

Overcome political issues to boost regional economy

Indian foreign secy urges neighbours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon yesterday urged India's smaller neighbours to overcome political issues to become stakeholders in the India-led regional economic growth by dismantling trade and road and water transport barriers.

Giving a talk on 'Creating a South Asian Community: India-Bangladesh Relations' at the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) in the city, Menon also said he was confident of improving relations with Bangladesh, but observed that "It is natural for close neighbours to have problems."

He said a benign international political environment together with present economic opportunities from India's growth provide a unique chance to create a long-lasting structure for regional economic cooperation in South Asia.

"Whatever we do, it must last," he said, adding that the South Asian

countries have a chance to remake relations. "We have a chance to overcome politics."

Regarding the Saarc, Menon said, "If Saarc fails, we will fail. We are the ones who built it. So, if there is something wrong, let us fix it."

Lamenting the lack of implementation of the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), he said the intra-regional trade of six percent is the lowest in any region in the world, except sub-Saharan Africa.

Menon said economic negotiations are no longer a zero-sum game, where short-term compromises could bring long-term economic benefits to countries.

He, however, cautioned that although economic opportunities beckon India's neighbours, they would have to combat regional and local political challenges that risk undermining regional prosperity.

He stressed that past problems should not prevent future progressive actions that have been blocked by regional politics. "We have a

chance to break out of that," he said.

Regarding Bangladesh, he said, "It is natural for close neighbours to have problems. Intimacy is not always easy. But our commonalities far outweigh our differences."

"Businessmen from both the countries are increasingly discovering that it is most convenient to procure goods and services from each other rather than from more distant sources," he said.

He also called for a greater expansion of Bangla-Indo land and water ports to open up trade access to reduce transaction costs, which in turn, would push up bilateral trade.

Menon was also confident of future cooperation in energy sector and flood-control activities.

Mutual trust is essential to develop regional cooperation and it will increase through greater interaction between the countries, he said.

"Political transitions" in the region are also a challenge that requires local solutions, he said, adding that

the decisions these countries take will have broader consequences and effects.

Menon stressed that Bangladesh needs to urgently expand the basket of goods for export to India so that it can explore deeper into the Indian market.

He said the intra-regional trade was 34 percent in 1948, which has dwindled to 6 percent in 2007.

He also said that trade levels can be increased manifold by dismantling trade barriers between the countries.

Menon said that India's preferential trade agreements are not only reciprocal but also provide greater benefits to the smaller neighbours.

Regional economic growth can be exponentially increased through greater trade, open borders and economic cooperation, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

UNHCR Representative Pia Prytz Phiri inaugurated a special exhibition at Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday on the occasion of the World Refugee Day.

LIBERATION WAR

Contribution of refugees can never be forgotten

Speakers tell World Refugee Day discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said over 10 million Bangalees had to flee home because of the atrocities carried out by the then Pakistani occupation forces.

The contribution of these people in the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state can never be forgotten, they added.

The discussion was organised by the Liberation War Museum in observance of the World Refugee Day.

To mark the occasion, a weeklong photo exhibition styled 'Refugee mothers and in honour of the mothers who carried our dream' was inaugurated.

The museum also displayed photos of those 'Mothers' who rendered their firm and generous hands for the people who were

exiled from home.

Speakers at the discussion paid homage to three noble women, Mother Teresa, Moitreyi Devi and Anjali Lahiri, who provided their help to distressed refugees.

They said Poet Sufia Kamal and mother of martyrs Jahanara Imam will remain as the beacon of inspiration for crores of freedom-loving people.

Mofidul Haque, a trustee of the Liberation War Museum, said refugees are very much part of the liberation war of Bangladesh and expressed gratitude to respectful figures like Saili Ghosh, Oxfam worker Julian Francis and Sanghamitra Desai, the then student of Kolkata Medical College, for their generosity to Bengali refugees.

Akku Chowdhury, another trustee of the Liberation War

Museum, highlighted the contribution of Jahanara Imam and Poet Sufia Kamal to the war.

Pia Prytz Phiri, UNHCR representative in Bangladesh, expressed her satisfaction over the observance of the day.

She said the memories, which still torment the people of Bangladesh, should be used in a constructive way.

Ali Reza, acting officer-in-charge of the United Nations Information Centre, Saif Imam Jami, son of Jahanara Imam, and Ziauddin Tariq Ali, a trustee of the Liberation War Museum, also spoke on the occasion.

Filmmaker Jahanara Noori presented a video documentary on Julian Francis and Sanghamitra Desai.

UNFPA STATE OF WORLD POPULATION REPORT

Inadequate shelter at core of urban poverty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inadequate shelter is at the core of urban poverty in Dhaka, one of the fastest growing cities in the world, with its 11 million people, according to the UNFPA State of World Population 2007 report released yesterday.

Like many other Asian cities, more than one third of the urban population in Bangladesh live in congested or slum areas in poverty, said UNFPA Representative Pornchai Suchitta at a press conference marking the launch of the report at the National Press Club in the city.

About 27 percent of the total population live in urban areas of the country, which experienced phenomenal increase in urban population with its projected growth rate of 3.5 percent per year up to 2010, the report said.

The report termed the official position of opposing urban expansion as a failed strategy based on faulty assumptions, saying that such positions often failed to support the non-governmental organisations that ease the process.

"Policymakers generally have been unwilling to accept urban growth and have tried to prevent it by discouraging migration. Such policies are ineffective," said the report titled 'Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth'.

"Urban migrants are making rational decisions. They need support to escape from poverty and, in the process, contribute to both urban and rural economic growth," Pornchai Suchitta said.

According to the report, in 2008, for the first time in the history, 3.3 billion people, who are more than half of the world population, will be living in urban areas. The number is expected to swell to almost 5 billion by 2030, while in Asia and Africa the urban population will double between 2000 and 2030. Many of these new urbanites will be poor, it noted.

"Their future, the future of cities in the developing countries and the future of humanity itself all depend very much on the decisions made now," Pornchai Suchitta said, adding this is very much appropriate for the South Asian countries, including Bangladesh.

The battle to reach the Millennium Development Goals, halving extreme poverty by 2015, will be waged in the world's slums, the UNFPA representative said, noting that one billion people live in the urban slums and 90 percent of them live in developing countries.

The report that examined implications of impending urban growth

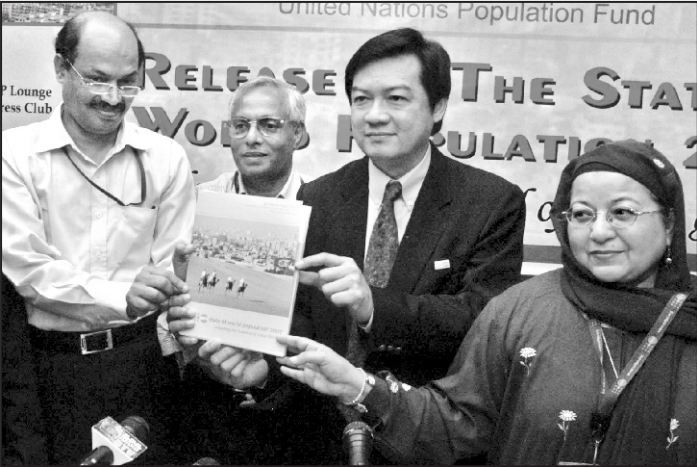


PHOTO: STAR

UNFPA Representative Pornchai Suchitta, Assistant Representatives Nurul Ameen and Tahera Ahmed and foreign ministry official Shamsul Haque launch the UNFPA State of World Population 2007 report at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

with specific attention to poverty reduction and sustainability said most urban growth would be in smaller towns and cities, thereby requiring considerable strengthening of the initiatives to meet the future challenge.

It observed that poor people will make up a large part of urban growth with natural increase rather than migration, and urged the government, civil societies and international communities to abandon attempts to discourage migration and prevent urban growth.

The report called for a broad and long-term vision of the use of urban space. "This means, among other things, providing minimally serviced land for housing and planning in advance to promote sustainable land use, looking beyond the cities' borders to minimise their ecological footprints."

It also called for a concerted international effort to support strategies for the urban poor.

Urging more analysis and pre-emptive actions, the report said the growth of the cities will be the single largest influence on development in the 21st century, yet little is being done to maximise the benefits of urban growth or reduce its harmful

consequences.

It observed that poverty is growing faster in urban areas than in the rural areas for not realising the potential advantages in reducing poverty, and neglecting the poor.

The report said that urban life offers many possibilities for women and girls for they can more effectively participate in social and political life, but few in poor households can take advantage of them. It advocated for women's education, reproductive health and creating adequate job opportunities for them.

The report this year was accompanied by a supplement 'Growing Up Urban' featuring the stories of young men and women that focussed on young people's right to live free from violence.

UNFPA Assistant Representatives Nurul Ameen and Tahera Ahmed, foreign ministry official Shamsul Haque and Shimu, a garment worker, who migrated to Dhaka following violence at her village, also spoke at the press conference.

Dr Kamal urges lawyers to stand against corruption

UNB, Narayanganj

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain has urged the lawyers to stand against corruption, saying that the present situation has provided an opportunity to fight crimes and injustice in society.

The lawyers should play an important role in establishing the rule of law and curbing corruption, he said at a seminar at the district bar association auditorium.

Dr Kamal, also the president of Gano Forum, said a corrupt person, whoever he is, should be punished. There should be no discrimination in enforcing the law.

About the situation prevailing in the country, he said the state of emergency had been declared only to restore normalcy. Reforms in every sector have now become an imperative.

Dr Kamal lamented that the country became the champion in corruption for successive years, although 99 percent of the people are not involved in corruption.

The rulers had been in mad race for accumulating wealth out of public money for the last 15 years, he said, adding that corruption has assumed the proportion of a serious disease.

He also warned those lawyers who are involved in forging deeds and cheating the genuine owners out of their property. "This practice has to be stopped. The lawyers involved in the racket have no right to wear the black gown."

Low over Bay intensifies

UNB, Dhaka

Tuesday's low over west-central Bay and adjoining northwest Bay concentrated into a well-marked low over the same area.

It is likely to intensify further into a monsoon depression and move in a northwesterly direction, said a special bulletin of Met Office.

Under its influence, deep convection is taking place over north Bay. Squally weather may affect the ports, it said.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist local cautionary signal number three.

All fishing boats and trawlers over north Bay have been advised to come close to the coast and proceed with caution till further notice.

Indian clothes worth Tk 5 cr seized

Members of Bangladesh Coast Guard seized Indian clothes worth around Tk five crore from an engine-rigger trawler on Pashur river at Harbaria in Mongla on Tuesday, says a press release.

The seized items, including Indian sarees, three pieces, shirts and pant pieces were sent to customs authorities for taking necessary steps.

BHBFC to remain open June 29, 30

Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation (BHBFC) has decided to keep open its zonal and regional offices in the capital and across the country from 9am to 5pm at the week-ends on June 29 and June 30 for convenience of its client borrowers.

BHBFC in an urgent notice has also requested its loan defaulters to pay their arrears and reschedule debts by June 30.

RU teacher dies in rooftop fall in Malaysia

A teacher of Rajshahi University (RU) died in Malaysia on Monday night after he fell down from the rooftop of the house he was residing in.

The deceased Sabyasachi Saha was a lecturer at RU sociology department.

Malaysia police informed his family about his demise that night.

He went to Malaysia to undergo some treatment in January 2007 and was on education leave since then, sources said.

Sabyasachi Saha had joined sociology department as a lecturer in 1997.

Department Chairman Professor Fayzer Rahman confirmed the incident and said they would hold a condolence meeting once the summer vacation is over.

Journo sustains acid injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A journalist sustained acid injuries in the city in the early hours of yesterday.

Nojibul Islam Polash, senior executive of The University Campus magazine, was thrown acid at around 3:00am while he was asleep in a mess at Mallabagh.

The acid burned his eyes and upper part of the body. He was admitted to burn and plastic surgery unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Polash said two fellow journalists Toslim Uddin and Monirul Islam Rintu might be involved in throwing the acid.

A case against Toslim and Rintu has been filed with Motijheel Police Station in this connection.

Assault of pregnant worker by Chinese staff condemned

Karmojibi Nari (KN) yesterday condemned the assault of a pregnant worker by a Chinese female official at a factory at Dhaka Export Processing Zone (EPZ), stated the KN statement.

President of KN Shirin Akhter and General Secretary Sharmeen Kabir in the statement expressed deep shock at the incident and said it is highly disheartening and demoralising to see a woman labourer being assaulted by a foreign official.



PHOTO: STAR

Policemen prevent acting general secretary of Awami League Mukul Bose from entering Suhda Sadan during a meeting between Indian Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and AL President Sheikh Hasina at her residence yesterday.

DHAKA TODAY

Debate

The inaugural ceremony of The Daily Star Vigarunisa Noon Debating Club 3rd Children's, 6th Inter-School and 6th Inter-Club Debate Championship 2007 will be held. Venue: Vigarunisa Noon School and College premises. Time: 4:00pm.

Film screening

Dhaka University Film Society will screen 'The Mirror' directed by Andrei Tarkovsky and 'Autumn Marathon' directed by Georgy Danilya as part of its 52nd World Film Manifestation Programme (WFMP). Venue: Russian Cultural Centre. Time: 3:00pm.

Training programme

Action on Disability and Development organises a training programme titled 'Legal empowerment of people with disabilities'. Venue: LGED-RDEC Bhaban. Time: 9:30-10:30am.

BELTA Workshop

Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association (BELTA) organises a workshop on 'Teaching Academic Writing'. Venue: British Council auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Orientation programme

The orientation programme of Summer Semester 2007 of Bangladesh University will be held. Venue: University auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

AGM

The 25th annual general meeting of Bangladesh Society of Pathologists will be held. Venue: Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons. Time: 9:30am.

Seminar

Breaking the Silence organises a seminar titled 'Counseling for sexually harassed children in the light of the experience of Breaking the Silence'. Venue: WVA Auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

WB workshop

World Bank Office, Dhaka organises a launching workshop of Bangladesh Development Series report titled 'Dhaka: Improving living conditions of the urban poor'. Venue: Seminar room, LGED Bhaban. Time: 2:00pm.

Discussion

Society for International Development (SID), Bangladesh Chapter and Action on Disability and Development (ADD) jointly organise a discussion on 'MDGs in the context of sustainable development with reference to the disadvantaged including the disabled people'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

UNIFEM Bangladesh organises a roundtable on gender issues in migration. Venue: Brac Centre. Time: 9:30am.

Donation programme

Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited organises a donation programme to help a number of acid victims. Venue: Hotel Purbani. Time: 11:00am.

Seminar on landslide

Agameer Bangladesh organises a seminar titled 'Terrible disaster in the Chittagong landslide and our responsibilities'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:30pm.

Emergency landing saves Bangladeshi child's life

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

A Bangalore-bound flight of India's biggest private carrier Jet Airways returned to NSC Bose International Airport in Kolkata after being in the air for 20 minutes to save the life of a Bangladeshi child who is suffering from congenital heart problem.

Twenty-day-old Abdul Rahman had turned blue when the plane landed under emergency conditions at the airport on Monday.

The child was wheeled out of the aircraft into a waiting ambulance and rushed to a nursing home near the airport where he was resuscitated. Later, he was shifted to Rabinranath Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences.

The plane was in mid-air when the baby suffered spasms and was having difficulty breathing. He turned blue due to lack of oxygen. The cabin crew alerted the pilot who, in turn, contacted the air traffic control at Kolkata airport and turned the plane back for landing.

The child's father Abu Sahem said he was taking his son to renowned cardiac surgeon Devi Shetty at Narayana Hrudayalaya in Bangalore.

As shifting the child at this stage to Bangalore would be risky, doctors in the Kolkata hospital decided to carry out a surgery on him.

Jubo Dal cadre held in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

The joint forces arrested a top criminal of the district and Jubo Dal cadre from his residence in Chatora area of the town on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off, the joint forces arrested Billal at about 7:00pm during a raid on his house.

Billal has long been engaged in crimes in the district and was wanted in five cases, including extortion and firearms.

Poet Shamsul Islam passes away

Eminent poet and journalist Shamsul Islam passed away due to a cardiac arrest at the age of 66 in the early hours of yesterday, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, son and daughter to mourn his death.

Shamsul was born in Feni on March 17, 1942. After completion of his masters in Bangla from Dhaka University, he did diploma in Radio Journalism from West Germany. He worked at Bangla Academy, Chittagong Radio Centre and retired as deputy regional director of Bangladesh Betar.

He was the literary editor of The Daily Nabajat, The Bangladesh Observer, The Banglar Bani and The Daily Desh Bangla.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Dharmapur in Feni.

His quikhwani will be held at his residence at 4/2 Momenbagh in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Bangladesh Writers Foundation and National Poetry Council expressed deep shock at his death.

Prof Dr Mansur Rahman RU CORRESPONDENT

Professor Dr Mansur Rahman of Rajshahi University passed away at his Debisingpara residence in the city yesterday at the age of 59.

Family sources said Prof Mansur, a faculty member of Mathematics department, suddenly fell sick at about 12:30pm and died after a while.

Prof Mansur was suffering from heart diseases for a long time, added the family members.

On hearing the news of Prof Mansur's demise, RU Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Altaf Hossain, Pro-VC Prof Mamnunul Keramat, Registrar Prof Abdul Salam, Student Adviser Prof Faridul Islam and other officials rushed to Prof Mansur's residence.

They expressed deep shock at the death of Prof Mansur and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul. They also conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

GM Mustafa Khan

GM Mustafa Khan, an assistant registrar of university Stuart Section, passed away at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) on Tuesday night at the age of 50.

Family members said he had been suffering from various ailments for a long time.

RU VC, pro-VC and registrar expressed deep shock at his death and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

Quikhwani

Quikhwani of Eradat Ullah Chowdhury, former director of Duncan Brothers (Bangladesh) Ltd, will be held at Paroma Community Centre, House No. 31, Road No. 07, Dhanmondi R/A, after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

He passed away at Lab-Aid Clinic on June 21.

Friends, relatives and admirers are requested to attend the quikhwani and pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.



No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met office said.

Highest temperature 36 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Bogra and lowest 26 degree Celsius at Rangamati.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.50pm today and rises at 5:14am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	35.8	27.6	59	59
Chittagong	33.7	26.6	76	77
Rajshahi	35.9	27.4	68	67
Khulna	34.5	27.4	70	70
Barisal	33.0	27.0	81	73
Sylhet	34.9	28.0	72	67
Cox's Bazar	34.0	26.5	66	73

AL leader held on charges of terrorism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The joint forces yesterday arrested an Awami League leader from the city on charges of terrorism.

Hazi Zahid, president of Rajshahi city Sainik League is ranked 19th among the listed terrorists, said Boalia police.

He went into hiding since the state of emergency came into being.

Zahid raised a terrorists' gang in the city's Barakuthi area.

He was also accused for influencing auction of seized customs goods.