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SAARC summit likely to be held by year-end in Kathmandu

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday expressed its readiness to extend all necessary support for holding the next SAARC summit in Nepal, a top official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

The Third Special Session of the SAARC Standing Committee at its meeting that ended yesterday in Colombo proposed that the 11th SAARC Summit would be held in Kathmandu from December 28 to 30 this year.

Acting foreign secretary Mohsin Ali Khan who led Bangladesh dele-

gation at the Standing Committee meeting in the Sri Lankan capital told BSS over phone that the US news agency AP had apologised for its "misreport" regarding "Bangladesh's problem concerning the summit."

Khan said while all countries reached consensus Wednesday about the proposed date, it was the Maldives that raised some objection.

The representative of the Maldivian government at the end of the standing committee meeting yesterday pointed out that it had some domestic compulsion on those proposed

dates of the Summit.

Despite the objections, the meeting was of the view that efforts would continue for holding the summit on the proposed date, Khan said.

The 11th SAARC summit was postponed in October 1999 following political changes in Pakistan. The summit was to take place in Kathmandu later that year.

Khan in his presentation at the start of the two-day meeting of the standing committee Wednesday recalled Bangladesh's initiative in reactivating the SAARC process.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

SAARC

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh delegation chief had talks with Indian Secretary of External Affairs Chokila Iyer on the sidelines of the meeting on bilateral matters specially the situation along the common borders.

Khan said he had briefed her on the subject specially the recent situation at Panchagram border and she deeply appreciated the problem. Iyer informed Khan that BSF had been instructed to exercise "utmost restraint" in order to create "border of peace" between the two countries.