

Saarc now deliberates more on action

Says Dipu Moni

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni yesterday said the Saarc now deliberates more on action and concrete deliverables in the form of projects than on declaration and rhetoric.

"Now it will be more easier by the Saarc to take decisions and implement those rapidly as all the member states now have democratic governments," she said.

Addressing a seminar on "16th Saarc summit: An evaluation and way forward" organised by Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) at Jatiya Press Club in the city, she said, "We now see a propensity towards developing demand-driven and time-bound programmes and projects."

She said the trend of project-based cooperation has added new dimension and dynamism. It has witnessed in the just concluded summit in Thimphu that wide range of collaboration and the deep sense of determination to make Saarc a meaningful vehicle to attain collective self-reliance and to relate to the aspirations of common people.

In the recent years, some important

steps and positive developments that reflect the determination to undertake regional projects.

Citing example of Saarc's march forward, Dipu Moni mentioned articulation of regional common approach and understanding towards the balanced progress in livelihood, education, health and environment. The region agreed to have its own set of goals in the form of the Saarc Development Goals.

She said operationalisation of the Saarc Development Fund (SDF) has a very encouraging development as this umbrella funding mechanism has already started financing projects with primary focus on poverty alleviation and social development.

Turning to the social charter, she said Saarc conventions for protection of rights of the children and combating trafficking in women and children and creation of a regional task force under these two conventions reflect the determination to secure progress in the social area. Projects like toll-free numbers to help trafficked women and children and Saarc Telemedicine Network are very commendable projects.

Operationalisation of the Saarc Food Bank and efforts towards devel-

oping numerous food security related projects are indeed encouraging. A model material transfer agreement has been developed, she added.

Establishment of the South Asian University is a timely initiative, she said, adding that the university would help create a greater sense of South Asianness amongst the students and scholars alike. This perception of common identity may help create the foundation for an alliance for peace, friendship and mutual respect in South Asia.

Transports have been identified to ensure seamless connectivity. Member States are seeking to undertake connectivity projects both bilaterally and regionally.

Establishment of a Saarc Energy Ring is a bold pronouncement. Projects such as region-wide power exchange and grid connectivity, a regional LNG terminal, a regional refinery are being examined to reduce costs by taking advantage of economy of scale, Dipu Moni said.

However, she said despite all those positive development there are challenges and difficulties that Saarc facing in implementing the programmes. She identified first and foremost is the trust

gap that affects conceiving of programmes and retards their realisation.

Implementation also suffers because of lack of understanding of regional projects in particular their regional level implementation. This lack of understanding is shallow in the sectoral departments, she added.

Media in South Asia also need to develop a fuller understanding of the Saarc process and its programmes, she said, adding that it is true that Saarc has not been able to mount an effective campaign to communicate better with its stakeholders in particular the media.

The seminar was organised in cooperation with Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (CSRL).

DG (SAARC, BIMSTEC & ACD) Sufiur Rahman and DG (External Publicity) of Foreign Ministry Saïda Muna Tasneem, Joint Chief of Bangladesh Tariff Commission Dr Mostafa Abid Khan, chairman of Unnayan Onneshan Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, Oxfam and CSRL official Ziaul Hoque Mukta, DCAB President Zahirul Alam, Vice President Raheed Ejaz and General Secretary Imran Alam also spoke at the seminar.



Slum people residing on railway land at Tejgaon in the city form a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday urging Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina not to evict them before their rehabilitation.



AM Nurul Islam, vice-chairman of Bank Asia, hands over a cheque for Tk 10 lakh to Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Annisul Huq as contribution to FBCCI Foundation to support "One Businessman-One Family" employment generating programme at a simple ceremony on Tuesday.

HC asks govt to explain within 3 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to explain within three weeks why the law enforcers' action creating obstacles to publishing and selling creative guidebooks for the school students should not be declared illegal.

An HC bench of Justice Md Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed and Justice Naima Haider issued the rule following a writ petition filed by a publisher.

Mehedi Hasan, owner of Sure Success Publications, recently filed the writ petition stating that they are publishing the books for the students of class six to eight for the interest of their creativity, but the law enforcers are restricting them from the publishing and selling those books in the markets.

Secretaries to the ministries of education and home, inspector general of police, director general of Rapid Action Battalion and chairman of National Curriculum Board were asked to reply to the rule.

Road crashes kill six, injure 13

METRO DESK

At least six people were killed and 13 others injured in separate road accidents in Jessore and Sirajganj yesterday.

A correspondent from Jessore reports: Four people, including a police constable, were killed and 13 others injured in a head-on collision between a bus and a truck on the Khulna-Jessore Highway in Abhoynagar upazila of Jessore early yesterday.

Two of the deceased were identified as Sheikh Zillur Rahman, 35, a police constable hailed from Fakirhat of Bagerhat district and Lipi, 14, daughter of Kartik Mondal of Doulatpur in Khulna.

Witnesses said a Khulna-bound BRTC bus collided with a truck coming from opposite direction near Taltala Milepost area on the highway at about 5:00am, leaving Zillur and Lipi dead on the spot and 15 others injured.

Of the injured, two died at Khulna Medical College Hospital. Their identities could not be known immediately.

The other injured were admitted to Abhoynagar Upazila Health Complex.

A correspondent from Sirajganj reports: A man and his wife were killed in a road accident on Bangabandhu Bridge approach road in Konabari Border Bazar area around 7:00am yesterday.

The dead were identified as Farhad Hossain, 30, and his wife Munni Khatun, 25, residents of Dhap Natun Radio Colony Engineer Para in Rangpur municipal area.

Police said the accident occurred when a north Bengal-bound coach hit their motorcycle from behind while the couple was going to their home in Rangpur from Jamalpur, leaving them dead on the spot.

Farhad Hossain was a senior officer of Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank at Sherpur in Bogra.

'Childcare facilities at workplace boost output'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A day-care centre for the children of the working mothers should be established at every public and private organisation to increase productivity, said speakers at a roundtable discussion yesterday.

If an organisation provides childcare facilities, it would add some positive impacts on the career of the women and on the output of the company,

said journalist Sumona Shrinin.

Most of the women quit jobs only to bring up their kids despite having successful careers, she said. "We cannot let those women to be dropped out and effective measures must be taken in this regard."

The roundtable entitled 'Maternity and Human Resource Development' was organised by Prothom Alo Jobs in association with Brac

Bank Limited at the office of the daily Prothom Alo in the city.

Mothers who work at different companies in the city shared their experiences at the discussion.

A participant said most organisations are unwilling to allow due maternity leave to expectant mothers.

Women often have to quit their jobs only to look after the children, another participant told the roundtable.

"Giving birth to a child is the hardest job ever," said Shamima Akhter, a mother who works for the IDLC Finance Company Ltd. "It becomes very difficult for the

would be mothers and women having children if minimum support -- maternity leave, breast feeding time -- is not provided by their organisations."

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QUADRUPLE MURDER IN DINAJPUR Relatives seek justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The persons accused of quadruple murder that took place in a Dinajpur village in 2002 are now trying to have the murder case withdrawn by terming it a politically motivated case, family members of the victims said at a press conference in the city yesterday.

They also alleged that the accused are also threatening them with death.

On June 17 in 2002, a gang of criminals poured petrol into three rooms of a house at Deuli village in Birganj upazila and set them on fire, leaving four people dead. They are Maqbul Hossain and his three nephews Bachhu Miah, Samad and Zainal Abedin.

Md Abdur Razzak, son of Maqbul, appealed to the prime minister to take steps so that the killers cannot go unpunished.

He said the killing was a sequel to long-standing feud with an influential person of the village who was trying to grab 50 acres of land belonging to Maqbul's family.

Earlier in 1994, hired men of the influential person stabbed Maqbul's brother Abdul Gafur, he said.

Two murder cases were filed against 42 people. One of the accused went abroad and did not return. The remaining 41 are now on bail.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted charge sheet against the 42 accused in 2003.



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