

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 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.

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 Safta has come into force and "We are considering the inclusion of Trade in Services in Safta. 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 Senga, 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 desired 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, Ikuro 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 afflicted 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 Shahajalal 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, Rabiul Islam and Sadequ Arefin addressed the condolence meeting.

RU Vice Chancellor Altaf Hossain and pro-Vice Chancellor Mammunul 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 black 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 Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal Chittagong city unit President Abul Hashem Bakkar were present on the occasion.

'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 Salaudinn, 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 mahfils will be held in Chittagong, Dhaka and Naogaon.

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



PHOTO: STAR

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.

Trader shot, robbed of Tk 55,000

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of unknown muggers shot a businessman and snatched Tk 55,000 from him in the city's Kotwali area yesterday.

The miscreants attacked Mohammad Soheli, 27, a sanitary goods supplier, while he was walking to north south road from Nawabpur area at around 1:00 am and forcefully took away the money and a mobile phone.

While Soheli tried to resist, the criminals shot three rounds of bullets wounding him on his chest and hands.

Being critically injured, he was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

JAMAL UDDIN MURDER CASE

Hearing deferred

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Hearing in the sensational Chittagong business magnet and BNP leader Jamal Uddin Ahmed Abduction and Murder Case was deferred yesterday as the Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate Akram Hossain was on leave.

Metropolitan Magistrate Monwarul Islam fixed a fresh date for hearing on August 9 that was scheduled to be held yesterday.

Police framed charge sheet on July 10 against 16 accused people, including prime suspects Kashem Chairman, Shahid Chairman and Kala Mahbub.

The first hearing in the case was held on July 23, sources said.

When the documents were placed before the court of MM Monwarul Islam at 12:00pm yesterday, the judge deferred the hearing and fixed a fresh date as the concerned magistrate of the case is on leave.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday stressed the need for united efforts of all to prevent spread of the deadly HIV/AIDS disease in the country.

They said only the integrated and coordinated efforts can prevent spread of the disease, as the number of HIV positives in the country is much smaller than other countries.

The speakers called upon the media to work for the issue with more responsibility, as the main 'vaccine' to get rid of the deadly disease is information and awareness.

The workshop titled 'Role of media for HIV/AIDS infected and affected people' was organised by STI/AIDS Network of Bangladesh at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers urged the media to highlight the issue positively so that the HIV/AIDS patients do not feel ostracised.

STI/AIDS Network Secretary General Mizanur Rahman presented a keynote paper where he pointed out that a total of 40 million people were affected by HIV as of 2005 in the world and a total of 658 cases of HIV/AIDS have been confirmed in Bangladesh as of December 2005.

He also said of the 658 cases, 134 patients have been infected with AIDS and out of them 74 people have already died.

He also said the number of probable HIV positive people are about 7500 in the country.

The most vulnerable group of HIV/AIDS is younger people and around 33 million younger people have no idea about the disease, he said.

Addressing the workshop as the chief guest, Dr Abdus Salim, programme manager of National AIDS and STD Programme (NASP), said the country is really under a

'Adopt effective policy for tobacco control'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to enforcing effective tobacco control measures in South and South East Asian countries, a four-day regional meeting on 'Implementation of WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)' began in the city yesterday.

Eleven member countries Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, North Korea and East Timor who ratified the WTO-FCTC 2003 convention are participating in the meeting.

Addressing the inaugural session, Secretary to health and family welfare ministry A K M Zafar Ullah Khan said the meeting is aimed to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of individual member countries in adopting comprehensive tobacco control measures and their implementation as well.

Focusing on the fatal aspects of tobacco consumption, Director of Tobacco Free Initiative-WHO Dr Yumiko Mochizuki said to stop globalisation of tobacco consumption and resulting explosion of tobacco related diseases, the member countries should adopt practical approaches.

While reading out a message from WHO Regional Director for South East Asia Region Dr Samlee Plianbangchang, WHO representative in Dhaka said WHO is ready to extend necessary assistance to enhance the capacity of the member states in adopting national policy on tobacco control and its implementation.

Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said though a number of countries have developed comprehensive tobacco control measures but effective enforcement still remains a major challenge.

He also spoke of Bangladesh's

advancement in this field.

Trader beaten to death in Gazipur

UNB, Gazipur

A trader was beaten to death at Bariaboh village under Kaliakoir upazila on Sunday night.

Local people said Mokhesur Rahman, 40, was beaten to death by some terrorists while he was returning home from his shop at Kaliakoir bazar.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police suspected that the victim might have been killed following a past enmity.

Coalmine blast kills 11 in China

AP, Beijing

A blast at a coalmine in south China killed 11 workers, the official Xinhua News Agency said yesterday.

The blast occurred on Saturday at the Bailongshan Colliery in Yunnan province, Xinhua said. It didn't say what caused the blast or if it was under investigation.

China's coalmines are the world's deadliest, suffering more than 5,000 fatalities annually in explosions, floods and other accidents despite repeated government promises to improve safety.

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 refuelled 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.

Shaharuzzaman 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 Presidents: Dr Kabir Hossain Talukder and Dr S K Zaman, Treasurer: Dr Mokhesur Rahman, Joint Secretary: Md Abdur Razzaque and Editor: Prof Dr Abul Khair Chowdhury.

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

DHAKA

T O D A Y

Reception

Viqarunnessa Noon School and College will accord a reception to the students who achieved GPA-5 in the SSC examinations in 2006. Venue: Bangladesh Shishu Academy. 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

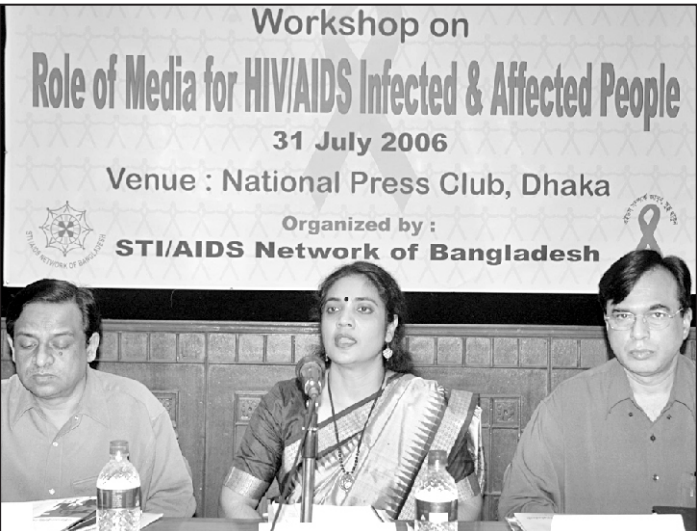
Bangalee Sanskriti Mancha will organise a roundtable on 'Social and cultural movements to observe the mourning day nationally'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4:00pm.

View-exchange meeting

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

Seminar

A seminar titled 'The interrelationship among policymakers and executives of private universities' will be held. Venue: Campus auditorium, Meherba Plaza (13th floor). Time: 9:45am.



Chairperson of STI/AIDS Network of Bangladesh Wahida Banu speaks at a workshop titled 'Role of media for HIV/AIDS infected and affected people' organised by STI/AIDS Network at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her left is Dr Abdus Salim, programme manager of National AIDS and STD Programme (NASP) and on her right is Iqbal Ahmed, vice chairperson of STI/AIDS Network.