

'SAARC summit to be held as scheduled'

XINHUA, Kathmandu

Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Nihal Rodrigo has reiterated here that the 11th SAARC summit will be held as scheduled from January 4 to 6, 2002, despite the unstable situation in Nepal, The Rising Nepal said Friday.

"Although the situation here has changed now, the SAARC summit will take place as scheduled," The Official English daily quoted Rodrigo as saying while addressing an interaction programme with local people.

"All depends upon the government of the Nepal. It has to tighten security, which is necessary in such conditions," he said, adding that terrorism will be the hottest agenda in the summit in addition to the issues of social and economic cooperation in the region.

The Nepali government imposed the state of emergency across the seven South Asian countries was originally scheduled to be held in Kathmandu in December, 1999, but was postponed due to the escalating nuclear tests by India and Pakistan.

Established in 1985 to promote

regional economic cooperation, SAARC groups seven South Asian countries — Nepal, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Forty journalists

FROM PAGE 12 the government's decision to ask police to reopen investigation into the murder of seven journalists over the last five years.

Two dailies were targets of vandalism, two journalists were threatened with death and one reporter was attacked on October 20 alone, it pointed out.

The journalists who were attacked or threatened with death include Rifat bin Tuha, Akil Poddhar, Rafiqul Hasan Tuhin of Janakantha in Narail, Kushtia and Habiganj respectively, Muktar Hossain Golap of Sangbad in Kishoreganj, Mamunur Rashid of Janakantha, DU; Mohammad Muniruzzaman Munir of Jugantor in Natchal, Humayun Kabir Mithu of Mutakantha in Kushtia and KM Reza of Danik Matribhumi in Putia, Saiful Islam Rob of Jugantor, Muzaffar Rahman of Danik Jannabhumi in Tara and Shaukat Milton of Janakantha in Barisal.

Iran, Pakistan to work together for broad-based govt in Kabul

REUTERS, Islamabad

Iran and Pakistan, saying the downfall of Afghanistan's Taliban rulers had removed "clouds" in their ties, pledged yesterday to work together for a broad-based government and reconstruction in their war-ravaged neighbour.

"The sun is shining," a smiling Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar told a joint news conference with his Iranian counterpart Kamal Kharrazi in Islamabad. "Pakistan and Iran today are rid of the shadow that existed over our relations."

Echoing Sattar's views, Kharrazi said: "We are now entering a new era of our relationship."

"There is no more gap between Iran and Pakistan. Both must play an important role for the establishment of a broad-based government and the reconstruction of

Afghanistan," he said.

Shi'ite Muslim Iran and mainly Sunni Muslim Pakistan have long been at odds over the Taliban. Islamabad backed the Sunni fundamentalist militia, while Tehran supported its foes in the Northern Alliance, especially the Shi'ite Hezbi-Wahdat militia.

Kharrazi reiterated his country's opposition to the deployment of foreign peacekeeping troops in Afghanistan, but said UN observers would be acceptable.

"If the UN would decide to deploy UN observers to monitor the situation in Afghanistan, that is something very different from a multinational force to be deployed there," he said.

Sattar said Pakistan would await the outcome of a UN-sponsored conference of Afghan factions in Bonn before making up its mind on

the question of foreign forces.

Sattar said Pakistan and Iran hoped the Bonn meeting would achieve its goal.

"Both countries want a peaceful and stable Afghanistan ... in the interest of its own people and all its neighbours," he added.

60 shops gutted in Bandarban

UNB, Bandarban

At least to shops were gutted in a fire at Bolipara Bazar in the district on Thursday night.

Locals said the fire originated from the shop of one Abdul Sawdagar at midnight and soon engulfed the surrounding shops.

The loss has been estimated at Tk 2 crore.

Hasina offers fateha at marzar of Bangabandhu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

AL President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina went to Tungipara in Gopalganj yesterday and offered fateha at the mazar of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

A party press release said Hasina attended a milad mahfil at her ancestral home and later hosted an Iftar party for party leaders and workers and local people.

In the evening, she exchanged views with local newsmen on the political situation in the country. She also exchanged views with leaders of Gopalganj district unit and thana units of the party.

The AL chief called upon the people to build up public opinion against 'anti-People' activities of ruling party.

She expressed concern at the 'rising crimes' in different parts of the country.

The last 15 days of the BNP rule is marked by repression, terrorism, killing, rape, extortion and abduction that surpassed all previous records, she added.

Hasina is due to return to the capital today.

6 Hindu women

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The miscreants also asked them to leave their homes for good, they alleged.

Kachua thana police refuted the allegation as none of the victims lodged any complaint.

"Yet, I shall definitely investigate the matter," said the OC of the thana.

Meanwhile, Shubol Chandra Das, Head Master of Satgambuj Union BSC Secondary School under Sadar upazila of Bagerhat district, said at a press conference on Tuesday that the minority community was being used as a political tool by vested groups to destroy the communal harmony.

Termining newspaper reports as "coccocted," Shubol Chandra claimed that there has been no incident of rape of Hindu women or any sort of persecution in any village under Sadar upazila. He claimed that there was no rape incident in Srighat and Sadullapur villages.

He further claimed that no fish farm was looted in Sadar upazila as was alleged by some vested quarters.

No Hindu family so far left for India fearing attack, Shubol Chandra told the press conference, held at Bagerhat Press Club.

Many distinguished members of the minority community from four villages in Sadar upazila were present at the press conference.

Iftar diplomacy

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Maharashtra for more than a year now and the two parties recently

joined hands to form a coalition in the northeastern state of Meghalaya also to bid for an alternative government to replace the existing ministry reduced to minority. Indications of Samajwadi Party's softening of hostility towards Congress came when Mulayam Singh's top aide Amar Singh shared a function organised by Sonia and was eloquent about her and decided to drop his private member's bill in Parliament seeking to debar persons of foreign origin from occupying public offices.

Samajwadi Party, according to sources, is cosying up to Congress keeping its eye on the coming assembly elections in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh where Mulayam Singh might require the support of Congress to form a government in a post-polls scenario in the event of a hung house.

Ramzan

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spontaneous on Thursday.

But it was not possible for them to fulfill the demands. Sources said Latif maintains good links with some top leaders of BNP.

On November 19, Elin and Monir, two associates of Latif, went to the shop at 2.30 pm and asked them to give Tk 20,000 immediately and also wanted to know when Tk 10 lakh would be given.

Ramzan was sitting at the cash counter of the shop. As he could not fulfill the demand, Elin shot him in the belly. Ramzan fell on the floor. Elin and Monir went towards the commissioner's office, Asgar Ali said.

The employees took him to Samorita Hospital immediately. He was operated upon but the bullet could not be removed.

As his condition deteriorated, he was shifted to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital on November 27.

A case has been lodged with Mohammadpur thana in this regard. When contacted on Thursday, the duty officer of Mohammadpur thana said they could not arrest anybody or make any progress in investigation into the case.

Despite several attempts over the past few days, Abdul Latif could not be reached over telephone. Some sources said he changes his mobile telephone frequently.

Khasru: Vengeance

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tary Adv. Abdul Mannan Khan also made their points against the scrapping of the act at the briefing yesterday morning.

Challenging Barrister Moudud's arguments that the special security act was unconstitutional and discriminatory as all citizens are equal before law, Khasru quoted Supreme Court judgement and 41 DLR (AD), as saying that "all persons are not alike and nothing can be greater inequality than to treat unequal as equal."

He said Article 27 of the Constitution does not guarantee absolute equality requiring the law to treat all persons alike.

Khasru who piloted the Father of the Nation Family Members Security Bill, 2001 in parliament on June 20 said Sheikh Hasina's standing in the country is completely different from that of other citizens after the carnage of August 15, 1975.

None's life is at risk the way Sheikh Hasina's life is, because of being a target by the self-confessed killers of her father, he said.

The ex-law minister said perceiving constant threat on her life, the law was enacted in an extraordinary situation when the trial of the killers was on the verge of completion.

Citing references from countries in the subcontinent and the United States, Khasru said Indian Parliament framed the Special Protection Group Act in 1988 to give special security to members of Rajiv Gandhi's family. Rahul, Priyanka and Sonia Gandhi.

But unfortunately when the law was withdrawn by the VP Singh government, Rajiv Gandhi was killed, he said, adding that the Indian parliament again introduced the law in 1994 ensuring special security to all former prime ministers.

Khasru said Sheikh Hasina's entire family has been eliminated under a planned murder in 1975. So, the position of Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana is quite different on the question of security.

Termining "ludicrous" another point of Moudud that repealing of the security act would save government money, he said the argument does not stand when Prime Minister Khaleda Zia formed a huge government of 60 ministers and 12 advisors with the rank of minister squandering crores of taka from the exchequer.

Khasru alleged that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's BNP-Jamaat coalition cabinet brought the bill in parliament abruptly with "malafide intention and ulterior motive of political revenge."

Referring to the writ filed by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan against the law, he said they should have waited for the judgement of the Supreme Court instead of bringing the bill in parliament hurriedly by extending the tenure of parliament session.

He also questioned Barrister

Polythene

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also a factor in causing cancer. They suggested use of paper, cloth and jute bags as easy alternatives to polythene bags and asked the government to offer incentives so that entrepreneurs feel encouraged to invest in these.

Teams of young men from different localities of the city were mobilised at the rally to launch anti-polythene campaigns and create awareness among people in their respective areas about the ills of polythene and to persuade people to boycott it.

The participants at the rally called for unity of the citizens and their concerted efforts to stop use of polythene. They underscored the need for behavioural change of the civil society members to shift to use of the environment-friendly jute and paper bags.

Different environmental and development organisations of the city also participated in the rally held in front of the National Museum at Shahbag.

46 murdered

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In contrast, October had seen 30 murders out of which 5 occurred in the Dhannoddi thana area, three each in Mirpur, Ramna and Khilgaon, two each in Sutrapur, Hazaribagh, Pallabi and Uttara, and one each in Demra, Kafur, Badda, Mohammadpur, Tejgaon, Lalbagh, Sabujbagh and Shyampani.

A couple, two young brothers, four small traders, four business men, a garage technician, four BNP leaders and activists, a female garment employee and a security guard were among the victims in October. Also, four alleged muggers were beaten to death by angry mobs.

Three of the muggers were killed in Motiheel's Bijoynagar and Paltan areas alone. Businessmen and other sources in the area complained about an unholy alliance between police and muggers. The nexus between police and muggers was proven several times in the past but the situation has remained unchanged.

The drug trade scenario in the Agargao's BNP slum under Mohammadpur thana has not changed either, rather it seems to be thriving. Police are very reluctant to

Moudud's long statement while introducing the repeal bill in parliament on Wednesday violating the rules of procedure.

The former law minister pointed out that a minister can give statement in support of his bill only if any member raises objection to it.

"The way Barrister Moudud made the statement is violative of rules of procedure and unprecedented," he said.

Khasru hoped that good sense would prevail upon the government to stop repeal of the law. Otherwise, he warned that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia would be absolutely responsible if any harm came to Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana.

Presidium member Abdul Jaill MP said question of security for Sheikh Hasina is not only linked with her personal security alone; it is also linked with the question of democracy, spirit of liberation war and non-communal politics.

He said if the security law is annulled, the self-confessed killers, who are waiting to take revenge on Sheikh Hasina and her sister, would be encouraged. The killers know that if Hasina remains alive, their trial must be held in the country.

Publicity secretary Abdul Mannan said Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana are not mere citizens of this country, but daughters of the Father of the Nation recognised by the Constitution and law.

He questioned the justification of giving SSF protection to former president Shahabuddin Hafiz and former chief advisor Latifur Rahman for one year when the government is initiating the process of withdrawing security for Sheikh Hasina whose life is in danger.

Office secretary Adv. Abdul Mannan Khan said persons like Barrister Moudud Ahmed should not utter the name of the Constitution, accusing them of raping the constitution repeatedly to fulfil their high political ambitions and to serve the military and autocratic juntas.

DRU election

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joint-secretary Shakhawat Hossain Badsha (Matribhumi), treasurer Rashed Ahmed (Sangbad), organising secretary Mannan Maruf (Khabar), publicity and publication secretary Harun-or-Rashid (Sangram), training and research secretary Shawkat Osman Rachi (Manab Zamin), cultural secretary M Mujibur Rahman (Sonali Barta), office secretary M Badiuzzaman (Dinkal) and sports secretary Rafiqul Islam (Inqilab).

The elected members are Mozammel Haq Chanchal (Jugantor), Nazrul Islam Mithu (The Daily Star), Arif Rahman (Ajker Kagori), Morol Nazrul Islam (Ittefaq), Abu Darda Jobar (ATN Bangla), Nimal Chakrabarthy (Bhorer Awaj), Mosharraf Hossain Bablu (Bhorer Kagori), Mufti Ahmed (Al-Amin), M Shaheen-ul Islam Chowdhury (Banglabazar).

Sohel Sunny (Banglabazar) and Zahurul Haq Rana (Novo Abhijan) obtained equal number of votes and the newly elected committee will elect one of them as the 10th member through an election on December 6.

AL may expel

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plans to project the government's "indifference to repression" on AL leaders and workers, members of the minority community and also on the people in general.

Schedule of the convention and the new government's completion of 100-day will coincide.

Sources in political circles think that tomorrow's hartal programme would set the trend of politics during the month of Ramadan, but post-Eid political situation would largely depend on the government's attitude towards the main opposition party and the latter's response to that.

BDR, police deployed

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relatives in connection with the killings. Police might file a case as plaintiff, they said.

Meanwhile, the city unit of Jamaat has said it had no links with Humayun. But police said interrogation of his brother revealed a lot of evidences that Humayun had links with Jamaat-shibir.

There are different claims as to how Humayun was killed. Talking to a group of newsmen who visited the area yesterday, police and a section of local people said Humayun was bullet-hit during the gunfight. Some other local people said he was fatally injured when a bullet went off his firearm accidentally.

The local people said the gunfight took place when Humayun and his accomplices on their way to Hathazari from Fatikchhari Maibzhanderi Darber Sharif in a microbus came under attack by Didar group of BCL at Rahmania Bazar. The Didar group is backed by Tayeb group.

Didar was killed on the spot and Humayun along with four accomplices were bullet-hit. Over 50 shots were fired during the gunfight, local

people and police said.

Hathazari police arrested injured Humayun and his accomplices when they were being taken to Chittagong in an ambulance. Humayun died after admission to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

On the other hand, some local people said Humayun and his armed accomplices got down at the market and suddenly opened fire, killing Didar on the spot and injuring Gobi critically. Didar and Gobi were talking standing beside a wall at the market.

President

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the 1973 batch of Bangladesh Civil Service were given forced retirement on Thursday.

Some sources said the government plans to give forced retirement to more officials from the batch under the provision that on completion of 25 years of service, an official may retire or may be given forced retirement. The plan is based on the assumption that BCS recruits of that time were political elements and they are "anti-BNP".

Discord at Bonn talksGeorge Harrison is no more

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talks in their fourth day, Abdul Qadir, the governor of the Pashtun province of Nangarhar and a northern alliance delegate, walked out to protest the lack of Pashtun representation here, another Natiqi spokesman, Bahadori.

The northern alliance, which has gained control of many areas of Afghanistan with the help of US airstrikes, comprises groups and warlords who have at times been bitter enemies. Its delegation includes two other Pashtuns.

AFP says, the delegation representing former Afghan King Mohammad Zahir Shah declared yesterday that the exiled monarch must be appointed as Afghanistan's head of state or head of a proposed supreme council.

"His Majesty is the spiritual leader of the Afghan people and at the core of national unity," said Abdul Sattar Sirat, who is heading the king's delegation at power-sharing talks.

"The proposal of our delegation is the king must play a central role in the future of Afghanistan. The king should act as head of state or head of the supreme council," he told a press conference.

In Kabul, tribal fighters said they captured 80 Taliban soldiers yesterday near the airport at Kandahar as anti-Taliban forces closed in on the Islamic militia stronghold. U.S. warplanes bombed Taliban defenses near the airport.

The Taliban soldiers surren-

dered without resistance when tribal fighters surrounded them in the morning and ordered them to drop their weapons, tribal leader Abdul Jabbar said.

Jabbar, speaking in Pakistan, said the fighters also seized five Taliban tanks, four pickup trucks, one anti-aircraft gun and a multi-barreled rocket launcher.

Taxi and bus drivers arriving in Kabul from Kandahar yesterday reported fighting Thursday in the three-kilometer (two-mile) area between the airport and Kandahar itself.

"That area is a no-man's land," said Pacha, a taxi driver. "There is fighting. We can't go there. ... We don't know who it is."

Another tribal leader, Mohammad Anwar, reported airstrikes from the U.S.-led coalition yesterday on positions around the Kandahar airport.

The Taliban have barred journalists from Kandahar, 450 kilometers southwest of Kabul, and the reports of fighting could not be independently verified.

The northern alliance's deputy defense minister, Bismillah Khan, said Thursday that anti-Taliban forces had reached the eastern outskirts of Kandahar and that "there is heavy fighting going on."

Speaking in the Afghan capital, Kabul, Khan said his information was based on radio communication with his commanders.

Moratorium on JCD committee

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pessimistic about its outcome.

A JCD leader said members of the central body could be kept away from criminal offences, but there is no bar on the members of other JCD units, the DU unit in particular. Leaders and activists of the JCD DU unit are out there on the campus to carry out onslaughts, he added.

"JCD activists are still oppressing resident students of different halls and keep on having meals without payment. I don't see the impact of the suspension order," said a student of the Mohsin Hall.

On Sunday, JCD activists beat up a leader of Shahidullah Hall unit of BCL on the campus. Seven other BCL activists were beaten up at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital on Saturday.

Armed activists manhandled the proctor and a house tutor at the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), Sylhet, on Monday night. At the time, the proctor of SUST and the proctor of Shah Paran Hall were on a visit to the hall to identify the outsiders.

The outsiders belonging to the JCD snapped telephone and electricity connections and misbehaved with teachers. They also vandalised the hall and created a panicky atmosphere forcing the teachers to leave the hall.

Various factions of the JCD were reported to be involved in gunfights across the country in the last few days, intensifying the internal conflict in the student body.

On Monday, a schoolboy was killed and several others were injured in a gunfight between two factions of the Jubo Dal, a BNP wing, at Nayamati, Narayanganj. On Tuesday, ten persons were injured in a clash between the two groups of JCD at Matlab, Chandpur.

On Saturday, police arrested the joint convener of Sylhet district JCD unit and his four associates in possession of six kilograms of gold worth about Tk 40 lakh at Malanichara point in the town.

An armed gang led by the JCD leader, Mamun, attacked Pallabi Police Station Friday night, protesting arrest of Mamun's brother. The fierce gunfight between the operatives and the law-enforcement officials left one person killed and 40 others injured.

Police arrested 28 persons, including Mamun and detained them on charge of attacking the police station. Mamun is accused in a number of cases, including extortion and killing. On Sunday, a young man was killed and three others were injured when a cracker went off at a slum at Pallabi. Police believe they were accomplices of Mamun.

On Monday night, police arrested Imrul Asgar Iman in possession of a revolver in the city's Azimpur area on charge of extortion in Kataban, Elephant Road, Nilkhet and Shahbagh areas. He was staying at the AF Rahman Hall of Dhaka University and leading a gang of extortionists.

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George Harrison is no more

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Shanker, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan and singer John Lennon also took part in that concert.

Harrison is the second of the "Fab Four" to die, after the slaying of John Lennon in New York in 1980.

"He left this world as he lived in it, conscious of God, fearless of death, and at peace, surrounded by family and friends," his family said.

In a statement, carried on the BBC, they added: "He often said 'everything else can wait but the search for God cannot wait and love another'."

Tributes poured in from around the world. Fellow Beatle Paul McCartney called him his "baby brother," adding: "He was a lovely guy and a very brave man and had a wonderful sense of humour."

Prime Minister Tony Blair, taking time from an Anglo-Irish summit, said his generation had grown up with the Beatles.

"Their music, and the personalities of the band, were the background to our lives," added Blair, who himself sang in a rock group when he was younger.

Harrison had been ill for some time. He was diagnosed with throat cancer in 1998, but was given the all-clear after receiving radiation treatment.

The scare prompted him to go for check-ups at the Mayo Clinic in

Minnesota, where in March doctors found a large cancerous growth on his lung and removed it.

A statement then from his solicitor said the operation had been successful and that he had made an excellent recovery, and in July Harrison denied press reports that he was losing his fight against cancer.

Lately, however, he had been undergoing treatment at a hospital in New York since an operation on a brain tumour earlier this month.

Harrison was almost killed in 1999 when he was knifed by an intruder at his country mansion near Oxford, west of London, suffering a punctured lung.