Hajj flight stalemate

FROM PAGE 20

being indifferent to resolving the crisis.

After November 8 emergency meeting of its central executive body, the HAAB held an extra-ordinary general meeting till late last night and decided to surrender licences and demand immediate resignation of the state ministers for civil aviation and religious affairs for 'trying to evade responsibility'.

ATAB Secretary General Golam Mustafa also blamed the Hajj flight crisis on the government's negligence and unrealistic fare hike by foreign airlines.

Assistant private secretary to State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Nasir told The Daily Star last night that the minister, who returned from Mount Elizabeth Hospital, Singapore last night after having treatment for acute headache, will have to take rest for 10 more days.

Earlier State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan had told The Daily Star that Hajj is mandatory only for the people who could afford the costs and not for others.

On the possibility of government intervention in lowering the fare demanded by the foreign airlines, the minister said, "They (foreign airlines) appears to be an united front and are asking for high fares in chorus. I can't comment now whether the government will intervene or not."

Amidst such uncertainty, most of the Bangladeshi pilgrims fear that they would not be able to perform Hajj this time as the last date for depositing Muallim fees to Saudi government expires on November 20 and the agencies would no longer be able to rent homes for them in Saudi Arabia after a week.

Chittagong City Corporation Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury said, "The government of India, where majority of the population are Hindu, reduced the fare for the pilgrimage to $400 from $500, whereas being a predominantly Muslim country we are doing the opposite."

He was addressing a protest rally organised by the association of Hajj agencies in front of the Chittagong Press Club yesterday.

Khaleda to have busy

FROM PAGE 1

Cooperation who will stay at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel during the summit.

Prime ministers (PM) of India and Pakistan, president of Sri Lanka, and king of Nepal will fly to Dhaka in special flights.

Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup will be the first to reach Dhaka. He is due at the ZIA at 2:45pm.

Pakistan PM Shaukat Aziz arrives at 3:45pm while King of Nepal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev will reach the airport at 5:30pm.

Indian PM Dr Manmohan Singh will reach Dhaka an hour later.

President of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom is scheduled to arrive at 10:35pm.

Sri Lanka President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga will be the last one to enter the capital. She arrives at 12:30 tonight.

The VVIPs will be presented floral bouquets and given guard of honour after their landing.

Gun salute will be heralded for the Saarc leaders who will arrive before the sunset.

The government has taken special security measures in Dhaka especially at the ZIA and adjacent areas and the roads from the airport to Sheraton Hotel to ensure foolproof security for the Saarc heads of state and government.

Special Security Force and President's Guard Regiment will be responsible for security of the VVIPs as about 40,000 security men have been tasked with maintaining overall security during the summit.

All incoming and outgoing flights will be delayed for 45 minutes during arrival of the VVIPs. Flights scheduled between 15 minutes before the Saarc leaders' landing and 30 minutes after will be rescheduled.

'Orange' security alert, one notch down from the top, has been announced at the ZIA with effect from 00:01 hours today to continue till 24:00 hours of Monday.

The ZIA authorities will not allow into the airport area visitors and those who might go to see off or receive passengers during the period.

Air passengers, however, will have no difficulties in taking their flights from Dhaka between November 11 and 14.

People accompanying a passenger to see off will not have any access to the area beyond the airport entry crossing. Only drivers will be allowed to take passengers to the driveway but [they] will have to leave after dropping the passengers.

Besides, the passengers will have to show all the travel documents and confirmed tickets at the airport entry crossing.

For an arriving passenger, a driver will be allowed to drive a car to the parking lot to pick him up. In that case, the driver has to provide the name of the passenger, the flight number and other information.

Both sides of the road from the ZIA to Dhaka Sheraton Hotel will remain closed for public until all the Saarc leaders reach the hotel.

Meanwhile, special gate has been built and both sides of the road from the ZIA to Sheraton Hotel have been decorated.

The hotel authorities have completed all preparation and decorated it on this occasion.

FMs agree

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

India vehemently opposed the proposal placed by Pakistan and supported by the five other Saarc members to award an observer's status in the regional forum to China, a highly placed source told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

India even refused to refer the matter to the regional heads of state and government, as the six other foreign ministers wanted, the source added.

However, all the seven foreign ministers agreed in principle to grant Saarc membership to Afghanistan, which had applied for it to the current Saarc chair, Pakistan.

If the Council of Ministers confirms the decision at its formal meeting today, it will then be placed for approval to the summit leaders on November 12-13. Sources said if the heads of state and government endorse the proposal, the next Saarc summit in India might grant Afghanistan the membership.

And if Afghanistan finally becomes a member of the forum, the charter and logo of Saarc will need to be changed, which seems time consuming, the source noted.

Earlier, while briefing journalists at Sonargaon Hotel media centre, Additional Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh AHM Moniruzzaman said the Saarc Standing Committee comprising the foreign secretaries in its meeting there yesterday did not reach any agreement about Afghanistan's membership or China's observer status.

He said a proposal has been made by a member state to include Afghanistan as the eighth member of Saarc, but Kabul has not sent any official letter yet seeking the membership. China, on the other hand, has submitted a letter requesting for the status of an observer or a dialogue partner of Saarc, he added.

Moniruzzaman said there is no modality or guideline in the Saarc charter regarding co-opting new member or awarding observer's status to any country. "So, right now it's not possible to give membership or observer's status to anyone," he added.

He said the charter needs to be amended first for inclusion of a new member and subsequently the logo too has to be changed.

However, he said the Standing Committee members did agree to formulate the criteria and guidelines for awarding the status of observer and dialogue partner to any interested country.

"This matter will be sorted out in a special session of the Standing Committee," he said.

Hiqma chief

FROM PAGE 20

four times in three years including the latest one. This time he was picked up from just outside the premises of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court (CMM) while he was returning home after attending a court.

Sources said the government high-ups had advised the RMP authorities to detain Kawsar after his release was reported in a number of local and national dailies.

"We thought he might pose a threat to national security ahead of the Saarc summit," RMP Commissioner Nayeem Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Why are you arresting me now when I am on bail and didn't do any crime?"a witness quoted Kawsar as asking the police team that went to make the arrest.

Accused in sedition, arms and swindling cases, he was shown arrested under Section 54. He was kept at Rajpara Police Station custody as of filing this report last night.

Kawsar came out on bail from Rajshahi Central Jail on November 2.

CMM Afzal Hossain granted Kawsar an ad interim bail on a security bond of Tk 50,000 and on condition that he would attend the court once in a week. The CMM cited in the bail order that on humanitarian grounds he (Kawsar) was granted bail before Eid-ul-Fitr.

He was arrested for the first time on April 23, 2002 for causing panic among the people. He was out on bail on July 30, 2002. He was held again on September 24, 2002 for 'running an underground party'. Kawsar was implicated in a swindling case but freed on bail on December 21, 2002.

Hannan put on remand again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed the investigation officer (IO) to interrogate Mufti Abdul Hannan, operations commander of the banned Harkatul Jihad's Bangladesh chapter, with caution.

Hannan was placed on a fresh seven-day remand yesterday. This is the seventh time he has been put on remand. Before this he was on remand for 37 days in six phases.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shamsul Alam issued the order when the Detective Branch (DB) of police produced Hannan before the court at 3:00pm on completion of a seven-day remand in the August 17 Rajuk blast case.

Hannan was shown arrested on November 3 in the case filed for the blasts near the traffic island in front of the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkho (Rajuk) Bhaban. Later, he was placed on seven-day remand for interrogation.

"I could not stand and my left hand is numb. Sometimes, I vomit due to severe headache. Moreover, I am in police custody for over 40 days," Hannan told the court when he was asked about his right of private defence without any lawyers.

The DB Inspector Abdur Razzak's forwarding report placed before the court said Hannan was directly involved in the blast in the Rajuk Bhaban area and he needs to be quizzed to find out vital clues to the blasts and the whereabouts of his accomplices.

Advocate Khorshed Alam, general secretary of Dhaka Bar Association, asked the general recording officer (GRO) about the legality of the number of days on remand for Hannan. But the GRO replied the IO had gathered important information from him about the August 17 bomb blasts.

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members took Hannan, wearing a helmet and a bulletproof vest, to the court where the hearing on the remand prayer took place.

Mufti Hannan was arrested at Madhya Badda in Dhaka on October 1 after hiding for several years. He was later shown arrested in three bomb blast cases filed with Tejgaon, Ramna and Motijheel police stations.

Monga

FROM PAGE 20

People have seen three terms of BNP and AL governments after stepping into democracy in 1991 and they will judge who can run the country better, she said.

"If the people voted the Awami League to power again, monga must be eliminated," she assured the people of the monga-hit northern region.

The AL chief said the coalition government could not do anything for the welfare of the people except presenting corruption, terrorism and monga like situation.

She criticised the ministers of the alliance government for their rampant corruption. "The World Bank has withdrawn its fund due to corruption...it is very unfortunate for us," she added.

Hasina said people will recover the money looted by the ministers. She also accused the government of the August 17 serial bomb blasts.

Foreign ministers

FROM PAGE 1

M Kasuri of Pakistan, Anura Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka and State Minister for External Affairs of India E Ahmed.

The Council of Ministers at today's meeting will discuss matters related to regional cooperation on poverty alleviation, enforcement of Safta as per schedule, economic integration of South Asia, and the ratification of Additional Protocol to the Saarc Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism,

The meeting will review the progress of Saarc Social Charter, Saarc Visa Exemption Scheme, the expansion of visa categories from present 23, entry of new members in Saarc, granting of observer and dialogue partner status to the interested countries.

The foreign ministers will discuss the Saarc secretary general's periodic analytical reports with comments and recommendations of the standing committee, the report of the 31st session of the standing committee and the reports of various ministerial meetings.

They will also review the progress on the ratification and implementation of Saarc conventions and instruments, the conferment of the Saarc Youth Award 2003 and consideration of evolving a vision for the third decade of Saarc.

The Council of Ministers will finalise the draft of the provisional agenda for the 13th summit of heads of state and government and the draft of the Dhaka Declaration.

It will also consider the venue and dates for the 27th session of the Council of Ministers as well as the 14th Saarc Summit

Earlier, the Saarc foreign ministers called on the Bangladesh foreign minister separately at Sheraton Hotel and discussed the Saarc issues, bilateral cooperation as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

Enayetullah Khan

FROM PAGE 1

pancreas early this year.

He had been convalescing at his daughter's home in Toronto, but was rushed to Toronto General Hospital earlier in the week after developing post-surgical infection. He breathed his last at the hospital at 9:23am Bangladesh time yesterday.

Popularly known as Mintoo Bhai in journalist community, Enayetullah Khan left behind his wife, a daughter, two sons and two grandchildren.

His body is expected to reach Dhaka in four days, family sources said.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Information Minister M Shamsul Islam expressed deep shock at the death of Enayetullah Khan.

Born on May 25, 1939, Enayetullah was the third son of the late Justice Abdul Jabbar Khan, a former speaker of the Pakistan National Assembly.

His siblings include journalist Sadeq Khan, the late poet and bureaucrat Abu Zafar Obaidullah Khan, politician Rashed Khan Menon, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman and New Age Managing Director Shahidullah Khan.

Having begun his career as a journalist as a cub reporter for the then Pakistan Observer in 1959, Enayetullah Khan founded the weekly Holiday in August 1965, before taking over as editor of the paper in 1966. He founded the daily New Age as its editor and publisher in June 2003.

He was also the editor of the Bangladesh Times during 1975-77.

In his chequered career, Enayetullah Khan also served as a minister in 1977-78 and as ambassador to China, North Korea, Cambodia and Myanmar between 1984-89.

Known for his democratic activism, Enayetullah Khan was at the forefront of the Buddhijibi Nidhan Tathyanusandhan Committee instituted on December 18, 1971 to investigate murders of intellectuals in the terminal days of the War of Independence by the Al-Badr and Al-Shams, the assassination wings of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Enayetullah Khan was also an organiser of the Civil Liberties and Legal Aid Committee and the Famine Resistance Committee in 1974, the Farakka March Committee led by Moulana Bhasani in 1976 and the Committee Against Communalism in 1981.

Enayetullah Khan obtained master's degree in philosophy from Dhaka University. During his student life, he was general secretary of Ananda Mohan College Students Union in Mymensingh, member of the Dhaka University Students Union in 1958-59 and vice-president of Dhaka Hall (now Shahidullah Hall) Students Union in 1959-60.

He was president of the Jatiya Press Club in 1973-76 and the Dhaka Club in 1984-85.

MORE CONDOLENCES

Journalist community, ministers, political organisations, NGOs and human rights organisations have condoled the death of veteran journalist Enayetullah Khan.

Dhaka Union of Journalists (BFUJ) President Gias Kamal Chowdhury and Secretary General Ruhul Amin Gazi, Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) President Elahi Newaz Khan and General Secretary Sardar Farid Ahmed, and Jatiya Press Club President Reazuddin Ahmed and General Secretary Shawkat Mahmud in separate messages expressed deep shock at his death.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Education Minister Osman Farruk, Jute and Textiles Minister Shajahan Siraj, Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam, Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman, Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, daily Ittefaq Editor Anwar Hossain Manju. Communist Party of Bangladesh and Workers Party leaders also condoled the death of the New Age editor.

They paid rich tribute to the memory of Enayetullah Khan and recalled his contributions in the fields of journalism, education and social welfare.

Other organisations include Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), Forum of Environment Journalists of Bangladesh, Dhaka University Journalists' Association, Press Institute of Bangladesh, Karmajibi Nari, Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights, Centre for Sustainable Development, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri.

The Union of New Age Journalists has also expressed deep shock at the death of Enayetullah Khan. The Union leaders prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and wished that the members of the bereaved family gets strength to overcome the shock.

Passing away

FROM PAGE 1

views, he was an icon for us who took up journalism as a profession.

The passing away of Enayetullah Khan, lovingly called "Minto Bhai" by almost everybody who knew him, marks the demise of one of the most respected journalists in the country, a respect he earned by his total commitment to the profession and by his unrelenting fight for press freedom. Whatever his liking for any particular regime, and whosoever he wrote in favour of, on the issue of press freedom and against all forms of censorship he would never hesitate to raise his voice even if it meant hurting those he supported. During the height of his professional career, which extended over four decades, he exuded an unmatched charisma that made him such a unique personality in our profession. Always the centre of conversation, one had to listen to him intently even if one disagreed with him utterly. He never shied away from taking up strong political positions in his weekly column that endeared him to many and made many others his detractors. But he really did not care. He had things to say, which he said without hesitation or consideration as to who liked it or not.

He first distinguished himself as the young editor of weekly Holiday in the mid-sixties when, in his late twenties, he stunned his readers by his uncompromising and bold stand against the dictatorship of Pakistan's "Iron Man", Gen. Ayub Khan. He joined our Liberation War and played a leading part, during the initial days of our freedom, in investigating the killings of intellectuals by Pakistani army and their local collaborators. Unfortunately his work remained unfinished.

After that we saw him constantly raising his voice against all forms of repressive measures during all the successive regimes in Bangladesh. Even from his sickbed in Ottawa, which tragically turned out to be the last few weeks of his life, he raised his voice against a new form of oppression and wrote some of his most powerful pieces against religious fundamentalism and terrorism.

His last significant contribution to English language journalism in Bangladesh is to give the nation a high quality English daily, New Age, which has already made its mark in the country.

On a personal level, I admired him greatly for his commitment to journalism. I briefly worked under his editorship in The Bangladesh Times in the mid-seventies. His editorial briefings were always precise, clear and to the point. I admired his knowledge of subjects and his ability to combine multiple ideas and weave them into a cohesive editorial. His editing skills were superb. He was always accessible, frank and direct. With his passing we lose a great leader of our profession, one to whom we could turn to when in need of guidance and moral support. Now that guiding light is gone.

May his soul rest in peace.

Regional power

FROM PAGE 1

Maldives as part of promoting regional energy co-operation.

The Saarc ministerial meeting decided to examine and conduct a study to determine the viability, economic benefits and cost of such a regional grid.

Besides, the Islamabad meeting also discussed the scope of regional co-operation in hydroelectric power and natural gas.

According to a study carried out by multilateral donor agency--the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the South Asian region has a hydroelectricity potential of between 70,000 and 80,000MW.

Of this, Nepal has a potential of 43,000 MW, Bhutan has 20,000 MW and the Indian State of Assam has 10,000 MW hydroelectricity potential.

But due to lack of proper initiative, this huge potential for energy co-operation remained untapped except a nominal bilateral electricity trade between India and Bhutan and India and Nepal.

Under the proposed regional power grid, all the electricity transmission systems of the Saarc member countries will be connected with each other's national grid to share the region's energy resources.

The proposed grid will also create an opportunity to promote inter-regional electricity trade among the member nations.

"Its main benefit will be increased reliability and security in the power system of the Saarc countries," said an official of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources of Bangladesh.

The proposed grid will link Pakistan's capital Islamabad with Agartala, the capital of the eastern Indian state of Tripura, covering Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The official said Bangladesh, however, favours an immediate commencement of regional grid connecting transmission network of four close-bordering countries--Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan.

He said only 40-km transmission line will be required to install among the four countries to initially take off the regional grid.

The energy ministers' meeting in Islamabad also recommended sharing of each other's experience and expertise in the power and energy sectors.

As a follow up, a regional workshop on rural electrification will be held during the Saarc summit in Dhaka.

Safma for visa-free

FROM PAGE 1

is still to be implemented, they said.

Speaking as chief guest at the conference, Information Minister M Shamsul Islam said Bangladesh is taking steps towards this end but this is an issue that needs a consensus among all the Saarc countries.

"I think the visa regime for bonafide journalists on professional visits should be liberalised as far as possible," he noted.

South Asian Free Media Association (Safma) organised the three-day Saarc journalists conference styled 'Journalists Beyond Frontiers' being held at a city hotel.

The information minister said freedom of movement of journalists is a corollary to press freedom.

Denial of free movement to journalists amounts to circumscribing press freedom. This should be particularly emphasised in respect of movement of journalists within the Saarc countries, he felt.

Moreover, media products of Saarc countries, including TV programmes, should also be allowed free movement within the region. This will go a long way in removing the existing information gap, the minister said.

In his keynote address, Dr Muhammad Yunus, managing director of Grameen Bank, said, "Saarc is our future. Getting people together is the best way to overcome any distrust ...If we can't overcome poverty, there is no way to achieve other things. We have to remove the things that create poverty."

Reazuddin Ahmed, president of Safma, said the organisation is lobbying for inclusion of a provision on free movement of journalists in the Saarc states in the declaration of the Dhaka summit. "We tried for this in the Islamabad and Kathmandu summits but we could not succeed."

Imtiaz Alam, secretary general of Safma, also stressed free movement of journalists within the region.

Gopal Prasad Thapaliya of Nepal said journalists in Nepal are fighting for restoration of democracy in the country. They are facing harassment for their views on human rights, press freedom and other issues but the authorities do not allow those to be exposed.

Zahiduzzaman Faruque, secretary general of Safma Bangladesh, M Ziauddin of Pakistan, Lakshman Gunasekera of Sri Lanka and KK Katyal of India, among others, spoke at the inaugural session of the conference.

Footpaths

FROM PAGE 20

always try to keep the footpaths free. But others including police are also involved in the matter. Footpaths are not fully freed from grabbers considering the social perspective."

Urban expert Prof Nazrul Islam said, "Pavements should be kept free for pedestrians. But there has to be alternative arrangements for the vendors as thousands of families depend on them for livelihood."

Firoz Al Mujahid, deputy commissioner (Traffic-north) of DMP said, " We always try to keep footpath and footover bridges clean." It is the responsibility of not only police but also of the DCC, he added.

Chief Estate Officer of the DCC Abu Taleb said, "We evict grabbers from footpaths many times. But it does not last long due to lack of police vigilance. If police act properly, it is possible to keep the footpaths free permanently."

57 killed

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let him expect the worst."

Jordan is one of two Arab countries that have signed peace treaties with Israel. It helped the United States in the war on Iraq.

Jordan had previously been spared major attacks, despite its proximity to Iraq and popularity as a tourist destination, but the authorities were braced for trouble.

"The initial investigations so far show that the blasts that caused the deaths of 57 people and wounded 110 people were executed by explosive devices and suicide bombings," a Jordanian cabinet statement said.

The violence in Iraq has forced many UN agencies and private relief groups to relocate to Amman, which also hosts about 400,000 Iraqis who have fled the mayhem, bringing valuable investment to the country.

Baghdad

FROM PAGE 20

some of the wounded died while we were taking them to hospital."

Six more people died and 13 were wounded when a suicide driver detonated a car bomb outside an Iraqi army recruitment centre in Tikrit, Saddam's home town in the north of the country, police said.

Two more civilians were killed an hour later in the same spot when another bomb exploded, police added.

(Reuters, AFP)

Ceramic, dairy goods

FROM PAGE 1

The Indian Express report said India is "planning to accord special concessions to Bangladesh in Safta and Bimstec" trade treaties as part of a commitment to provide it increased market access. The report quoted Indian Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar as saying that Indian Commerce Minister Kamal Nath informed him about the intention last month.

Duty-free access to ceramics, dairy products, leather footwear, and marble and plastic products was part of Bangladesh's request to India while negotiating under the South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta). Dhaka also sought abolition of specific duties on garment and textile goods.

New Delhi, the report said, is also considering Bangladesh's request for removing non-tariff barriers like mandatory testing requirements for goods like food, textiles and leather, and labelling requirements for jute bags.

India, as short-term measures, will be assessing the Bangladesh College of Textile Technology and the National Institute for Textile Testing, Research and Development for accreditation, the daily said.

New Delhi hopes these measures will address Dhaka's concerns over the issues it raised as pre-conditions for allowing a natural gas pipeline from Myanmar through its territory to India.

Dhaka insisted on New Delhi allowing electricity import from Bhutan and Nepal through the Indian power grid and trade corridors between Bangladesh and the two Himalayan countries through India, and also reducing trade imbalance between India and Bangladesh as conditions for the proposed tripartite gas pipeline.

India in the past made it clear that it would not accept any bilateral precondition for the pipeline project but could consider trade concessions to Dhaka.

CHANGES TO DRAFT TAX AGREEMENT

The Indian cabinet yesterday approved some minor changes in the text of the Saarc multilateral agreement on avoiding double taxation and promoting mutual administrative assistance in tax matters. "The amendments in the agreement will be considered and signed at the Saarc meeting in Dhaka," Indian Finance Minister P Chidambaram told reporters after the cabinet meeting.

He said the cabinet earlier had approved in principle the draft agreement in February.

The accord would promote mutual administrative assistance and cooperation in tax matters among Saarc countries and provide tax relief to students and teachers pursuing academic interests.

Safta tops agenda

FROM PAGE 1

He said the committee reviewed the progress of negotiations by the expert committee on Safta and will table the review at the Saarc foreign ministers' meeting slated for today.

The expert committee will meet in Kathmandu on November 29 to December 1 to sort out the disagreements on three contentious points -- rules of origin, lists of sensitive products and compensation for revenue loss to the least developed countries (LDCs).

Of the seven Saarc countries, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives are considered as LDCs, and India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as developing countries. The Standing Committee has decided to ask the expert committee to address the disagreements at its Kathmandu meeting in order to expedite the implementation process of Safta.

The Saarc foreign secretaries will also sit in a special session after the summit on Safta implementation, Moniruzzaman said, adding the Saarc Council of Ministers might also seek directions from the Saarc leaders for quick resolution of the differences among the Saarc countries relating to the umbrella agreement.

The Standing Committee decided to set up a South Asian Development Fund (SADF) containing a number of windows to deal with poverty alleviation, problems of disabled persons and media development.

The committee resolved to expand the size of the fund, which now comprises of only $5 million. Moniruzzaman said the Saarc finance ministers will meet after the summit to prepare guidelines for contributing to the SADF by the member countries as well as for its utilisation. India has already committed $100 million for poverty alleviation projects in the Saarc countries.

The Standing Committee meeting yesterday also agreed with India's offer to set up a Saarc Disaster Management Centre. Besides, the meeting discussed the memorandum of understanding on forming a Saarc-Japan Special Fund and strengthening the Saarc Secretariat in Kathmandu.

Pak PM's wife

FROM PAGE 20

able to attend the programme. The school authority has prepared the programme under the supervision of Special Security Force (SSF), school sources said.

The school authority has also invited two of the ex-teachers to attend the programme. They also contacted a few classmates of Rukhsana who would not be able to join her in the programme as they are staying in different countries.

Nasrin Kasouri, wife of the foreign minister of Pakistan, assigned officers of Pakistan high commission, Director General Dilara Hafiz of education board of secondary and higher secondary of Dhaka, members of Holy Cross School committee and teachers will also attend the programme.

The school authority told The Daily Star that they are honoured to have their former student visiting them and they take pride as she remembers her former school days.

Charge sheets

FROM PAGE 20

Shahidullah, who is in Rajshahi jail, and JMB cadres Delwar Hossain Mithu, Hafizur Rahman, and Bangla Bhai associates Shihab and Abdul Matin, who are in Natore jail.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Natore Sadar Police Station and investigating officer (IO) of the blasts case Syed Emdadul Haque said in the charge sheet filed under the Explosive Substances Act of 1908 that the arrestees named Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai as the masterminds behind the blasts.

Abdul Awal, who evaded arrest during a police raid on the Mirpara den of the militants in Natore on September 16 night, supervised the blasts in Natore at the direction of Rahman and Bangla Bhai, the charge sheet said.

Natore police arrested Delwar, Hafizur, Shihab and Matin during the raid with huge bomb-making materials and books on jihad.

UNB adds: Of the six charge sheeted accused in Bogra, Abdur Razzak is in custody while the five others remain fugitive.

In Chapainawabganj, ten persons were charge sheeted, of whom Abul Kashem, Shahadat Hossain, Abdullah Al Mamoon, Shahidullah and Tufan are in custody.

In the Chandpur charge sheet, police accused 14 JMB activists, of whom five are in custody.

In Cox's Bazar, charge sheet was submitted against six persons.

Khan, Ahamed

FROM PAGE 20

external affairs arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning to represent India at the Saarc Council of Ministers' meeting in the build-up to the 13th Saarc Summit on November 12-13.

He had to cut short his visit to Sudan to come to Dhaka as K Natwar Singh was relieved of his duties as external affairs minister and made a minister without portfolio after his name cropped up in the Volcker Committee report on the UN's Oil-for-Food Programme scam.

Meanwhile, official sources said trade imbalance, sharing of common river waters and security issues are expected to be high on the agenda for the meeting between Manmohan and Khaleda on the sidelines of the summit.

They said the two leaders might also discuss ways to co-ordinate their efforts in the global fight against terrorism, given the fact that the entire south Asian region was grappling with the scourge.

BNP lawmaker's

FROM PAGE 20

Earlier, a High Court (HC) bench asked Maruf to appear before the sessions judge's court in Chittagong as he sought bail on October 24.

However, the HC order did not specify which court--district or metropolitan sessions judge--he should surrender to, sources said.

Judge Abdur Rahman asked Maruf's lawyers to bring a revised HC order and appear before the correct court by December 1 as Public Prosecutor Kafiluddin Chowdhury informed the judge that the matter was the jurisdiction of the metropolitan sessions judge's court and not his.

The judge also ordered the police not to arrest or harass Maruf during the period, sources said.

Maruf arrived at the court in the Pajero jeep of his brother ruling BNP lawmaker Sarwar Jamal Nizam.

Later, sensing the presence of reporters and photographers, Maruf left the court premises secretly by another vehicle at around 1:30pm.

When contacted over telephone, Sarwar told The Daily Star that the Pajero was his private vehicle and that his family members have the right to use it.

"My son was actually using the jeep at the time and he went to the court to discuss the case with the lawyers," he said, adding, "I don't see any problem if my brother was using the vehicle too."