the declaration which has been named ritualistically after the venue of the conference.

mentions about this anxiety of the leaders while the document touches upon other vital fields like the trade, business, economic interactions and social matters.

How far this declaration will work in improving the political climate in South Asia in the wake of sharp deterioration in the environment in the recent times? To what extent will the just-concluded summit lend economic benefits to the member nation and their peoples?

And finally, has the much talked-about summit succeeded in providing the much-needed stimulation to the SAARC that was required badly since the forum also needs cohesion and conviction of purpose rather than just providing a forum for 'meeting of leaders'?



MATTERS AROUND US by Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury

When judged from that point of view, the SAARC leaders have shown wisdom by sticking to the staging of the event despite tensions in the area that also entailed on the personal security of the leaders.

The leaders have discussed a variety of issues like poverty alleviation, progress of the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangements (SAFTA), increasing people-to-people contact through easing travel restrictions and other measures.

which is often lacking in the forum.

In the political side, the leaders have stressed the need for informal consultations to ease tensions among member states. This is inextricably linked in letting the forum utilise its full potentials.

their rivalries for decades and this has compounded in recent times following their nuclear explosions. The SAARC at least has provided the opportunity for their first meeting since the tests in May last.

The SAARC has made modest progress in many fields and its achievements are modest. Against this background, the Colombo summit has succeeded to the expectations. SAARC will live so long this degree of cohesion and commitment are there.

OPINION

"The Campus Revisited: Those Days" - A Postscript

M Gholam Mostafa

Mr Siddiquer Rahman's article "The Campus Revisited: Those Days" made a pleasant nostalgic reading. As one who was a student of Dhaka University in late fifties, experiences narrated by the writer touched the heart and renewed sentiments of those pleasant bygone years never return in our twilight years.

The SAARC should intensify its efforts for effective financial links with different world organisations and forum like the European Union so that it could be economically assisted. The summit has mentioned about this link but follow up actions in this regard are necessary

number of families who sent their children to Dhaka University from different parts of the province could hardly afford to send their wards even 80 rupees a month - which by today's standard of living is simply unbelievable.

Issues of national import were discussed and debated on but politics in its present connotation took its back seat. Summum bonum of life revolved mostly round appearing in the Central Superior Services exam and qualifying for Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP). Since proficiency in written and spoken English was a deciding factor of success in the said examination (lack of it proved Achilles' heel) everybody aspiring for it let slip no opportunity to hone the skill in and out of place.

Simple living and high thinking was none of our option - financial crunch thrust it upon us. A few among us had the enviable luxury of donning more than two shirts and two trousers. Still fewer were lucky who wore complete suits come as they did from affluent families.

From the sixties onward this generation of students adorned for a position of government bureaucracy and politics and were at the helm of affairs. Many of them made their mark nationally and internationally by dint of their talent and industry. Although to these brilliant sons of soil poverty, its pain and genesis, was not altogether a stranger, it is indeed a sad commentary that few remembered their roots, fewer still owned their genealogy, amassed huge wealth abusing power they wielded. As a consequence, the poor countrymen, whom they were intended to serve, continued to wallow in deprivation and misery even after many decades and through changes of various shades of government. That is, however, another painful story.

The writer an Advocate, is Reid First Secy., National Board of Revenue

To the Editor...

We want justice

Sir, The tacit approval accorded by other dailies to the police of their 'interrogation method' is appalling. I refer to an English language editorial on July 26 under the heading 'Police As Killers' where it was written: 'We also understand that the police at times have to take recourse to stringent and painful methods during interrogation'.

The fundamental tenant of our legal system is that every person should be presumed innocent unless proven guilty. Bodily harm to a person by any person is a punishable act under the penal code. It also infringes on a human right to live in a society free of fear and oppression. Nobody has the right to torture anybody physically or in the name of interrogation or whatever.

When the newspapers are with stories of people dying in police custody, this kind of comment in an esteemed daily is truly regrettable.

I offer my heartfelt sympathy to Rubel's parents and other relatives. I also demand that the alleged killers are brought to justice immediately.

Shahed Morshed Khan, NS University, Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Dhaka

Stop police brutality

Sir, Some ten years ago a British tourist girl's mutilated body was found in a Kenyan bush. Foul was suspected, but the authority there, partly wanting to maintain a safe image of the tourist spots and partly wanting to protect the killers messed up the prosecution process, which resulted in people charged with the murder

going free. The girl's father, however, had money, and thankfully, some grid and bulldogging digress, a synonym with British character. What followed then was one man's crusade to bring the real killer of his daughter to justice.

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and come forward, firstly in condemning this death and importantly to do everything in their means not only to secure justice but also to ensure that this never happens to anybody else.

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BJMB and domestic tourism

Sir, Having a first-hand but very short experience of the great bridge I venture to give some suggestions to the authorities that be.

From press reports we learn that there are good plans to develop the area of the bridge vicinity into tourist spots. It is good as far as the plan goes. But for immediate, especially to save the land from encroachers and squatters, some make-shift arrangement can be made to facilitate domestic tourism.

Some are: 1) Construct temporary sheds with CI sheets and put in some long benches and stools with arrangement for simple and low cost snacks like water, tea and biscuit etc., for the rural visitors (and others who would not mind) visiting in thousands now.

2) Run shuttle buses across the bridge which will drive through the slow lane. Fares should be minimum to encourage people in using those.

3) There is said to be a shuttle train running between the east and the west stations. Reduce the fare and increase the frequency.

4) After these measures, ban the pedestrians on the bridge. If something is not done

now, the situation will be impossible and the plans will remain unrealisable dream forever.

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New miseries of a new route

Sir, The Bangabandhu Jamma Bridge has been inaugurated very recently which is the implementation of a dream of every citizen. But after travelling in the route of Dhaka-Rajshahi, it seemed to me that the bridge has multiplied our miseries.

The fault is not with the bridge, rather it is with the roads of the route. Different roads of the route, especially the eastern part, are yet to be constructed. They are embarrassingly narrow. Sometimes there is traffic congestion because of the narrowness. In some places the roads are broken and totally unworthy of letting heavy buses and trucks to run.

Everybody travelling on the route will admit that it was much better to go by the previous route spending as much as three hours on the ferry. Before opening the bridge the government should have thought of making the roads smoother. I request the authority concern either to take quicker step to construct the roads or postpone running vehicles by the route to avoid accidents.

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