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SAARC SUMMIT

Pakistan faces regional isolation

REZAUL KARIM and SHAKHAWAT LITON

Pakistan faces isolation in South Asia after Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and India have refused to attend the Saarc summit scheduled for November in Islamabad.

The announcements by the four nations, all on Tuesday, mean that the summit will have to be postponed, which will put further strain on the three-decade-old, almost dysfunctional regional body to turn around.

The 19th summit was due on November 9-10 in the Pakistani capital, where heads of state and government of the eight-member nations were to attend.

The four members conveyed their inability to Nepal, the current chair of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, to attend the summit.

Under the rules, the summit has to be postponed if even one member nation pulls out.

Kathmandu has received communications from the Saarc secretariat transmitting the diplomatic notes from the four countries, Nepal's foreign ministry said in a press release late last night.

"We have taken this development seriously. As the current chair of Saarc, the government of Nepal strongly urges that a conducive environment be created soon to ensure the participation of all member states in the 19th Saarc summit in line with the spirit of the Saarc Charter," it said.

Nepal has yet to make a formal announcement about the fate of the summit.

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In an otherwise humbling outing for the Tigers against Afghanistan in the second ODI, 20-year old debutant Mosaddek Hossain was the sole shining light, taking the hosts to a challenging total with his 45 before returning with the ball to take two wickets. However, the youngster's impressive debut ended on a sour note, his side suffering a two-wicket loss as the visitors squared the series 1-1.



Afghans trump sorry Tigers

BISHWAJIT ROY

It might be a bit of an exaggeration to say that Mushfiqur Rahim could have taken a cup of tea before dismantling the stumps, but there is no argument over the fact that he had all the time, yet fluffed a simple stumping and deprived Mosaddek Hossain from an auspicious ODI debut.

Mushfiqur's keeping has long been a concern for the team and many might not pardon him for last night's mistake, but the blame should not only be his; the greater blame should fall on Bangladesh's batting, the real culprit behind their two-wicket defeat to Afghanistan in the second ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Afghanistan

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PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

"A particular country's repeated attempts to interfere in Bangladesh's internal affairs have created an environment, which is not conducive to successful holding of Saarc Summit."

M SHAHRIAR ALAM, STATE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

INDO-PAK TENSIONS

India ratchets up pressure

Islamabad cries war as New Delhi moves to review key water-sharing treaty

AGENCIES

Tensions between India and Pakistan rose yesterday after New Delhi moved to review a privileged business status to Islamabad and threatened to revoke a key water-sharing treaty.

The moves follow the India's decision to look for options beyond diplomatic pressure after a terror attack on an army camp in Kashmir killed 18 soldiers on September 18.

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RAMPAL POWER PLANT

Fly ash a big threat to environment

PINAKI ROY

The fly ash to be generated from the Rampal coal-fired power plant has the potential to cause "substantial" damage to the environment, say experts.

They also pointed out the tender document does not clearly specify how exactly the contaminants of the fly ash will be prevented from leaching.

"It [fly ash] will react with water. The contamination from the fly ash will be inevitable", said an expert reviewing the environmental risks associated with coal ash disposal from the proposed 1320 MW Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company Ltd. ("BIFPCL") coal-powered plant.

Charles H Norris, a Denver-based geoscientist and hydrologist who has been working in the field for the last 40 years, made



the assessment in response to a request made by the National Committee for Saving the Sundarbans (NCSS) headed by advocate Sultana Kamal.

He reviewed the part of the tender documents that deals with handling of coal ash section from the Environmental Impact Analysis for Rampal and the BIFPCL project layout map.

He thinks the Rampal site located on a river bank in a flood-prone area itself is inappropriate for such a project.

"Even for the ash contained within the dyke, this site is inappropriate. The site is minimally above sea level. The area is subjected to both typhoon-driven storm surges and tsunamis. Both of these known risks will become worse -- to unknown degrees -- due to climate change and rising sea levels," the expert added in his remark.

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"Your resolute leadership has provided the people of Bangladesh a beacon of hope during a difficult period."

INDIAN PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI CONGRATULATING PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA ON HER BIRTHDAY

COMPETITIVENESS INDEX

Bangladesh one notch up

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh has improved its competitiveness for the fourth year, thanks to gradual progress in different indicators, mainly infrastructure, according to the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR).

The country moved up one notch to 106 out of 138 economies on the Global Competitiveness Index for 2016-2017, prepared by the World Economic Forum.

"This is positive that Bangladesh has increased its score and ranking gradually," said Prof Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue at the launch of the GCR at the Cirdap in Dhaka yesterday.

The GCR ranks nations based on their ability to offer products and services meeting local and global quality standards at a competitive price with adequate returns on the resources employed or spent on providing them.

A year ago, Bangladesh



Poet and rickshaw puller Shafiq places two roses on the coffin of poet Syed Shamsul Haq at the Central Shaheed Minar. Thousands of people paid tribute to the poet-playwright-writer yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

On the crest of fame all along

Syed Haq laid to rest in his beloved Kurigram; outpouring of love, affection continues

STAR REPORT

Sometimes poets remain unrecognised in life and end up dying unsung only to gain fame in death. The 19th century French poet Charles Baudelaire comes to mind. But not Syed Haq.

Our very own literary titan, Syed Shamsul Haq, who had possessed no magical wand but the pen of a wordsmith that had worked ceaselessly to create many of the finest verses in modern Bangla literature found a place in the Bangla literary scene from the very beginning.

Haq has been riding the crest of fame almost all through his life. And he touched the hearts of literary connoisseurs far and wide.

In death did the poet get the proof of his power over the minds of his fans.

The president of the country led a nation in its outpouring of tribute to arguably the most versatile poet and writer in post-Tagore Bangla literature.

Men, women, children, students, academics, artists, poetry lovers, playwrights, actors, politicians and ordinary people, all came in the hundreds forming the procession of respect at the Central Shaheed Minar to say adieu to a wordsmith, whose verses, lyrics and poetic dramas have found a home in their hearts.

Syed Shamsul Haq, died at 81 on Tuesday evening from lung cancer and was buried yesterday afternoon at the place he was born, Kurigram.

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