

# 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, 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 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.

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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 Bangladeshis 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 scores 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 Salil 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, also spoke on the occasion.

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

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 Rabindranath Tagore International Institute of Cardiac Sciences.

The plane was in midair 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 Saheem said he was taking his son to renowned cardiac surgeon Devi Shetty at Narayana Hrudayala in Bangalore.

As shifting the child 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 Nabijat, The Bangladesh Observer, The Banglar Bani and The Daily Desh Bangla.

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

His qulhwani 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 Desibingspara 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 Mammul Keramat, Registrar Prof Abdus 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.

Qulhwani

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

He passed away at LabAid Clinic on June 21.

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

## 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 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 urban 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 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 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 and foreign ministry official Shamsul Haque and Shimi, a garment worker, who migrated to Dhaka following violence at her village, also spoke at the press conference.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowsers 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

Members of Bangladesh Coast Guard seized Indian clothes worth around Tk five crore from an engine-run 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 weekends 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.

The Chinese woman allegedly kicked and injured Asma, a day labourer of Red Point Factory at the Old Zone of Dhaka EPZ, stated the KN. President of KN Shirin Akther and General Secretary Sharmin 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.

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