

## Japanese robot lost in space mission

REUTERS, Tokyo

A miniature robot released by a Japanese space probe to a small asteroid circling the Sun was lost before it was able to land on the asteroid's surface, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) reported yesterday.

Minerva, a 10 cm (3.9 inch) long can-shaped "baby" robot, had been designed to gather information on the Itokawa asteroid as part of a rehearsal ahead of the unmanned Hayabusa probe's own landing on the asteroid Itokawa scheduled for Nov 19.

Minerva's landing was to have been the first attempt by Japan to send information-gathering equipment to an astronomic object outside the Earth.

Equipped with a camera and thermometers, Minerva was meant to hop around Itokawa and send data such as surface temperatures and images back to Earth via Hayabusa, the Kyodo news agency reported.

A previous attempt to land Minerva earlier this month was aborted due to technical problems.

Itokawa, a 600 metre (1,970 feet)-

long asteroid that travels on an orbit that takes it between earth and Mars, is named after Hideo Itokawa, the father of Japan's space exploration programme. It is currently around 290 million km (180 million miles) away from the Earth.

Junichiro Kawaguchi, a professor at JAXA, said scientists had miscalculated the best moment to release Minerva, a task made difficult by Hayabusa's changing altitude over the asteroid.

"It is very disappointing that it did not work out nicely. We found out various things about the asteroid, so we will study the data and hope it will lead to the successful landing of Hayabusa," Kyodo quoted him as saying.

Hayabusa, which was fired into space on May 9, 2003, has been hovering over Itokawa for almost two months.

The space craft is designed to swoop down on the asteroid on two separate occasions and gather samples before returning to Earth.

Scientists hope that by studying samples of the asteroid's surface they will be able learn more about the origins of the universe.

## Experts pin high hopes

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executed, fulfilling the desire and aspiration of the people.

"The decision to give Afghanistan new membership and China, Japan observer status were significant breakthroughs in the Dhaka summit," said Imtiaz Ahmed, a teacher of international relations department at University of Dhaka.

"The symbolic value of Saarc would increase tremendously with the joining of those three countries," he said. The expansion will help the regional body to break free of the logjam, he observed.

Besides, the country has proved that such a high-profile summit could be held even amidst high tension, he said referring to the recent acts of terrorism. Besides, the issue of people's patience is noteworthy as no untoward incidents occurred regarding security measures.

On the question of deliberations, Ahmed said for the first time Saarc has moved from the context of economy to politics and culture. Because, political mindset should be changed before forging any wider economic co-operation, he said.

He said it is not an easy task to bring the area into a free trade regime within a couple of years. It would take even more time for the member states to get rid of political suspicion, he pointed out.

"This summit was more action-oriented than the previous ones as it took a number of tangible steps," said noted economist Atiur Rahman. The desire to make Saarc effective was very much evident and there were some concrete steps as well, he added.

For example, he said, the summit declared formation of a \$300 million fund for poverty alleviation. "The leaders tried to avoid political tension and there was a sense that Saarc is maturing and moving forward," Atiur said.

On launching of South Asia Free Trade Area (Safta), he said the summit could not yet remove dilemma among the leaders over some key issues. It could not give any clear-cut directions about three contentious issues before launching Safta. The issues include negative lists, rules of origin and revenue loss.

Some clear directions, which were widely expected from the leadership, would have given a renewed impetus to the trade negotiations.

He, however, thinks that it would take time to resolve those issues.

He observed that the Saarc is still a government-oriented organisation rather than a people-oriented body. The future leadership should think about making the forum more oriented towards people.

"The summit made it clear that the process of Safta will start from January next but it did not state at what level it

would start," said Mostafizur Rahman, research director of independent think-tank Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

As the leaders gave a green signal, the negotiators will face some pressure to implement Safta, he pointed out.

"That Saarc still exists and [it] has not yet broken up is the only positive thing to have come out of the summit," said Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu.

Otherwise, he said, the summit failed to make any breakthrough both in political and economic sectors. "It was rather a grand gala of the leaders faking smiles," he remarked.

The seven-nation meet could not take any tangible steps towards poverty alleviation. There were also no measures to deal with the issues like terrorism and communalism in the region.

It seems by the way niceties dominated the summit that some very disturbing groups were maintaining careful cease-fire, he commented.

According to him, the Saarc is still an inter-governmental association rather than a true regional association.

"I am hopeful because the leaders spoke on practical grounds," said Saiful Islam president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI). He said the smaller economic issues should be resolved through piece meal basis before launching Safta.

## WHO set to probe bird flu death

AFP, Beijing

World Health Organisation experts will travel this week to the central Chinese province of Hunan to investigate whether bird flu caused the death of a 12-year-old girl and infected two other people, a spokesman said Sunday.

"They will probably be there sometime this week, to join the ongoing investigation into the three pneumonia cases," said Roy Wadia, WHO spokesman in China, quoted by the official Xinhua news agency.

"We do not know how long the investigation will take. So far there are no updates from our side as the work has only just begun."

China has yet to document a case of human bird flu despite several outbreaks of the deadly disease in poultry farms and in migratory populations this year.

However, an outbreak in Hunan in early October coincided with the death of a young girl who became sick with a flu-like disease after reportedly eating a sick chicken.

The girl's brother was also stricken with a mysterious flu-like disease as was a school teacher in the same county. They recovered.

On November 6 the health ministry said it could not rule out bird flu and invited WHO experts to investigate.

All three cases were in Hunan's Xiangtan county.

In a report from Xiangtan later Sunday, Xinhua quoted veterinary and disease control experts as saying the bird flu outbreak in Hunan province is ready to be lifted from quarantine.

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## BSF pushes

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men, were collected from different areas including Delhi.

The ejected people claimed they hailed from Bagerhat and Pirojpur districts, BDR sources said.

The people would be pushed back soon, BDR official Lt Col Jahid Hasan said.

## Indian PM

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lives, Singh said various clues indicated that the bombers had "external linkages" although he did not directly blame Pakistan for the attacks.

The attacks jolted the peace process when India earlier hinted they were carried out by Islamic rebels with links to Pakistan.

## Indo-Pak talks

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partition from Britain in 1947.

India has long-accused Pakistan of aiding militants in their fight against Indian rule in the Muslim-majority territory, a charge Islamabad has denied.

On Saturday, India claimed that infiltration and violence by Muslim militants in Kashmir have not abated even after the devastating Oct. 8 earthquake in the region which killed some 86,000 people, almost all of them on the Pakistani-controlled side of Kashmir. The quake has left millions homeless as the harsh Himalayan winter approaches.

During his meeting with Singh, Aziz said his country is against "all forms of terrorism and is ready to cooperate with any country to combat the menace."

The India-Pakistan peace process received a minor boost after they agreed to open their heavily militarized frontier to exchange relief material, and allow Kashmiris to cross over to visit relatives hit by the quake. Although three border crossings have been opened so far, no one has been allowed to cross because of bureaucratic delays.

## China, Japan

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the Saarc Council of Ministers at its 27th meeting in July 2006.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said the standing committee comprising the foreign secretaries of the Saarc member states will sit early next year in Dhaka to prepare the modalities.

He said the meeting of the Council of Ministers will also be held in Dhaka.

On a question whether the Saarc Charter requires amendment to include new members or accord observer status, Morshed said as per the charter any decision taken by the Saarc leaders is final.

He said Afghanistan will attend the next Saarc summit in India as the eighth member of the South Asian grouping.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Declaration issued yesterday says the heads of state and government have hailed the Afghan membership request and invited the country to be a member, "subject to the completion of formalities."

The summit leaders also "welcomed and agreed in principle with the desire of the Peoples Republic of China and Japan to be associated as observers," the declaration adds.

## Shaukat

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He lamented that for 20 years since its launch the seven-nation forum "has not been able to exploit its full potential."

"This is a region mired in conflicts... It's not only the India-Pakistan conflict, but there are other dimensions and problems," he told the journalists.

Shaukat stressed the need for conflict resolution, saying, "We want to move from conflict management to conflict resolution."

The Pakistan Prime Minister observed that Kashmir remained the "core issue" and there would not be any durable peace in the region without removing the bone of contention between India and Pakistan.

"We want a sustainable solution to the Kashmir problem," he said.

Referring to his talks with Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of the Saarc Summit, he said it was "very productive" and it covered some of the bilateral issues.

"We are building ties with India block by block, step by step. Yesterday's meeting with Dr Singh was another step in the right direction," the Pakistani leaders said.

Asked about the peace process between his country and India, Shaukat said Islamabad would like to see reduction of troops on the highly militarised Kashmir front and conveyed their intentions to New Delhi.

The Indian side explained their position, he said, without elaborating much. But Shaukat pointed out that the "trust-deficit" between the two neighbours has been declining and both would like to move toward normalising their relations.

The Pak premier said his bilateral talks with Dr Singh on the fringes of the two-day Saarc Summit covered all issues, from terrorism to trade.

## Three major

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member countries inked the agreements in presence of their heads of state or government.

The signing ceremony was followed by a cultural function.

Earlier, Saarc Chairperson Khaleda Zia received the leaders at the state guesthouse, where the forum leaders were on retreat from about 11:00am to 1:30pm.

## Next summit

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in India," she said after the Saarc summit adopted a joint declaration.

Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh accepted the offer instantly saying, "India has the privilege of hosting the 14th Saarc Summit. We look forward to welcoming you all to India."

## Saarc leaders

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The president made the remarks when Saarc Chairperson and Prime Minister of Bangladesh Khaleda Zia, Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, President of the Maldives Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and King of Nepal Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev called on him at Bangabhaban yesterday.

President of Sri Lanka Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga could not attend the meeting as she had to leave Dhaka for attending an important programme in Colombo.

Welcoming the heads of state and government, the president appreciated the decision of the Saarc leaders at their summit meet for strengthening the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc). He hoped that the ongoing Saarc process would ultimately lead to the South Asian economic union.

Briefing the newsmen about the outcome of the meeting, President's Press secretary M Mokhlesur Rahman Chowdhury said it was held in a very cordial atmosphere.

"The Saarc leaders discussed everything frankly and thanked the president for warm hospitality," he said.

The president congratulated the new chairperson of Saarc, Khaleda Zia, and sought support and cooperation from the member countries in this regard.

Regarding the devastating tsunami

and earthquake that happened in this region recently, the president expressed deep shock at the tragedies.

He underscored the need for fight against terrorism and poverty jointly, as these two scourges are common problems facing the Saarc countries.

"The pragmatic ideas and proposals put forward by the Saarc leaders on the present and future of the forum are truly inspiring," the press secretary quoted the president as saying.

The president expressed the hope that there would be reflection of many of the concrete commendations in the Dhaka Declaration.

He said Bangladesh is grateful to all Saarc states for conferring the first Saarc Award on late president Ziaur Rahman.

He said the Saarc nations should realise the greater economic cooperation through trade liberalisation, investment promotion, poverty alleviation and social development for building a poverty-free South Asia.

"The third decade of the Saarc should be devoted to turning commitments into concrete actions, projects and programmes," the president told the leaders who concluded their two-day summit meeting here yesterday.

The president appreciated the decision taken by the Saarc leaders to implement South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta) from January 2006, saying, "It will help the region in poverty alleviation."

He thanked the leaders and wished them good health and happiness.

## Hasina meets

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to regional cooperation including poverty alleviation and curbing terrorism, Political Secretary to the AL chief Saber Hossain Chowdhury told The Daily Star last night.

The AL president told the Indian PM that regional cooperation, to be effective and meaningful, must have to be consistent with the national objectives and aspirations of the people, Sabersaid.

"The challenge therefore is to synthesise these two perspectives," Hasina said. For a true regional stability, it is important that no country in the region remains behind in economic or development terms, she told Manmohan.

"Through regional cooperation we can take advantage of the immense potential that exists in the region as a whole. Awami League is supportive of greater connectivity, people-to-people contact and movement as well as increased trade, investment and economic cooperation," the AL chief said.

Hasina also observed that apart from poverty, terrorism is another major problem in the region and all parties must work together in a spirit of mutual trust to resolve the problem. "Through discussion, solution to any problem is possible and we are always generating dialogue and discussions among all parties," she said.

Indian State Minister for External Affairs E Ahamed, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Veena Sikri were present during the meeting.

Hasina also met Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel and discussed bilateral issues that included economic development, growth strategy and relations between the two countries.

The two leaders agreed to plan the growth strategy in a way that will benefit the real poor. They also agreed on building 'people-to-people friendship' for the overall development of the two countries.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid M Kasuri, Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Minister for Port and Shipping Senator Babar Khan Gouri, and Pakistani High Commissioner in Dhaka Alamgir Babar were also present at the

meeting.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP, Presidium Members Kazi Jafarullah, Suranjit Sengupta, Syed Abul Hossain, Political Secretary to Hasina Saber Hossain Chowdhury and former Ambassador Ziauddin accompanied the opposition leader during the meetings.

SR LANKAN FM MEETS HASINA  
Meanwhile, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Anura Bandaranaike called upon Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence in the city yesterday morning.

After the meeting, Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP at a press briefing told journalists that the Sri Lankan FM made the courtesy call on behalf of President Chandrika Kumaratunga.

They discussed different issues related to regional cooperation including poverty alleviation, development of infrastructure and curbing of terrorism during the hour-long meeting, Jalil said.

The Sri Lankan minister also recalled the role of AL and Bangabandhu in the Liberation War and the history of democratic struggles in Bangladesh. He pointed out the overall development of the country during the AL regime, Jalil said.

Tk 30 lakh  
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of a window was broken with the glass intact.

Police arrested the bank guard Mujibur Rahman, 45, who told the police that he went home on Saturday around 10:00pm as he felt feverish. Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Noor Ahmed said primary investigation indicates the involvement of bank officials in the robbery.

Assistant General Manager (AGM) Tamizuddin, principal in charge of Sonali Bank Narayanganj office, said an investigation committee would be formed soon to investigate the incident.

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## WB board

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cabinet is yet to approve the draft Public Procurement Law (PPL).

The WB board now will discuss the matter in another meeting on December 1.

A source said if the cabinet subcommittee comprising four ministers and a state minister tasked with reviewing the draft law makes any major change in it and if it is not approved before December 1, the WB may further postpone discussing disbursement of the DSC instalment.

The subcommittee led by Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan is scheduled to sit today to finalise the draft law by making any necessary amendments.

The proposed law was tabled at a cabinet meeting on November 2. In the face of a strong opposition from some cabinet members, the meeting did not clear the draft and formed the subcommittee to further scrutinise its clauses.

The subcommittee held its first meeting last Friday and tasked Agriculture Minister MK Anwar and Law Minister Moudud Ahmed with scrutinising and suggesting amendments to the draft bill in two days time, meeting sources said.

The cabinet's approval of the PPL is one of the 13 conditions set by the WB to get the third DSC tranche.

## Four leaders

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session of the 13th Saarc Summit. She could not attend the session for her domestic compulsion.

Senior officials of the foreign ministry saw the Lankan president off at Zia International Airport.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz left for home after attending the concluding session of the two-day Saarc Summit.

A special flight of PIA, carrying the Pak prime minister and his wife, took off from the Zia International Airport at 7:10pm.

Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh left for home last night.

A special flight of Indian Airlines, carrying the Indian prime minister and his wife, took off from the ZIA at 8:15pm.

Reaz Rahman, advisor to the foreign ministry, saw them off at the airport.

## Enayetullah

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Enayetullah Khan will be taken to the residence of his younger brother Shahidullah Khan Badal (House No--22, Road No--113, Gulshan) at 12:30pm. The coffin will be kept there until 3:30pm.

The second namaj-e-janaza of the eminent journalist will be held at Gulshan Azad Mosque after Asr prayers. He will be laid to rest at Banabi Graveyard.

To pay tribute to him, a civic condolence meeting will also be held on the premises of the Jatiya Press Club on November 27.

Enayetullah Khan died in Princes Margaret Cancer Hospital in Toronto, Canada, on Thursday.

## Manmohan

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multi-party democracy and said he was prepared to work with political parties towards this.

Relations between India and Nepal have been strained since the king sacked the government and took power in the impoverished country in February saying political leaders had failed to tackle a nine-year Maoist insurgency that has killed more than 12,500 people so far.

Although the king has announced municipal elections next year and parliamentary polls in 2007, political parties say free elections are not possible under the royal regime.

India has been upset with King Gyanendra's slow moves to return power to political parties. Hours before arriving in Dhaka on Friday, Singh warned there was a danger of failed states emerging in India's neighbourhood.

While Singh did not name any country, analysts said he could be referring to Nepal, among others.

On Saturday, King Gyanendra sought to garner support at the summit of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) saying security had improved in Nepal under his rule.

He said he was forced to take power because of the failure of political parties and his move had not endangered democracy.

## Govt wasting

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leaders to withdraw the award, Hasina, however said, "It is a matter of the Saarc."

Asked by an Indian journalist if the present Bangladesh government harbours Indian Ulfu insurgents in Bangladesh territory, Hasina directed him to ask the prime minister about this and said the AL in its tenure sheltered no such insurgents.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, senior leaders Suranjit Sengupta, Abdur Razzak, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Tofail Ahmed, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya were present at the press conference.

## Roadmap for Saarc

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barriers and encourage investment. "We agreed on an ambitious set of goals in the most important areas, including the establishment of a free trade area, promotion of investment and cooperation on energy, transport and communications and disaster management," she said.

"We put special emphasis on combating terrorism," Khaleda said, noting that the Additional Protocol to the Saarc Convention on Terrorism will now come into force.

It was decided that the Saarc home ministers will meet annually, preceded by the meeting of the home secretaries, to address the issue of common concern.

In view of the recent natural disasters, the summit has taken a number of decisions and Bangladesh will host a meeting of regional expert groups in December to elaborate a comprehensive framework on early warning system and disaster management, the PM said.

Bangladesh's proposal to proclaim 2007 as the "Year of Green South Asia" through region-wide afforestation programmes has also been accepted.

On regional social challenges, Khaleda said the summit recognised the importance of the social dimension of development and all the seven countries have already formed national coordination committees to implement the Saarc Social Charter.

The Saarc leaders have agreed to draw a roadmap for the third decade of Saarc and subsequently directed the Saarc Standing Committee to meet a special session and elaborate a blueprint in this regard.

Observing that a major problem in regional cooperation has been the lack of a viable funding mechanism, Khaleda said that Saarc finance ministers will meet in Pakistan next

month to formulate recommendations on funding Saarc programmes and projects, particularly the Saarc Poverty Alleviation Fund.

She said a major highlight of the summit has been the rich tributes paid by all leaders to late president Ziaur Rahman for his statesmanship and vision of launching and pursuing the idea of Saarc.

Asked whether India want transit and transshipment through Bangladesh in the name of communication linkage, the PM said, "It is not a matter between Bangladesh and India...it's the matter of the entire region. Setting up of such linkages is time-consuming as it needs series of meetings of experts and other bodies concerned."

On the failure of Saarc to bring any tangible development in the past two decades, Khaleda said there was strong mistrust among the seven member states, but the situation has changed greatly and relationship among the Saarc countries is now much better.

"Everyone reached the conclusion that development cannot be achieved fully without regional cooperation and we are confident that the Saarc countries will now move forward," she said.