

Saarc summit

FROM PAGE 16

A well-equipped media centre will be set up in Hotel Sonargaon during the summit. The foreign ministry will set up a Saarc Facilitation Desk at the Zia International Airport for the delegates.

Strict security measures will be taken in respect of all baggage of the guests.

The beautification and other preparations were geared up since Pakistan confirmed that it would take part in the summit despite the devastating earthquake that killed thousands of people in the country, officials said.

They said the 13th summit has special significance for Bangladesh on three counts - it coincides with the 20th anniversary of Saarc, it is being held on the eve of the third decade of the organisation, and Bangladesh is the first country to host the meet for the third time.

Saarc represents the largest regional cooperation organisation of the world as South Asia is home to one-fifth of the world population. South Asian nations are endowed with immense geographical advantages, considerable natural and human resources and a large economic space with a vibrant market of some 400 million middle-class consumers.

Officials said the region needs to make great strides in the areas of poverty alleviation, intra-regional trade, attracting Foreign Direct Investment, expanding communication and transport network, adopting an energy policy, increasing investment in human resources development, ensuring quality education, better management of natural disasters, stabilising population growth and eradicating illiteracy.

The implementation of South Asian Free Trade Area (Safita) is still uncertain, as the meeting of the Saarc Committee of Experts (CoE) held in Kathmandu on October 18-19 ended inconclusively, while the scheduled October 21-22 meet of the Saarc commerce ministers in Islamabad was postponed due to the earthquake.

Safita is due to be implemented from January next year.

The 13th summit will usher in a new era of regional cooperation, to build a more peaceful, prosperous and forward-looking South Asia, the officials added.

According to the programme, the inaugural session will take place on November 12 at the Bangladesh-China

Friendship Conference Centre (BCFCC) at 11:30am.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz will open the summit as current chairperson.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will give her inaugural speech. Then the Saarc leaders will adopt the agenda of the summit and confer Saarc Award 2004.

Late president Ziaur Rahman was the first winner of the Saarc Award for his outstanding contribution to the initiation of the regional co-operation in South Asia.

The election of the chairperson will also take place at the inaugural session when the current chairperson of Saarc will hand over the chair to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The secretary general will address after the speeches of the leaders.

The session will be preceded by a visit to the National Memorial at Savar and the mazar of late president Ziaur Rahman.

Khaleda Zia will host a state banquet in honour of the Saarc leaders at the BCFCC hall in the evening of the first day of the summit.

On the second day, the leaders will discuss reports of the Council of Ministers, reports of ministerial meetings on environment, information, health, energy and commerce at the State Guest House Jamuna before the summit.

The leaders will also discuss the Declaration of the 13th Saarc Summit, known as Dhaka Declaration. Then they will proceed to Bangabhaban where they will pay a joint call on President Iajuddin Ahmed.

Four agreements will be signed by the foreign ministers of the Saarc countries at the concluding session at the International Conference Centre.

The Saarc leaders will then approve the reports of the Council of Ministers, reports of the ministerial meetings and declare the date and venue of the 14th Summit.

The Saarc heads of the state and government will then adopt the declaration of the 13th summit. Khaleda Zia, the new chairperson of Saarc, will make the concluding speech.

She will also address at a press briefing as the new Saarc chairperson.

9 Afghan cops killed in ambush

AFP, Kandahari Khost

Nine policemen and a journalist were killed in troubled Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, in the latest attacks in a deadly insurgency blamed on militants loyal to the ousted Taliban government.

Taliban fighters ambushed a police convoy in a remote district of southern Helmand province as the officers were looking for a suspected militant hideout, provincial administrative deputy chief Ghulam Moheedin told AFP.

Nine policemen, including the unit commander, were killed in a fierce battle that followed. Four Taliban fighters were also killed, he said.

"The fighting lasted for two hours," he said.

An interior ministry spokesman in Kabul said the policemen had been searching for militants after being tipped off by captured Taliban that there were dozens of rebels in the area.

"Some two days ago we captured two Taliban who later told us that there was a big Taliban hideout in the region," spokesman Yousuf Stanizai told AFP.

Helmand is one of several provinces in southern and eastern Afghanistan that are a focus of the insurgency launched by the Taliban after they were removed from power in late 2001 in a US-led campaign.

Government officials, aid workers and foreign security forces have been some of their targets in near-daily violence.

Investigators focus

FROM PAGE 16

reports our staff correspondent from Khulna.

"His information will help us to make a major breakthrough in the investigation of Khulna bomb blast cases," said Abbas Uddin, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sonadanga Police Station.

Shahidullah will be produced before the court today, the OC said.

Police will also produce JMB cadre Hafez Jalil before a court today seeking seven-day remand in connection with bomb explosion on the judges' court compound.

Meanwhile, police defused a powerful bomb kept in front of a house at Monirampur in Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj district on Friday night.

BDNEWS added: Following the rumour of planned bomb attacks on the Gazipur court premises, authorities yesterday beefed up security measures there.

Govt to seek

FROM PAGE 16

proposal, now being prepared by the ministry.

He said donors' assistance will be sought to finance various components, such as vaccination, decontamination, training of workers and officials, and laboratory and testing facilities.

Karim said a taskforce headed by Iqbal Mahmud, joint secretary of the ministry, has already started working to ensure bio-safety in the poultry farms.

The taskforce will work mainly to create awareness among the people about the disease so that they keep themselves from making contact with migratory birds, he said.

The taskforce has included representatives from the ministries of health, environment, education, and information. The stakeholders of the poultry industry have also been included in the taskforce, he added.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) earlier said Bangladesh, being the host of migratory bird, has the potential risk of being affected by the bird flu virus. The virus has already spread across Europe and many Asian countries.

Tender floated

FROM PAGE 1

companies. The short-listed firms are HPC Hamburg Port Consulting of Germany, Royal Haskoning of the Netherlands, Kolen Gromit and Pvt Ltd of Australia, Pacific Consultants International of Japan, BCEOM of France, CPCS Transcom Ltd of Canada and Nathan Associates of the USA.

The selected firms have been asked to collect documents and submit their proposals within 45 days, shipping ministry officials said.

Nepal Chandra Sarker told the news agency that only one firm would be awarded the contract for conducting the study.

The government at an inter-ministerial meeting on October 12 short-listed the seven international firms and finalised the terms of reference for the study.

The study will cover review and analysis of the present situation, port administration model, public-private participation model, assessment of potential market and business opportunities, site selection, survey and investigations, planning and cost estimates, project appraisal and project management model and other ancillary services.

BNP stagnates

FROM PAGE 1

members.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who was last elected party chairperson in 1997, leads the BNP into the sixth year without any mandate. The party constitution lays down that the national council will directly elect party chairperson for a two-year term.

On the other hand, four out of 11 front organisations of the party are now headed by acting presidents. Three of the organisations do not even have any executive committee and are being run by convening committees.

The remaining four front bodies have presidents but none of them was elected. The party chairperson selected them.

BNP sources pointed out that to hold a new council meeting of the party, the party first needs to have new committees of its union, thana and district units. Most of these units do not have valid elected committees.

The party started formation of unit committees 18 months ago. But it has so far formed new committees of thana and union units mostly on the basis of understanding. Only a few of them were elected.

At the district level, the party has constituted committees of 43 out of 78 units on the basis of consensus and selection. The process could not be completed due to intra-party feuds.

At the front organisation level, acting presidents are heading the Jatiyatadabi Sramik Dal for 15 months, Krishak Dal for more than four years, Shechhasabak Dal for two years and Jatiyatadabi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (Jasas) for 15 months.

The Shechchhasabak Dal does not even have an acting president. Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank Chairman Rizvi Ahmed, who had been its president for long, is occasionally seen playing some role for the Dal. Rizvi's tenure expired in 2003.

Abdul Malek has been given temporary responsibility of Jasas since the death of its president and actor Wasimul Bari last year. The Krishak Dal is in crisis as its president Mahbul Alam Tara joined the Awami League in

2001. Sramik Dal President Nazrul Islam Khan was appointed ambassador to Kuwait last year.

The Jatiyatadabi Tanti Dal and Matsya Dal are being run by a convening committee as the original committees have been dissolved. The Jatiyatadabi Mahila Dal never had any committee since its inception in the mid-eighties. The Tanti Dal's committee was dissolved last month for corruption of its president.

The ruling party recently appointed a new committee of the Jatiyatadabi Olama Dal on the basis of selection, which virtually became leaderless as its convenor Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari resigned recently. The Olama Dal was being run by a convening committee for the last one decade and is still riven by intra-party feuds.

The Jatiyatadabi Muktijodha (freedom fighter) Dal is now run by a committee whose tenure expired several months ago.

The Jatiyatadabi Jubo Dal and Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) committees were formed regularly on the basis of selection. These front bodies do not have serious intra-party conflicts.

Both the Jubo Dal and the JCD, which are regarded as the major front bodies of the BNP, however badly lack fresh blood and suffer from crisis of policy guidelines.

Jubo Dal President Barkatullah Bhulu, who is also adviser to the commerce ministry, is over 50. He is not supposed to lead the youth front.

President of the party's student front JCD Azizul Bari Helal is around 40 and was not a student for around 15 years. A couple of years ago, he took admission in a department of the Dhaka University.

BNP Secretary General and Minister for Local Government Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan admitted some lapses within the party but said none of these is major.

The party is now forming committees from the grassroots level to top level.

The party will hold national council when this process is completed, he added.

3 lost kids end

FROM PAGE 16

Talking to The Daily Star Sharmin said, "My employer Jibon Nahar brought me here in the name of treatment. She left me here and never came back. I started crying after several hours of her departure and some hospital staff took me to a ward."

She is still staying in a ward of the hospital without being registered as admitted. She is from Bhola but she couldn't recall the name of her village. She said she studied up to class three and that her father is poor.

Rafiq, a rickshaw-puller, brought her to Dhaka with a promise of a job about three to four months ago and found the work as a domestic help for her.

Sharmin said, "I could manage all the household work of the employer except giving baths to her children. For this she used to beat me every day."

Tutul, 9, is a boy from Magura. He said, "One day I was loitering at the local train station about a year ago when a man asked me if I wanted to go to Dhaka and put me on a train. But the train took me to Chittagong. From there a woman brought me to Dhaka and since then I

have been working at Zia International Airport carrying luggage."

He said he was earning a living. Two months ago he got on a train to go to Kamalapur with his friends. On the way he fell down from the running train and was severely injured.

Pedestrians rushed him to the DMCH where he is staying still.

Sayed Rony, 8, is from Mymensingh. He lost his legs eight days ago in a train accident at Kamalapur and being treated in the DMCH. He said, "I left home after having a spat with my mother and came to Dhaka. I don't know the exact date or the month. I used to beg at Kamalapur railway station. One day when I was playing with my friends, I was hit by a running train and fell down on the tracks, the train ran over my legs."

The three kids are staying in ward No 33 in the hospital. Sympathetic ward staffs are looking after them although they do not know where they will go after the hospital discharges them in a few days. Nobody knows.

UN rejects

FROM PAGE 1

country," a source told The Daily Star citing the UN peacekeeping policy on the appointment of force commander.

Foreign Ministry Secretary Hemayetuddin during his visit to the US this month met the head of UN peacekeeping operations and submitted the replacement proposal.

But Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno declined to consider the proposal as, he said, the UN policy does not provide for replacing the incumbent force commander by someone from the same country. He told the Bangladesh envoy that the UN rather wants the present force commander to continue, sources said.

The foreign secretary however denied having had any such discussion with Guéhenno. "We talked about some general aspects," Hemayetuddin recently told The Daily Star, admitting his meeting with the UN top official.

Major General Fazle Elahi Akbar was appointed the force commander in the UN peacekeeping mission in strife-torn Sudan last year. Bangladesh Army late last month asked him to return to Dhaka by October 30, sources in the army said.

A letter conveying the message has already been sent to Maj Gen Akbar, added the source.

Akbar's tenure as the force commander expired on September 3 and the UN has proposed to extend his service in the peacekeeping mission for another nine months from September 4 to June 4, 2006.

"The secretariat will be grateful if the government of Bangladesh intimates its approval for the extension for the period indicated," said a UN letter forwarded to Bangladesh government.

"The Secretariat of the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the permanent mission of

West Bengal floods maroon thousands

10 killed in 3 days

REUTERS, Kolkata

Tens of thousands of people were marooned by flooding in West Bengal yesterday after three days of torrential rains that killed at least 10 people, officials said.

The unseasonal rains came after the June-September monsoon, which this year triggered severe flooding in other parts of the country such as the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra in the west and Assam in the northeast.

"The situation is bad in four southern districts, but we are doing everything necessary," West Bengal state Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta said.

Officials said at least 10 people had died in the coastal eastern state due to wall collapses and electrocution in the rains and some 50,000 people were cut off by floods.

Relief officials warned the situation could get worse for hundreds of thousands of people living in the Sunderbans region, where two rivers were close to bursting their banks.

Rains also hit life in Kolkata, eastern India's main trading hub, which was flooded for a second day after the city's century-old drainage system failed to cope with the water.

Cars and motorcycles floated in waist-deep water, while people waded their way around the city and residents of some low-lying areas used boats. Many shops and business establishments were closed and road traffic was thin.

Filth from overflowing sewage canals entered homes and shops in many low-lying areas, witnesses said.

"It's sickening the way garbage washes up our door," said Ratna Das, a mother of two who used huge mops to keep out the water.

Weather officials said the downpour was likely to continue for another day.

During the monsoon season, floods and mudslides killed more than 1,000 people in western India. The country's financial hub, Mumbai, was brought to a standstill for four days when a record 94 cm of rain fell in 24 hours.

Ex-JCD leader

FROM PAGE 16

When Mohammad Shahjahan, a former JCD leader and the vice president of the Dhaka Metropolitan unit of the Swechcha Sebak Dal was going out from Bangladesh Kriya Shikkha Pratishan (BKSP) at Savar where the tender papers were available, a group of JCD activists assaulted him and snatched his schedule papers.

Responding to Shahjahan's call, police rushed to the spot and arrested Sanaul Kabir Russell, former literature and publication secretary of the DU SM Hall unit and an MBA student of the university, after Shahjahan filed a case against him.

On that day at least three groups of JCD activists went to the BKSP to buy schedule papers of the tender work, sources said.

Meanwhile, JCD central leader Shamsuzzoha Sumon told The Daily Star that he along with Russell went to the BKSP to buy schedule papers, not for "tender manipulation".

"Police came to the BKSP gate where I and Russell were gossiping and arrested him without proper reasons," he added.

Earlier, Savar police arrested former JCD leaders Iqbal Hossain Liton and Jahidul Kabir with a .22 bore revolver from the BKSP over tender manipulation on September 25.

The JCD leaders are not involved in tender manipulation, JCD General Secretary Shaiful Bari Babu said, adding, "I heard that some people who were expelled from the Chhatra Dal earlier are now engaged in tender manipulation. We will not take any responsibility of those who are no longer attached to the Chhatra Dal."

Sun may shine

FROM PAGE 1

Rajshahi, 39mm in Sylhet, 37mm in Ishwardi, 32mm in Bhola and 29mm in Sandwip.

Meanwhile, the three major sea ports of Chittagong, Mongla and Cox's Bazar have posted a no-3 alarm signal, apprehending light storms with rainfall, while the inland river ports posted a no-2 alarm signal.

PBCP leader

FROM PAGE 16

during interrogation, took him to Gurkha Thakpara area to recover illegal firearms early yesterday.

According to police, when the team reached the area at about 3:00am, accomplices of Hossain Ali opened fire on them, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

Hossain Ali was caught in the crossfire when he tried to escape during the shootout. He died on the spot.

Police recovered one shutter-gun, four bullets and some sharp weapons from the shooting spot.

Three policemen were also injured in the shootout and are undergoing treatment at a local hospital.

The body of Hossain Ali was sent to Sirajganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police said Hossain Ali of Charia Kalibari village under Solonga upazila was wanted in eight criminal cases, including one for murder.

Call for UN resolution

FROM PAGE 16

juvenile justice in the Commonwealth were some of the major issues that came up at the meet, attended by over 160 delegates who included the law ministers or their representatives from the 53 member countries of the organisation.

The communiqué said, "... frequently their families, and others who aid them were subjected to loss, damage or injury and that they may, in addition, suffer hardship when assisting in the prosecution of offenders".

The meeting reaffirmed the principles that such victims must be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect for their personal dignity. It called upon member countries to consider implementation of the measures designed to give practical effect to these principles.

The ministers also agreed that they would consider passage of legislation that would assist in the realisation of adherence to the basic principles.

They further agreed that ground realities should be considered for evolving appropriate mechanisms to assist the victims, and recognised that such mechanisms must remain a matter for national decision, taking into account economic, social and

cultural norms of each member country, the communiqué said.

The law ministers welcomed the work on 'Juvenile Justice', which had already been undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat, and asked that the Secretariat should explore the issues further.

They urged the Commonwealth Secretariat to continue to support member countries in complying with the United Nations Convention and to make further suggestions on juvenile justice at their next meeting.

The ministers welcomed the development of the Commonwealth Legal Information Institute, which is an internet research facility providing free access to legal information from all Commonwealth countries.

They recognised the importance of enacting and enforcing laws for the achievement of gender equality and resolved to play their part in implementing the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality.

The ministers' deliberations covered many important contemporary issues touching on their responsibilities for civil and criminal justice, the progressive development and reform of law, the role of law and legal profession in supporting democracy and good governance, as well as certain areas of international law.

Star channel blackout

FROM PAGE 1

23) in protest against recent increase in charges for subscribing to Star Group channels run by local company MGH and demanding withdrawal of all false cases against our members."

He went on, "We would then suspend nationwide transmission of all pay channels operated under the Star Group (MGH) if they fail to withdraw the additional subscription fees, and criminal charges lodged against some of our members and beg unconditional apology within the next fifteen days"

He announced a series of programmes for demonstration to realise their demands. These included a human chain at the city's Muktangan tomorrow to press for 'arrest of the miscreants and begin prosecution'.

Later, memorandums would be submitted to the ministries of information and home on Thursday for speedy acceptance of their demands, he said.

They also demanded that from now on, all Value Added Tax (VAT) bills

would be paid directly by the cable operators themselves.

COAB STATEMENT

The Cable Operator Association of Bangladesh (COAB) in a press release yesterday strongly protested a recent decision by a leading cable channel operator to stop transmission of certain channels.

COAB leaders said the Nationwide Communication Ltd (NWCL) without any prior notice on October 21 suspended transmission of pay channels to different cable network operators like Chittagong Multi Channel Ltd, Mirpur Digital, Star Trek and Technovision.

They alleged that the NWCL authorities also threatened to shut down cable operation of those who continue to transmit channels operated under Star Group, such as Star Movies, Star Sports, Star World, Star Plus and Star Gold.

The COAB said it would however continue to relay channels like National Geography, The History Channel and HBO.

Bird flu found in Britain

FROM PAGE 16

farmer who died of bird flu had also contracted the disease, but they said the virus had not mutated and still cannot pass easily among humans.

The 48-year-old farmer -- the 61st human victim of the virus worldwide since late 2003 -- died after slaughtering and eating sick chicken.

"In this case the boy may have contracted the disease from the area where the chicken was dying. The boy had close contact with the virus (from being around sick chickens) and possibly from handling the birds' excrement," Siriraj Hospital director Prasad Watanapasa said.

Doctors said the boy was expected to recover but would remain in hospital for observation for three weeks.

In Romania, officials said a suspected new case of bird flu had been detected in the northeast of the country, only hours after assurances that the outbreak of the deadly H5N1 virus had been contained to two locations in the southeast.

Even as governments tried to calm people, fears spread.

Stocks of flu vaccines in Spanish chemists "are being exhausted", the Spanish general public health administration said.

In France, a national federation of supermarket chains said sales of poultry had dropped 20 percent in five days.

The World Health Organisation (WTO) warned against "scaremongering" but it also said each additional human case was making it easier to develop human-to-human transmission.

"While neither the timing nor the severity of the next pandemic can be predicted, the probability that a pandemic will occur has increased," it said.

The European Commission has formally banned imports of pet birds and feathers from nearly all Russian territory in an emergency procedure after the discovery of the disease south of Moscow this week.

The Czech Ministry of Agriculture announced a ban on the sale of chickens in markets and exhibitions or sale of other birds in public places.

Norway ordered all poultry in the south of the country to be placed indoors to prevent contact with wild birds. Switzerland issued a similar order for the entire country.

Ukraine's parliament slapped a six-month ban on imports of poultry. Nepal banned imports of European poultry. Bangladesh formed a bird flu taskforce.

Migratory birds believed to be carriers may next take the virus to Africa, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said this week, warning that the continent would be an "ideal breeding ground" because of close contact between people and animals.

Half-trained cops

FROM PAGE