

Asem ends with call for peace

BSS, Laos
The two-day summit of the 9th Asia Europe Meeting (Asem) ended in Vientiane of Laos yesterday with a call for strengthening partnership for peace and development among 52 Asian and European nations.

"The forum has expressed strong desire and collective will to foster an environment of lasting peace, security, stability and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms to contribute to sustainable economic and social development," said the 16-point declaration adopted in the summit.

Talking to the news agency, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni termed the induction of Bangladesh in Asem a progress in cementing the relations with the Southeast Asian and European countries.

In the declaration, the Asem leaders emphasised strengthening cooperation between the regional organisations through establishing partnership links to contribute better interaction aimed at creation of atmosphere of peace and stability in Asia and Europe.

The declaration said the Asem leaders reaffirmed their determination to respect the right of Asem people to freely choose their political system and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

They agreed to provide new momentum to the cooperation between Asia and Europe for strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, reforming the financial sector and international financial institutions to spur economic growth and create conducive environment for investment.

They also renewed their pledges to refrain from the act of threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the UN charter and international law, and broaden Asem interfaith dialogue to promote social cohesion, peace and development.

Chairman of the 9th Asem Summit and Prime Minister of Laos Thongsing Thammavong and Belgium Prime Minister Elio Di Rupo also spoke at the closing ceremony.

The next summit of the Asem will be held in Belgium in 2014.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA, STAR
Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir clash with police in Kazir Dewri area in Chittagong city yesterday. Inset, police fire tear gas to subdue similar protesters at Shapla Chattar in Rangpur city. Jamaat-Shibir men clashed with law enforcers in more than a dozen districts yesterday, demanding release of their detained leaders.

Fire breaks out at sweater factory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out in MNS Sweater and Printing Factory in the capital's Adobar area yesterday.

Abdul Alim, senior station officer of Mohammadpur Fire Station, said the fire, might have originated from an electric short circuit in the store room of the tin-shed factory around 6:15pm, burning a good amount of valuables.

Fire fighters doused the flame around 8:00pm. However, no causality was reported as most of the employees were not available in the factory at that time due to prayer break, he said.

BNP condemns arrest of Jamaat men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police attacked Jamaat-e-Islami's countrywide programmes without any provocation, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam said yesterday, strongly condemning injuries and arrests of Jamaat men.

In a statement, he also demanded immediate release of the arrested Jamaat leaders and activists and called for immediate treatment of the injured.

Over 450 people including around 100 policemen, were injured as Jamaat-Shibir men fought pitched battles with law enforcers across the country including Dhaka in the last two days.

"Monday's attack was part of government's plan to prolong its rule without election. But the united movement of people against the autocratic government will be stronger after such inhuman attack," he said.

The government is using police force as its cadres to suppress the opposition parties, Fakhru said.

The clashes sparked as Jamaat-Shibir men took to the streets as part of their weeklong protest programme across the country demanding immediate release of their leaders, including the nine arrested on war crimes charges.

LGD secy criticises Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Government Division (LGD) Secretary Abu Alam Md Shahid Khan yesterday criticised Bangla daily Prothom Alo for a news report regarding the prime minister's financial adviser Mashiur Rahman, which was published on November 2.

Emphasising the importance of news to the public, he said the report titled "Mashiur rejoins during investigation", published on the daily's front page should not have been a three-column story rather it should have been a single-column news.

"We, as Bangladeshi citizens, must be patriotic and should want the nation's development. We have to love the country and think about what is important to the people," Shahid Khan said.

The secretary was addressing a discussion on handover of a proposed democratic decentralisation policy to the government, organised by Governance Advocacy Forum at Cirdap auditorium in the capital.

He said the media is interested in publishing negative news more than positive ones.

LOCAL GOVT

Need for decentralisation stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The people will not be benefited from the local administrations until the government formulates a decentralisation policy to strengthen local government bodies, experts and civil society members said at a discussion yesterday.

This government enacted some laws to empower the local government bodies four years ago but there have been no initiatives to formulate a policy for implementation of those laws, they said.

The speakers alleged that all the political parties strongly spoke for a stronger local government but did

the opposite after assuming power.

Dhaka University professor MM Akash said the political parties frequently changed their stands when their interests were challenged. He said such mere discussions would not work. "Time has come to wage a movement to realise the demands."

Governance Advocacy Forum, a platform of NGOs, organised the discussion in the capital's Cirdap auditorium and handed over a proposal for democratic decentralisation policy to government representatives there.

A local government expert, Dr Tofail Ahmed, said the decentralisa-

tion of the government was a political issue, so political will was a key factor in formulating the policy. "The local government bodies cannot be functional only through decentralisation until there is a decentralised finance commission in place."

He also stressed the need for a separate local government commission.

Local Government Division Secretary Abu Alam Md Shahid Khan emphasised collaboration between the elected representatives and government employees for the country's development.

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