

Khan, Ahamed talk bilateral issues

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian State Minister for External Affairs E Ahamed yesterday met Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan and discussed bilateral issues as well as matters relating to Saarc.

Official sources said the two ministers also talked about the agenda for the meeting likely to be held on November 13 between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Dr Manmohan Singh.

Morshed said, "We have discussed various bilateral concerns and the issues that might come up at the Saarc Summit."

E Ahamed, however, did not say anything about the meeting.

The Indian state minister for

57 killed in Jordan suicide bombing

REUTERS, Amman

The al-Qaeda group led by America's deadliest foe in Iraq yesterday claimed bombings that ripped through luxury hotels in Jordan's capital and killed 57 people.

In Wednesday night's closely synchronized attacks, two bombs exploded while crowds were celebrating weddings, leaving blood and destruction at Amman's Grand Hyatt and the nearby Radisson SAS. A third blast targeted a Days Inn hotel.

al-Qaeda in Iraq, led by Jordanian

militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, said in a statement on an Islamist website that "a group of our best lions" had carried out the attacks.

"Some hotels were chosen which the Jordanian despot had turned into a backyard for the enemies of the faith, the Jews and crusaders," said the message in a reference to King Abdullah. Its authenticity could not be verified.

The United States has put a \$25 million bounty on Zarqawi, who comes from a town north of Amman. Police said they thought the blasts

were the work of suicide bombers. Simultaneous attacks are an al-Qaeda hallmark and US officials said they also suspected the network.

King Abdullah blamed a "deviant and misled group." While Foreign Minister Farouq Kasrawi said the attacks would not alter the policies of the kingdom, which is a close US ally.

al-Qaeda in Iraq's statement said: "Let the tyrant of Amman know that his protection...for the Jews has become a target for the Mujahideen and their attacks, and

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JAMAL UDDIN ABDUCTION BNP lawmaker's brother appears before wrong court for bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Maruf Nizam, one of the suspected masterminds behind the sensational abduction of business magnate Jamal Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, wrongly appeared before a Chittagong court yesterday to surrender and seek bail.

Maruf appeared before the court of District Sessions Judge Abdur Rahman Patwary instead of the court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge AKM Anwar Hossain as the abduction case was filed with the Chandgaon Police Station of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, sources said.

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Pak PM's wife to visit Holy Cross School tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rukhsana Aziz, the wife of Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, is due to visit the Holy Cross School tomorrow at 4:30pm, school authorities said.

Rukhsana was a student of Holy Cross School till 1967. She left for Pakistan before the Liberation War in 1971.

A brief cultural programme, with a small number of senior students performing, will be held at the school in her honour.

As the school remains closed till November 14 for the 13th Saarc Summit, all the students will not be

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HAIJ FLIGHT STALEMATE

Agencies give govt 5-day ultimatum

REAZ AHMAD

Giving the government a five-day deadline for resolving the stalemate over Hajj flights, 363 Hajj agencies, responsible for arranging the religious journey to Makkah for 56,000 prospective pilgrims, yesterday decided to surrender their licences on November 15.

The decision taken by the Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB) came while the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB)

was holding a meeting with the foreign airlines last night in a last-ditch attempt to bring down this year's highly inflated Hajj flight fare of \$1,350 per passenger.

Meanwhile in Chittagong, Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday issued a seven-day ultimatum for the government to arrange Hajj flights for thousands of non-ballottee pilgrims at fair fare.

The craft-crunched state-run Biman Bangladesh Airlines has already expressed its inability to fly

more than 4,000 ballottee pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for January 9, 2006 Hajj while the foreign airlines have asked for a highly inflated fare of \$1,350, compared to only \$950 of Biman.

As the ministries of civil aviation and religious affairs have yet to take any initiative to get airplanes at cheaper fare for the overwhelming majority of 56,000 people intending to make Hajj, HAAB, ATAB and various other organisations of Hajjis accuse the government of

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Monga to go if AL voted to power Promises Hasina

BDNEWS, Lalmonirhat

Awami League (AL) President and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged people to vote for the AL in the next general elections to save the country from corruption and terrorism.

"The alliance government has established the rule of corruption and terrorism instead of democracy," she said while addressing a number of public meetings in Lalmonirhat district yesterday.

Hasina said the ruling party leaders are busy looting the wealth of the country, leaving thousands people in starvation.

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PHOTO: STAR

Army men check a sewer near Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, the main venue of the Saarc Summit, as part of the heightened security measures in the capital yesterday.

WELCOME TO SAARC LEADERS

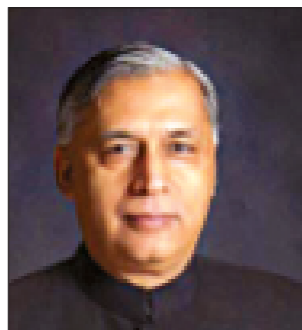


MANMOHAN SINGH
Prime minister, India

India's fourteenth Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh is rightly acclaimed as a thinker and a scholar. He is well regarded for his diligence and his academic approach to work, as well as his accessibility and his unassuming demeanour.

Dr Singh was born on September 26, 1932, in a village in the Punjab province of undivided India. He completed his Matriculation examinations from the Panjab University in 1948. His academic career took him from Punjab to the University of Cambridge, UK, where he earned a first class

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SHAUKAT AZIZ
Prime minister, Pakistan

Born in Karachi on March 6 in 1949, he did his early education at Saint Patrick's School in Karachi and Abbottabad Public School and graduate (B.Sc) in 1967 from Gordon College, Rawalpindi. He obtained MBA degree in 1969 from Institute of Business Administration, University of Karachi.

Started his career in 1969 when he joined Citibank, Karachi. Moved overseas in 1975 and has since served in several countries including the Philippines, Jordan, Greece, USA, UK, Malaysia, Singapore and Saudi Arabia. His assignments included head of

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CHANDRIKA BANDARANAIKE KUMARATUNGA
President, Sri Lanka

President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga was born to one of Sri Lanka's most distinguished families on June 29 in 1945. Her father, SWRD Bandaranaike, was a senior Minister of the government at the time of her birth. He was later to become the Prime Minister of the country, while her mother, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was to become the world's first woman Prime Minister in 1961.

President Kumaratunga had her early education at St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo and at the Aquinas University

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GYANENDRA BIR BIKRAM SHAH DEV
King, Nepal

King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal was born on July 7 in 1947 Kathmandu, has been the King of Nepal since June 2001. King Gyanendra is son of His late Majesty King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah and Her late Royal Highness Crown Princess Indra Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah.

As the second son of Prince (later king) Mahendra, the infant Gyanendra was declared king for two months (1950/1951) when the rest of his family was in exile in India, but was not internationally recognised. His grandfather

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LYONPO SANGAY NGEDUP
Prime minister, Bhutan

Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup is Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture in Bhutan. In Dzongkha word Lyonpo means "Minister".

Sangay Ngedup was born in 1953 at Nobgang village in Punakha. He is the second eldest son in a family of two brothers and five sisters. Four of his sisters are the Queens of Bhutan. He graduated from Dr Graham's Homes in Kalimpong, India, and completed his tertiary education at the St Stephen's College in New Delhi, India. In 1976 he joined the Bhutanese foreign service, and attended diplomatic

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MAUMOON ABDUL GAYOOM
President, Maldives

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom is, in both origin and style, very much a man of the people. He has been the president of the Republic of Maldives since November 11, 1978, having succeeded Ibrahim Nasir.

He was first appointed Minister of Transport in 1977 and then in November 1978 was nominated as Presidential Candidate by the Citizens' Majlis, winning a record 92.9% of the popular vote in the referendum which confirmed him as the undoubted choice of the people. He assumed office on November 11 of the same year

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Pedestrians get back footpaths for a change

DCC fears pavement grabbing again after summit

ABDUL KADER

Pavements in the capital have got back their original look with the eviction of illegal occupants as part of beautification as well as security on the occasion of the Saarc Summit that begins tomorrow.

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) sources however pointed out that grabbers will again occupy the footpaths as usual just after the summit to earn a lot by 'selling' those to vendors.

The illegal occupants were evicted by November 6, and this has come as a big blow to them, causing losses of millions of taka to vendors and toll collectors including police and ruling alliance influential people.

The capital has 163-km footpaths and about 2 lakh vendors are engaged in small business on those, DCC estimates said.

Vendors themselves don't dare to

occupy the pavements, rather influential people are behind the scene. But they always remain out of reach and earn a lot from the vendors.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and DCC officials said keeping the pavements free for pedestrians depends on the will of those in power. If they want to keep those free round the year, none would dare to occupy those. Police alone cannot do this.

Explaining the situation, a senior DCC official said, "Nothing happens in the city without the knowledge of government high-ups."

There are some influential politicians who carry out political activities with the money they realise from footpath vendors, he said seeking not to be named.

When contacted, DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said, "We

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Hiqma chief Kawsar held again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP) yesterday arrested Shahadat-e Al Hiqma chief Sayed Kawsar Hussain Siddiki Raja, considering him a 'potential threat to national security ahead of the Saarc summit'.

The self-styled head of the banned Islamist outfit had been arrested

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Baghdad restaurant blast kills 35

27 bodies found elsewhere

AGENCIES, Baghdad

A suicide bomber wearing an explosive vest blew himself up in a crowded Baghdad restaurant frequented by the security forces during breakfast yesterday, killing 35 people and wounding at least 25 more, police said.

The bodies of 27 people who had been shot in the head were also discovered in open countryside south of the capital.

The grisly discovery of 27 bodies was made in the region of Jassan, near the town of Kut, according to army Colonel Badr al-Basri, who said the victims, whose hands and feet were bound, were dressed in civilians clothes.

"Body parts are all over the place, we

are still collecting them," a police officer at the scene said.

It was one of the biggest attacks in the capital in recent months and came the day after at least six people were killed and 25 wounded by two car bombs in a mainly Shia area of Baghdad.

The police officer said at least four Iraqi police patrols were having their breakfast at the restaurant when the bomber struck. A police explosives expert on the scene said that the bomber was also carrying a bag full of explosives.

"A suicide bomber wearing an explosive vest went into a restaurant," another police official said shortly after the loud blast which could be heard

from several kilometers away, rocking the city shortly after 9:30 am (0630 GMT).

The official said the restaurant, which was crowded with diners, was known to be regularly frequented by Iraqi security forces.

One witness, Khadem Mohammed, said two Iraqi army cars had arrived at the restaurant around 15 minutes before the blast. "It targeted the Iraqi army, police and civilians because the restaurant was full of people," he said.

A police officer who identified himself only as Ahmed said: "We were on patrol... We heard the blast and I was the first one to arrive on the scene. There were 32 dead and

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Charge sheets submitted linking Rahman, Bangla Bhai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Charge sheets were submitted to courts in Natore, Bogra, Chapainawabganj, Chandpur and Cox's Bazar yesterday, accusing Shaikh Abdur Rahman, Bangla Bhai and others in the August 17 serial bomb blasts across the country.

Natore police in its charge sheet accused eight top militants, including most wanted Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman, his son-in-law Abdul Awal Samad and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) operations commander Bangla Bhai, for the four bomb blasts in the town on August 17.

The five other accused are Chapainawabganj JMB leader

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