

২৭/৭/৮০

তারিখ...	...
পৃষ্ঠা...	কমান... ৩

## SAARC summit likely to be held on schedule

The next summit of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is expected to take place on schedule, despite sudden eruption of tension in the region and its neighbourhood, diplomatic sources in Dhaka said, reports BSS.

The summit has been subjected to unusual delay due to lack of unanimity among the members on its timing but the decks were finally cleared at the meeting of the foreign secretaries in Colombo sometime ago. The meeting was of the view that the event could be staged by the year-end or just at the beginning of the new year in Kathmandu-venue of the event.

However, terrorism in the United States on September 11 and subsequent shift of the international focus in Afghanistan changed the political environment in the area. The current situation stemming from the Afghan tangle has cast a shadow of uncertainty on the holding of the SAARC summit as well but sources believe that the conference of the heads of government of seven member states would be held without further delay, sources believe.

The coming summit was to take place in November, 1999 but was postponed as all the member states could not agree on the dates and consequently, the much-awaited conference was delayed. No headway could be made for the early convening of the summit till the atmosphere changed for the betterment a few months ago. A scheduled meeting of the foreign secretaries was called off as a fallout of the massacre of the royal family in Nepal, which houses the SAARC secretariat and is also host of the next summit. The meeting later took place in late July and agreed that the summit would be held by year-end or

a nearby date. The foreign secretaries obviously took the decision following green-signal from their high political leadership.

SAARC, which was mooted by Bangladesh and formally came into being in 1985 through the first summit Dhaka, has come a long way despite being a nascent organisation and handicapped by problems like resource constraint. The Integrated Programme of Action (IPA) brought member states under the aegis of cooperation in different areas, which proved beneficial for more than one billion people, living in the South Asian region. The next summit is likely to take some important decision, particularly in the field of business and trade, which are expected to help the smaller nations of the forum.