

Saarc Charter of Democracy finalised

BSS, Dhaka

Senior officials of the eight-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) yesterday came up with a draft charter to consolidate democratic process in the region following a two-day exercise in the capital.

"We have finalised the draft of the charter which was proposed earlier by Bangladesh and adopted by the last summit in Thimphu... it will be reviewed by the Saarc council of (foreign) ministers ahead of its endorsement in the next summit," Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes told the newsmen.

Quayes, who chaired the two-day meeting, however, declined to elaborate the details of the draft charter as it was yet to be endorsed at the political level but said the representatives of all the member states joined the two-day exercise in preparing the draft aimed at "spread and preservation of democracy" in the region.

"All the member states of Saarc now enjoy democracy, so what could be a better time than this to draft a charter to spread and preserve democracy in the region," he said.

Bangladesh originally floated the idea of adopting a charter of democracy for Saarc

while it was formally proposed during the last summit of heads of government in Bhutan earlier this year when the regional forum had tasked Dhaka to formulate the draft.

In the subsequent months, Bangladeshi officials formulated the draft, which was given a "clean paper" shape during the past two days of exercise of official level representatives of the member states at a hotel here.

Asked what specific steps the draft suggested if any of the member states suffered a setback in their democratic process as democracy appeared fragile in several parts of the region earlier, Quayes evaded a direct answer but said the charter did not speak about democratic values but addressed issues of its preservation.

Replying to another question if the regional grouping took a political look with the drafting of the charter, the foreign secretary said nothing barred the Saarc in exploring its possibilities.

Director General of Saarc Desk in the foreign ministry Sufiur Rahman also spoke on the occasion explaining the conceptual background of the charter.



Tailback on the Mirpur Road from Dhaka City College to Dhanmondi Road No-27 in the city is a routine experience for commuters. The photo was taken at 11:00am yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Suranjit Sengupta, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry, speaks at a roundtable on "Cancellation of the fifth and seventh amendments: Politics of tomorrow." The daily Prothom Alo organised the event at its office in the city yesterday. (Story on page 1)

PM likely to receive FF certificates for Kamal, Jamal today

BSS, Dhaka

The government has decided to confer posthumous freedom fighter certificates on Sheikh Kamal and Sheikh Jamal, sons of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"The government has decided to confer the freedom fighter certificates on them... in the interest of highlighting the records of the Liberation War," Liberation War Affairs Secretary Uzzal Bikash Dutta told the news agency yesterday.

He said two other 1971 veterans Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni and Abdur Rab Serniabat, the nephew and brother in law of Bangabandhu respectively, would also be conferred the certificates for their heroic role in the Liberation War.

"The liberation war affairs ministry is expected to hand-over the certificates to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the eldest sister of the two brothers tomorrow (Monday) as one of the two surviving family members of the family," Dutta said. "The decision was taken to highlight the fact that Bangabandhu's family members also had an active role in 1971 and they took part in the Liberation War instead of staying indoors in safety."

Sheikh Kamal and Sheikh Jamal were in captivity along with other members of the family in Dhaka under the custody of Pakistani troops during the Liberation War while Bangabandhu was faced with a trial in a Pakistani jail.

Kamal managed to flee the captivity and joined the Liberation War, obtained commission in Bangladesh army and subsequently was appointed as the military aide-de-camp or ADC to general MAG Osmany during the liberation war.

Following the footsteps of the elder brother Sheikh Jamal also escaped the captivity, crossed over to a liberated zone and joined the Liberation War. The London-based Sunday Times carried a photograph of Jamal in the warfront at the flag end of the Liberation War.

Their mother Begum Fazilatunnessa Mujib, elder sister Sheikh Hasina and her nuclear scientist husband Dr Wajed Mian, younger sister Sheikh Rehana and younger brother Sheikh Russel were remained in captivity in Dhaka.

Sheikh Moni was one of the top leaders of the Bangladesh Liberation Force (BLF) popularly known as the Mujib Bahini while Abdur Rab Serniabat was a also a top ranking veteran of the same force.

Dr Mohibur made UGC member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Mohammad Mohibur Rahman, former professor of Chemistry Department of Dhaka University, has been appointed member of University Grants Commission (UGC).

Mohibur, now the director of Centre for Excellence, a research centre in DU, was appointed full time member for the next four years, said sources in the education ministry and UGC.

The education ministry issued a circular in this regard yesterday. Dr Mohibur is likely to join UGC today, said the sources.

NU Masters result published

UNB, Dhaka

Masters' results of different subjects of 2007 under the National University (NU) were published yesterday.

The published subjects include Bangla, English, Social Science, Statistics, Marketing, Geography, Home Economics, Arabic, Palli, Sanskrit, Psychology, Library and Information Science, Soil Science and Biochemistry.

The result of other subjects will be published gradually, a press release said. The result is available on the NU website at www.nu.edu.bd.

Child mortality rate falls by 5.3pc

Says report of Save the Children

UNB, Dhaka

Child mortality rate in Bangladesh fell by an average of 5.3 percent annually from 1993 to 2007 and the gap between boys' and girls' prospects of survival closed, reveals Save the Children's report titled "A Fair Chance at Life".

The report says Bangladesh has defied the odds and is now on track to achieve Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4.

In part, the country did this by focusing on increasing equitable access to life saving health services, such as immunisation, treatment of diarrhoea and family planning for the poorest segment of the population.

It says a number of developments contributed to a narrowing of disparities between the sexes. These include micro credit schemes, improved female education, the growth of vibrant women's civil society organisations and networks, declining fertility rate over the past three decades and expanding job opportunities for women.

Save the Children's report comes two weeks before world leaders gather in New York to discuss all of the MDGs - internationally agreed targets to combat global poverty by 2015.

With only five years to go, the goal to reduce child mortality by two-thirds is the one mostly in

off track. The rate has fallen only by 28 percent since 1990, far short of its 67 percent target.

The report says lives of more than a million children could be saved in Asia over ten years if countries reduced child mortality among poor children at the same rate as the ones better off.

The aid agency, in a new report, claims it has discovered a dangerous trend among many countries of reductions in child mortality being concentrated among children only from better off communities.

Save the Children says an average global reduction in child mortality of 28 percent over the past decade masks a dangerous expansion of the child mortality gap between the richest and poorest families. This can be seen in many countries including India, Nepal, Pakistan, Cambodia and the Philippines.

Ben Phillips, Save the Children UK's regional strategy director for Asia based in Bangkok, said "A child dies every six seconds from preventable causes in Asia. Equity is a huge problem."

He says there are tall and healthy children living in urban areas across Asia who go to good schools and eat healthy food. On the other hand, children in many rural provinces are malnourished, tired and work in rice fields everyday, unable to reach their full potential.

Road accidents kill 6

METRO DESK

At least six people were killed in separate road accidents in Gazipur, Mymensingh and Bagerhat yesterday.

A correspondent from Gazipur reports: Three members of a family were killed as a bus hit a motorcycle on Dhaka-Tangail highway at Kaliakoir upazila in Gazipur yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Shakil Ahmed, 30, of Gabtoli village in the upazila, his wife Kohinur Akhtar, 22, and their three-year-old daughter Rahuan Akhtar.

Locals and highway police said the accident occurred when a passenger bus rammed a motorcycle at Sutrapur around 11:00am, leaving its three riders dead on the spot.

Our correspondent from Mymensingh adds: A woman was killed in a road accident on Bhaluka-Shakhipur road at Bharaduba of Bhaluka upazila in Mymensingh yesterday.

The victim was identified as Shyamoly Begum, 45, wife of Tara Miah of village Bandiapara in Bhaluka.

Police said the accident occurred when a Bhaluka-bound human-hauler hit Shyamoly Begum from behind while she was crossing the road at around 12:45pm, leaving her dead on the spot.

Police recovered the body and also seized the human-hauler but its driver fled the scene.

The body was sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with Bhaluka Police Station in this connection.

A correspondent from Bagerhat reports: At least two motorcyclists were killed in a road accident at Banshtoli under Rampal upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Jahangir Sheikh, 35, son of Moslem Sheikh of Jhanjhania village and Ruhul Mollah, 30, son of Faruk Mollah of Gabunia village under the same upazila.

Md Nizam Uddin, officer-in-charge of Rampal Police Station, said the accident took place when a speedy motorcycle tangled in rope of a cow.

Locals rushed the victims to Khulna Medical College Hospital where they succumbed to their injuries.

No democracy in BSD

Claim two former leaders

DU CORRESPONDENT

Two central leaders of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) who have recently resigned from the party yesterday claimed that democratic practices hardly exist in the party as all activities of the party are run as per the direction of its General Secretary Khalequzzaman.

Leaders who raise questions against the decision of Khalequzzaman are either dropped from the posts or expelled from the party, alleged two central leaders Abdullah Sarker and Saifur Rahman at a press conference at the National Press Club.

Showing causes of internal conflict and other problems in the party, former lawmaker Abudullah Sarker has resigned from the party on March 28 this

year followed by Saifur Rahman.

An attack was made on the family members of Abudullah in connection with his resignation on March 31, alleged Abdullah saying that the attack was made following patron from other central leaders.

Speaking at the press conference, Abdullah said he was trying to ensure democratic practices in the party for last six to seven years but failed.

"When it appeared impossible to ensure the democratic practices in the party, I tendered my resignation," he added.

Saifur Rahman alleged that two city unit leaders were expelled and "oral restriction" was imposed on carrying out organisational activities of few leaders after their resignation.

Some other leaders may be expelled from the party within next 20 to 25 days, he feared.

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