

Saarc summit in Dhaka to be a landmark event

India hopes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran yesterday said the 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka is going to be a landmark event to discuss important steps like setting up of the regional poverty alleviation fund.

"We have a substantial agenda at the Saarc summit in Dhaka," Saran who returned from the US last night told reporters in New Delhi.

Predicting an upbeat future for the South Asian grouping that was formed two decades ago, he said, "The Saarc is moving from the stage of making declaratory sentences to doing collaborative work."

The summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) is scheduled for November 12-13. The seven-nation group comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

According to a PTI report, Saran said the Saarc countries are discussing attaching Afghanistan to the regional body.

"We have been talking to each other about the possibility of Afghanistan joining as a new member," Saran added.

This figured during the meeting of the Saarc foreign ministers on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. All the ministers agreed the Saarc meet in Dhaka in November would be a "landmark" summit, he added.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai had expressed keen interest in his country joining the Saarc during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's recent visit to Kabul. Singh had

assured Karzai that the Saarc members will consider the proposal soon.

Karzai told Singh Afghanistan could be a bridge between the Central Asia and southern and western Asia. He had earlier discussed the same issue with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, who was very positive towards the suggestion.

The Indian foreign secretary said it was agreed that there should be a "substantive" agenda for the 13th Saarc summit.

"Our efforts should be to move Saarc from a stage of declaratory statements to a stage of actually doing some collaborative work," he said.

The Saarc ministers had an exchange of views on the setting up of the poverty alleviation fund and specific proposals dealing with disaster management in the light of the tsunami that affected several Saarc nations.

Asked about the inclusion of a new member, an important official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh said the decision came at the Kathmandu summit to prepare criteria for inclusion of members and observer in the Saarc.

He said a number of important Asian and European countries including China have expressed keen interest to get Saarc observer status.

Bangladesh raised a point to give China the observer status, but India proposed to prepare criteria first before giving anyone this status.

However, the criteria are yet not prepared, the official added.

Meherpur BNP leader killed in bomb attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, KUSHIA

Criminals yesterday killed a BNP leader in Meherpur by hurling bombs on him while another BNP activist, who was attacked and injured by a gang in Kushtia on September 20, died in Rajshahi yesterday.

Azizur Rahman Silu, 25, BNP leader of Kushtia Union in Meherpur, was killed when a gang hurled bombs at him around 2:45pm. Sukur Ali, a member of Kushtia Union Parishad, was also injured in the incident.

Police sources said Silu and Sukur were returning to their village Kasba-Bhatapara from Gangi upazila on a motorcycle when a gang of four reportedly ambushed them near an isolated Kasba field.

The gang hurled two bombs at them and fled the scene. Silu died on the spot while locals rushed the injured Sukur to Meherpur General Hospital. He was later shifted to Kushtia General Hospital.

Sukur was undergoing an operation at the time of filing this report. His left leg and eyes have been badly burnt, hospital sources said.

"Both the men were our enemies but I don't know who carried out the killing," said Roni Biswas, a regional leader of the outlawed Purbajuddha Communist Party (PBCP) Janajuddho faction.

Law enforcement agencies including Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) started a massive drive to hunt down the criminals.

Meanwhile, BNP activist Majibar Mondol, 45, died yesterday at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) following an attack on him at Kushtia on September 20.

Police said a gang stormed into Majibar's house at Udaynagar village of Daulatpur upazila in Kushtia and beat him up severely around 11:00pm.

Seriously injured, Majibar was taken to Kushtia General Hospital and later shifted to RMCH as his condition deteriorated.

IDB to consider enhancing oil import funds

UNB, Dhaka

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) will consider enhanced fund support for Bangladesh to help overcome the recent oil shock that prompted the government to divert a substantial amount from the fund which would have been used to achieve development goals.

This was stated by IDB President Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali during a meeting with Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman on the sidelines of the ongoing Bank-Fund Annual Meetings in Washington on Sunday.

According to a message received in Dhaka yesterday, Dr Ali said he will raise the finance minister's proposal for enhanced fund with the IDB Board for a decision at the earliest possible time.

"The proposal is a timely one which warrants serious considerations by the bank's board," said the IDB president.

Saifur appreciated IDB for providing Bangladesh with the substantial credit line facilities and requested further enhancement of the support to help overcome the recent oil shock.

The minister also raised the possibilities of the IDB providing assistance to the OIC member countries to help them modernise their madrasa education so as to enable the madrasa graduates to qualify themselves for competing in job markets home and abroad.

The IDB president also appreciated the proposal as it would facilitate madrasa education to be at par with the mainstream education system and agreed to consider the idea with right earnest.

It was also agreed that the IDB-aided Waqf Mutawalli Committee in Bangladesh would be reviewed and further strengthened.

Road march

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Canadian company. The government has to rehabilitate and compensate the victims of the Tengratila gas explosion, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) Mujahidul Islam Selim said at the rally.

He demanded cancellation of the oil-gas agreements that go against national interest and punishment of the ministers, bureaucrats and experts involved in the process of signing these agreements.

The committee leaders urged the people to come forward to protect the gas resource and make the road march a success.

With the committee President Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah in the chair, the rally was addressed by Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, economist Anu Muhammad, Workers Party Politburo Member Haidar Akbar Khan Rono, CPB leader Rubin Hossain Prince and Sylhet Division Development Council President Abed Raja.

The committee leaders will address meetings at different places on their way to the road march that is scheduled to end with "Tengratila Declaration" at a rally in Tengratila on September 28.

Hasina tells

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Sadan residence. Emerging from the hour-long meeting, Chammass told reporters, "We've discussed many issues including the upcoming elections, the August 17 bomb blasts, and other unresolved crimes."

On the next general polls, she said, "We are urging all to work together to hold the election in a free and fair atmosphere."

She however declined to comment on the government's turning down the Tuesday Group's bid for holding a high-level conference in Dhaka on the issues of best election practices.

Asked about her comment she made on September 13 about the elections in Bangladesh, the US envoy said, "What I said is nothing new. I said this many times before. There was distortion of my statements in the media. Till now I stand by my remarks."

Chammass at a luncheon meeting of American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh on September 13 said though Bangladesh is generally recognised for conducting free and fair elections, it should address the concerns that the next elections "may be problematic."

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Hasina's political secretary, told the reporters yesterday's meeting dis-

cussed the party's plans for holding a free and fair election.

Citing the controversial appointments of ruling alliance's student activists as election officers and 'biased' activities of the chief election commissioner, Saber said the reality is not the same as propagated by the prime minister at home and abroad.

"A free and fair election cannot be possible under Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz. He has proved through his comments he is not an impartial person," Saber said.

"This government is doing everything possible sensing the people will reject it at the next general elections. So the government is taking all measures for vote rigging," Saber said quoting meeting discussions.

On the August 17 serial blasts across the country, the AL leader said the prime minister in her speech in parliament tried to hide the perpetrators.

AL leaders Kazi Zafarullah and Syed Abul Hossain were present.

PM shocked

FROM PAGE 16 The resilience of the America people would be equal to the task of coping with the disaster and its aftereffects.

Khaleda expressed her government's support in helping the affected people and their families to return to normal life.

4 more confess part

FROM PAGE 1

Ataur Rahman alias Sunny, younger brother of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdul Rahman, used to bear all expenses for their lodging and meals.

Yasir said he on a number of occasions had been in processions with Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, operations commander of Jangra Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMB), in Bagmara of Rajshahi and other places.

Booklets and leaflets on jihad used to be composed and printed from the East Bashabo house of Ataur, both the detainees told the magistrate, said court sources.

In mid July, Ataur came to the house with a bag containing firearms and papers on jihad and told them about the plans for August 17 blasts, they added.

After the near-simultaneous blasts, Ataur paid Yasir Tk 2 lakh. Belal was already getting Tk 3,000 a month from Ataur for his service for JMB.

Besides the two, Abdul Rahman Masud, who was arrested in Kaliakoir in Gazipur on September 19, admitted his role in the country-wide explosions.

He said he had met Nurul Islam Uzzal alias Jubair and another man at Kaliakoir about two years ago and they had inspired him to join JMB to work for 'jihad', Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza recorded his confessional statement.

Induced by the JMB operatives, he had gone to Narsingdi Ahle Hadith Madrasa and come into contact with Ataur, who along with JMB leaders Hasan and Solaiman had prepared him for jihad.

He said JMB leader Jahid gave him a time bomb on August 17 at the house of another JMB man Habib in Savar and asked him to detonate the bomb near Khilkhet Foot Over-Bridge.

BDNEWS from Bagerhat adds: JMB member Abdullah Sheikh, 45, yesterday confessed before a magistrate's court his link to the country-wide terrorist attacks. Magistrate Mohammad Sobur Hossain recorded his statement.

Abdullah was arrested in Chitalmari upazila on September 21. Son of late Abdul Barez, he hails from village Aruabari.

Meanwhile in Bagerhat, Ahle Hadith leader Daud Sheikh was taken on a five-day remand yesterday for interrogation.

Saifur for more aid

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He expected that the additional commitment of aid should be directed to the poor countries on the basis of their actual needs, demonstrated utilisation performance and improved governance. "No amount of aid is likely to deliver poverty reduction without sound institutions and governance in a country," he categorically said.

The minister pointed out that aid alone is not the panacea for poverty reduction and recalled the Monterrey Consensus that recognised trade as the engine of growth.

He said the common goals set by the world leaders through the consensus rekindled hopes of a better life for about three billion poor of the world who earn less than two dollars a day. "Insecurity of livelihood and lives of these poor people emerge as a threat to peace and security anywhere in the world."

The Monterrey Consensus and wide-ranging participatory process in developing PRSP have popularised MDGs throughout the developing world. "But we are far away from the set goals," Saifur said, emphasising that it was high time to act together to deliver on these promises to meet the growing aspiration of the poor.

About the continued improvement of policies and governance by many developing countries, he mentioned that faster reduction of

income poverty is a formidable task without stronger economic growth led by sizeable investment in infrastructure and capacity building.

He referred to the devastating impact of oil-price hike on the economy of low-income countries and said macroeconomic balance and poverty-reduction strategies of these countries have been thrown out of gear.

The finance minister appraised the meeting of Bangladesh's achievement of over 5.5 percent annual growth despite all this adversity. Bangladesh made impressive gains in human development rallying the country to the category of medium developed countries in the Human Development Index, he said.

"As part of governance improvement, Bangladesh has been implementing a series of institutional reforms in almost all sectors to minimize waste and inefficiencies and curb corruption," he told the donors.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the United States Shamser M Chowdhury, World Bank Alternate Director Zakir Ahmed Khan, Bangladesh Bank Governor Salehuddin Ahmed, ERD Secretary Ismail Zabihullah and Finance Secretary Siddiqui Rahman Chowdhury were among the members of Bangladesh delegation to the meetings.

OC mastermind

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The elite force nabbed Tuhin and Zia following statements of Johnny, another accused in the case who was arrested on September 20.

They said OC Rafiq had a conversation with Taaj over telephone and asked him to kill Kamrul. Acting on this directive, Taaj turned the mission on to his accomplice Shah Alam, who orchestrated the killing, the sources added.

The arrestees also said Shah Alam first opened fire on Kamrul and they were guarding the spot.

There is likeness between their statements and Johnny's confession, made before a magistrate, in which he had claimed someone masterminded the killing and Alam orchestrated it.

Kamrul was gunned down in front of his Ibrahimpur house on September 13 following a feud between the family and the OC over property.

His father Abdul Razzak had filed a case against 26 people including the OC as the prime suspect.

Police high-ups closed the OC and asked Additional Commissioner Faruq Ahmed to prepare a report on his alleged involvement. Ahmed submitted the report on Friday, showing four reasons behind the killing including the feud.

The report has been sent to the police headquarters, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

3 robbers

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under Chandina upazila and Mohammad Habib, son of Shahabuddin of village Bishnupur under Comilla Sadar upazila, to Laksam Upazila Health Complex.

The law enforcers seized the private car, two ram daos and two knives.

Moudud

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sooner we do it, the better it is for us," he added.

Broadcast media is playing a very important role in motivating people to increase food production, empowering women and controlling population, he felt.

Asked whether permission for satellite TV channels are now given on political considerations, Moudud said some TV channels were also allowed to operate in the past. "Were all of them allowed on political considerations?" he asked, adding competition will be intensified if more private channels are allowed.

Khalid Hassan, country director of AC Nielsen Bangladesh Ltd, made a presentation on Media Consumption in Bangladesh.

He said use of radio in Bangladesh is declining but use of TV is rising as its price has come down substantially and battery-run TVs are now available in the rural areas where there is no electricity.

Gavin Anderson and Tony O'Regan, two media experts from abroad, made separate presentations focusing on broadcast media liberalisation in Africa and South East Asia respectively.

Anderson said 46 percent of the population in Bangladesh don't have access to media while 97 percent people in Sri Lanka have access to it.

Regan said the number of radio listeners in Bangladesh is declining because a lot of people find nothing to listen to. He regretted this situation.

Prof SA Salam of journalism department of Dhaka University and Selim Zaman, BEI project researcher also made two presentations at the seminar.

Former ambassador Farooq Sobhan was in the chair.

7 hurt

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men responsible for throwing bombs on their procession.

BCL President Liaqat Sikder said the JCD and the Shibir men blasted the bombs "under the direction of Hawa Bhaban" as part of their conspiracy to put a stop to the demonstration against the Upazila Election Officers' appointments.

BCL General Secretary Nazrul Islam Babu, Shariful Islam Swapan, Marufa Akther Popy, Rafiqul Islam Kotawal, Ali Hasan Taron, Rafiqul Islam Sujon, Mustak Ahmed and Jewel Ahmed Khan also spoke at the press conference.

Meanwhile, JCD also brought out a procession on the campus protesting the blasts. Blaming BCL for the incident, the JCD leaders said that it was a plan to destroy the congenial atmosphere of the campus.

JCD Senior Vice President Sultan Salauddin Tuku, DU unit President Hasan Mamun, General Secretary Saiful Islam Firoz, Jayanta Kumar Kundu, Mostafa Khan Safori, Mamunur Rashid and Akramul Hasan spoke among others.

Dhaka University Teachers Association (Duta) expressed its grave concern over yesterday's bomb blasts on the campus that left seven students injured.

In a statement, Duta President Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique and General Secretary Prof Md. Akhtaruzzaman, urged the government and the university authorities for immediate punishment of the criminals responsible for the blasts.

HSC results

FROM PAGE 1

Diploma in Commerce Examinations under Bangladesh Technical Education Board were also published yesterday -- all under the grading system.

As many as 23 Alim examinees and two of Business Management students also secured GPA 5.

Education Minister Osman Faruk handed over the result sheets to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office. State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Huq Milon, Education Secretary Faruq Ahmad Siddiqi and the heads of the education boards were present.

The prime minister expressed satisfaction over better results this year compared to past few years, increase in the number of students getting GPA-5, falling number of expulsions for adopting unfair means, and also over considerable decrease in the incidents of cheating in the public examinations.

Khaleda expressed the hope the concerned administrators and teachers will keep up the trend and make more effort and carry out motivational activities for better result in future.

She also asked them to put emphasis on English education and suggested summoning the principals of the colleges, which did bad in the exams, to know the reasons and overcome the shortcomings.

The education minister said motivational as well as corrective measures are being taken after analysis of the results.

"Students are now taking at the examinations better prepared as they know public examinations are being held in a copying-free environment," he told the prime minister.

Rajshahi Board this year fetched

'Criminal' shot dead in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals gunned down a youth after abducting him from Mirpur in the city last night.

Police said several accomplices of infamous Shahadat Group abducted alleged criminal Jewel from road No. 1 in Mirpur Section No. 6 at 9:30pm and took him to an under-construction building.

They shot him in his head point-blank and fled the spot, leaving him dead on the spot.

Police said Jewel was an FIR (first information report)-listed accused in businessman Shahidullah killing case.

BCL leader

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attending doctors declared Tapash dead. His uncle Anisuzzaman, injured by bullets, is undergoing treatment at the hospital.

It was alleged that Tapash was killed in an intra-party feud.

Police arrested Tapash's other uncle and district AL President Mohammad Mohiuddin, his two sons and 10 others.

They have also sealed off the residence of Mohiuddin.

Tapash's father, late Khalequzzaman Khoka, was also a chairman of the Munshiganj Municipality.

The officer-in-charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station quoted witnesses as saying Nayeem, one of the close associates of AL leader Mohiuddin, shot Tapash. Nayeem is among the 13 arrested in connection with the murder, he said.

A tense situation was prevailing in the district town. Additional police have been deployed.

Search for victims

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Texas governor Rick Perry said the low toll was "a blessing" and praised what he called the largest evacuation in US history which saw about three million people flee the Texas and Louisiana coasts before the storm.

Officials pleaded with the multitudes who fled in advance of the storm not to rush back, warning that the zone remained dangerous due to flooding.

President George W. Bush who had led appeals for people to get away from the coast before Rita struck joined the Texas and Louisiana governors in urging evacuees to stay in their refuges. "The situation is still dangerous," said Bush.

Biman staff

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Committee and the state minister for civil aviation.

Meantime, BDNEWS reports Biman employees also demanded the withdrawal of the decision on forced retirement of Captain Nasim, president of Bangladesh Airlines Pilot Association (BAPA).

The Civil Aviation Authorities Thursday in a letter forcibly grounded Captain Nasim showing the reason of high blood pressure.

Israel strikes

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Hamas's most senior leader, Mahmoud al-Zahar, announced his group's decision to halt attacks shortly after Israel killed an Islamic Jihad leader in an air strike in a resumption of its policy of targeting militants for assassination.

The decision would ensure the safety of Palestinians in Gaza, he said.

the highest pass percentage of 65.93 and Sylhet Board the lowest of 44.40. Dhaka Board last year obtained the highest pass percentage of 53.60 and Barisal Board the lowest 36.42.

In Dhaka Board, 70,711 of the 132,120 examinees passed the exams with the pass percentage of 53.52. As many as 32,807 students took part in the exams in Chittagong Board and 18,061 among them passed at 55.05 percent against 43.73 of last year.

Among the 103,281 candidates under Rajshahi Board, 68,096 came out successful with a pass percentage of 65.93 against 45.23 in last year. As many as 68,214 students appeared in the exams under Jessore Board and 43,452 passed. The pass percentage is 63.70 against last year's 42.70.

Under Comilla Board, 20,550 examinees out of 34,218 passed with a success rate of 60.06 percent against 51.80 last year. Barisal Board had 27,343 candidates and 17,085 of them passed. The pass percentage is 62.48 against 36.42 last year.

As many as 17,105 students appeared under Sylhet Board and 7,594 came out successful with the pass percentage of 44.40 against last year's 46.69.

The percentage of pass is 64.74 in Alim Examinations against 41.40 last year, 30.98 in HSC (Vocational) examinations against 29.24 last year, 59.98 in Business Management examinations against 68.29 last year and 50.97 in Diploma-in-Commerce examinations against 74.55 last year.

Tuesday Group

FROM PAGE 1 course of action following the government's refusal to allow the planned conference, added the sources.

Adviser of the Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman on Sunday communicated the government's stance during a meeting with Canadian High Commissioner in Dhaka David Sproule and Ambassador of Norway Aud Lise Norheim.

The group members at yesterday's meeting decided to continue a dialogue with the government high-ups to make them aware of the 'benefits' that the proposed conference may offer in holding the next general election in a more free and fair manner.

The Group sources said it only wants to provide technical assistance to Bangladesh to make its future general election more transparent. They said the group has no plans to discuss reforms in the electoral laws or changes in the constitution.

The meeting, which lasted about one and a half hours, starting from 3:30pm, however, decided not to take any such step that might strain the relationship between the government and member countries of the Tuesday Group.

"We will talk to policymakers of the government and try to make them understand that the initiative to hold the conference has been taken out of a good intention and that we will not take sides in domestic politics. We only want to provide Bangladesh with technical assistance in electoral matters and we don't intend to interfere in the internal affairs," said a diplomat on condition of anonymity.

The diplomat said that the group considers Bangladesh a democratic country and will continue helping it to strengthen its democratic process.

The Tuesday Group comprises the ambassadors and high commissioners accredited to Bangladesh from Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, US, European Commission, and the resident co-ordinator of the United Nations.

It has been planning to hold a seminar in Dhaka sometime in November this year on "International Electoral Best Practices".

Cabinet okays

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Sunday to Thursday will be from 9:00am to 3:30pm with a 15-minute break for prayers from 1:15pm.

The meeting also approved the Cable Television Network Policy 2005.

It also okayed the