

Saarc to make South Asia poverty-free region

Speakers tell Japan-Saarc cooperation confce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both Bangladesh and Japan yesterday expressed their overwhelming hope that Saarc can play a catalytic role in making South Asia a poverty-free region and contribute to the development of whole Asia through regional cooperation.

While Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi termed the development of South Asia as 'indispensable' for the prosperity of Asia in its entirety, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said functioning of Saarc Development Fund could pave the way for a much broader engagement between the Saarc and the observers in future.

The views were expressed at an international conference on Japan-Saarc Cooperation organised by

Japan Study Centre (JSC) of Dhaka University at a city hotel.

The Japanese prime minister, in a message read out by Yonezo Fukuda, charge d' affairs of Japanese Embassy in Dhaka, at the conference, said, "I think the activities of Saarc in last 20 years for the welfare and quality of life in South Asia are truly valuable."

It is with such recognition, Tokyo has supported Saarc through 'Japan-Saarc Special Fund,' he said, adding that his country remains committed to promoting further cooperation with Saarc and its member states.

Speaking as chief guest M Morshed Khan said Saarc-Japan Special Fund is the only fund of its kind in supporting the key areas

including social development, gender mainstreaming and natural disaster management.

"I believe once the guidelines on observer status in Saarc are finalised, we look forward to Japan being engaged more vigorously in different areas of cooperation," he noted.

"When we say that the 21st Century belongs to Asia, it won't be an overstatement to say that the thrust would come from South Asia and South-East Asia," Morshed said.

South Asia collectively offers as much as around 440 million growing middle class with dispensable income, which will grow fast with the expansion of these economies, he said, adding, "We are looking at an economy of about \$800 billion."

Saarc has taken a more focussed and result-oriented

course, he said, adding that Saarc has come into force and "We are considering the inclusion of Trade in Services in Saarc. There has also been significant progress in the key areas like counter-terrorism, environment, tourism, energy and connectivity."

Yonezo Fukuda said pooling its enormous natural resources for an integrated approach to economic development could do wonders and free the Saarc region from the curse of poverty and hunger.

Japan is keen to share her experiences and expertise in capacity building, training and technical cooperation with Saarc to develop it into a strong and vibrant regional bloc, he noted.

Kunio Sen, director general of South Asia Department of Asian Development Bank, said strong political commitment is a must for the success of regional cooperation in South Asia.

Foreign Affairs Advisor Reaz Rahman said Saarc failed to make progress due to political differences.

Prof Ataur Rahman, director of JSC, delivered the welcome speech while DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz chaired the session.

Dr Takako Hirose of University of Senshu, Japan, Shinsuke Shimizu, director of Southwest Asian Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Ikuo Sato of Japan Bank for International Cooperation, Shuji Uchikawa of the Institute of Developing Economies, Japan and Koji Suzuki, executive director of Asian Disaster Reduction Centre, spoke at the working sessions.



PHOTO: STAR

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan speaks at an international conference on Japan-Saarc Cooperation organised by Japan Study Centre (JSC) of Dhaka University at a city hotel yesterday. Sitting from right are Prof Ataur Rahman, Reaz Rahman, Prof SMA Faiz, Yonezo Fukuda and Dr Takako Hirose.

Killing of children in Lebanon condemned

Expressing grave concern over the killing of children in Lebanon, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) urged the authorities concerned to refrain from child killing, says a press release yesterday.

The international human rights bodies including the United Nations (UN) have not taken any measures yet to take the affected children to a safer place, BNWLA observed.

It also observed that such a war not only denounces the international instruments for human rights but also deplore the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

BNWLA called upon all to work for upholding human rights across the world particularly the rights of the children to unite their voices against such inhuman activities.

Death of Prof Habibur Rahman condoled

RU CORRESPONDENT

Teachers, students and staffs of Social Work department of Rajshahi University yesterday brought out a mourning procession on the campus following the death of Prof Habibur Rahman, a former teacher of the department who served from 1964 to 1992. He was also a former vice chancellor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST).

The procession led by department chairman Prof Ashrafuzzaman paraded different streets on the campus.

After the procession, a condolence meeting was held at the department hall room where teachers and students reminisced about the life and works of Prof Habibur. Prof Ashraf and faculty members Abdul Halim, Shahidur Rahman, Rabul Islam and Sadequ Arefin addressed the condolence meeting.

RU Vice Chancellor Altaf Hossain and pro-Vice Chancellor Mamunul Keramat in separate statements expressed deep shock saying that the nation has lost a scholar and social scientist at the death of Prof Habibur Rahman.

Firearms seized in Ctg slum

CU CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered three firearms from a slum house of South Kattali in Pahartali area early yesterday.

According to sources, a special team of Rab 7, comprising 150 members, raided Pathanpara slum at around 2:00am as part of their block raid and recovered a revolver and two light guns in an abandoned condition.

However, none was held in this connection, sources said.

THIRD KARNAPHULI BRIDGE Mayor's move an undesirable disturbance: Noman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman yesterday alleged that the move by Chittagong city mayor for a suspension bridge is nothing but an "undesirable disturbance" to make the implementation of the long-cherished Karnaphuli Third Bridge uncertain.

At a press briefing on the issue at Chittagong Circuit House, the minister said the proposed bridge would be a latest version of suspension bridge known as 3rd generation bridge from its technical viewpoint.

Noman said a road march under the banner "Chalo Chalo, Karnaphuli Bridge Abhimukhe Chalo" (Let us move towards Karnaphuli Bridge site) will be staged in the port city on August 5 to drum up support in favour of the pillar-based bridge.

Referring to the allegation that the proposed bridge would ultimately be harmful for Chittagong port, the minister said as per the recommendations of the country's renowned experts, the possibility of siltation in the riverbed for the bridge is only one percent.

There will be 200 metres span between the pillars in the bridge,

the first of its kind, to reduce the possibility of siltation, he added.

Noman said the government had carried out all the required feasibility studies and model tests before finalising the design of the bridge.

The experts had examined all aspects including possible siltation in port channel and the risk of natural calamity like cyclone and earthquake in order to ensure the long-cherished bridge economically viable as well as geographically and environmentally sustainable, he said.

"I don't know why the mayor raised his voice against the implementation of the project while most political parties and their leaders, including those of Awami League and the common people in Chittagong sincerely want it's timely execution," Noman said.

He said it was nothing but an ill attempt to make the project uncertain with a motive to prove that the BNP had failed to fulfill its commitment.

Former city BNP general secretary Dastagir Chowdhury, Shahjahan Chowdhury MP of Jamaat-e-Islam and Jatiyatabdabhi Jubo Dal Chittagong city unit President Abdul Hashem Bakkar were present on the occasion.

WEATHER TODAY

Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong, Barisal, and Khulna divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy falls are also likely at places over Chittagong and Barisal divisions, Met Office said in a forecast. It said that day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Highest temperature 35.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangpur and lowest 24.4 degree Celsius at Cox's Bazar and Rangamati.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:42pm today and rises at 5:28am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage	Morning	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.7	27.0	76	63
Chittagong	34.2	25.6	71	86
Rajshahi	35.0	26.0	81	62
Khulna	33.5	24.8	84	84
Barisal	33.0	26.5	86	80
Sylhet	34.8	27.5	75	66
Cox's Bazar	32.0	24.4	73	82

'No logic to finance anti-Ahmadiyyas'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat yesterday protested a news item published in a Bangla daily on July 28 that blamed the minority sect for financing the anti-Ahmadiyyas to carry out movements against them.

Denying the allegations, the Ahmadiyya Jamaat at a press conference at their office at Bakshi Bazar in the city said there is no logic of financing the anti-Ahmadiyyas to run movement against the community that causes trouble to the Ahmadiyyas.

"It is quite illogical to use our hard-earned money for running movements against us, which will be nothing but suicidal," said the leaders while reading out a written statement at the press conference.

"The Ahmadiyya Jamaat is totally funded by its members." Ahmadiyya leaders said firmly, "And it does not accept any kind of fund or donations from outsiders. The community members contribute a major portion of their incomes to run the activities of the mission across the country" they added.

The news item, that passively blames the Ahmadiyyas for the nine deaths of its sect, injuries, grabbing of mosques and lands, and other anti-Islamic and anti-humanitarian activities, is nothing but an ill-practice of journalism, the leaders said.

The Ahmadiyya also denied an allegation that they collect fund from abroad by showing footages of torture on them, which tarnishes the image of the country and brands it as a 'militant' and 'extremist' country.

"The modern media is capable of collecting and broadcasting news on oppressions on the Ahmadiyyas, which is a global issue," the leaders said, adding, "There is no need for the Ahmadiyyas to work for that."

Acting Amir Mohammad Salauddin, Secretary General Kausar Ali Mollah, Missionary In-Charge Md Abdul Awal Khan Chowdhury and other leaders were present at the press conference.

Death anniversary

Today is the sixth death anniversary of Md Lutfar Rahman, senior tax lawyer of Chittagong, says a press release.

On the occasion, doa mafils will be held in Chittagong, Dhaka and Naogaon.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.



With a slogan 'Peace, not war', Human Rights Review Society forms a human chain in front of National Museum in the city yesterday protesting Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

Khulna tense as BNP factions firm to hold rally at same venue same time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Ruling party lawmaker M Nurul Islam yesterday said he will hold a rally at the Maharaj square tomorrow despite cancellation of permission earlier given by the Khulna City Corporation (KCC).

Addressing a press conference at Khulna Press Club, Nurul Islam, also former city BNP president, said KCC gave permission us on July 27 to hold the rally at Shahid Maharaj square on Wednesday and issued a letter on July 29 cancelling it. This is quite unfortunate, he said, adding that KCC is playing a double standard in dealing with the issue.

Nurul Islam is leading a faction of his party in Khulna, sources said.

Nazrul Islam Manju, former general secretary of city BNP, said party activists and supporters loyal to his faction will march towards Shahid Maharaj square on Wednesday afternoon to hold the rally at any cost.

Manju said, "Lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi and Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman are political cheats as they have no little contribution to the development of Khulna." They are nothing but seasonal birds rejected by people and diehard workers of BNP, Manju said.

Manju, claiming himself as general secretary of Khulna city BNP, rejected the convening committee led by Lobi.

Meanwhile, cancellation of permission to hold meeting has fuelled tension among BNP leaders and workers as Lobi-Tayebur faction is also determined to hold the rally at Shahid Maharaj square at the same time the same day.

Shahruzzaman Martuza, member-secretary of city BNP convening committee, said, "We have an official letter from KCC with permission to hold a rally there."



SAEC Bangladesh formed

A professional association titled 'Society of Agricultural and Environmental Chemists (SAEC), Bangladesh' was formed with the leading educationists and scientists as its members to promote and diffuse all aspects of knowledge relating to agricultural chemistry and environment, says a press release.

Prof Nur Mohammad Talukder and Dr Md Tofazzal Islam have been elected president and general secretary of SAEC.

Other office-bearers are: Senior Vice President: Prof Dr Wahid-Uz-Zaman, Vice President: Dr Kabir Hossain Talukder and Dr S K Zaman, Treasurer: Dr Mokhlesur Rahman, Joint Secretary: Md Abdur Razzaque and Editor: Prof Dr Abul Kair Chowdhury.

Executive committee members are: Prof Dr M Shahjahan Ali, Dr M Abdus Sattar, Dr Jalal Uddin, Prof Dr Md Akther Hossain Chowdhury, Prof K M Golam Qudus, Dr Bikash Chandra Sarker, Dr M Yunus, Dr Md Moazzamul Haque, Dr AK Azad, Sheikh Md Abdul, Dr Md Delwar Hossain, M Abdul Hai, M Ashiqur Rahman, Musfiqur Rahman, Md Faruk-e-Azam and Md Mahbubur Rahman.

Prof Shahjahan Ali, Dr M Abdus Sattar, Dr Jalal Uddin, Prof Dr Md Akther Hossain Chowdhury, Prof K M Golam Qudus, Dr Bikash Chandra Sarker, Dr M Yunus, Dr Md Moazzamul Haque, Dr AK Azad, Sheikh Md Abdul, Dr Md Delwar Hossain, M Abdul Hai, M Ashiqur Rahman, Musfiqur Rahman, Md Faruk-e-Azam and Md Mahbubur Rahman.

Viqarunnesa Noon School and College will accord a reception to the students who achieved GPA-5 in the SSC examinations in 2006. Venue: Bashundhara City auditorium (Level 7). Time: 12:00noon.

Inaugural ceremony

The inaugural ceremony of the World Breastfeeding Week '06 will be held. Venue: Bangladesh Shishu Academy. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

Bangale Sanskriti Mancha will organise a roundtable on 'Social and cultural movements to observe the mourning day nationally'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.

View-exchange meeting

A view-exchange meeting on welfare and peaceful political reforms will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Seminar