

Colombo SAARC Summit ushers in new hopes

The just concluded 15th SAARC Summit in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo has ushered in new hopes as the heads of state and government of the south Asian forum, including Bangladesh, vowed to work closely for economic benefit of the region through alleviating poverty, reports BSS.

The two-day eight-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit began on August 2 at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Hall in Colombo for devising way and means to undertake concerted efforts by the member countries to improve the lot of about 150 crore people of the region.

The formation of SAARC Food Bank and SAARC Development Fund (SDF) at the summit would further accelerate the regional initiatives to build a prosperous future for one-fifth people of the globe living in south Asia, leaders of the regional grouping observed.

Besides, Bangladesh's robust role in adopting a 41-point Co-

lombo Declaration, calling for cooperation to fight terrorism and transnational crimes and facing the challenges of food and energy security and climate change, will open up a new era for SAARC to establish peace and stability along with ensuring economic growth in the region.

The declaration adopted in the concluding session also covered wide areas of cooperation including improving intra-regional connectivity and facilitating social, economic and people to people contact and undertaking sustained efforts to attain SAARC Development Goals (SDGs).

The annual conference of the SAARC grouping Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka also underlined the importance of conservation on water resources in the backdrop of a looming global water crisis and implementing the SAFTA in letter and spirit.

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, who led Bangladesh delegation to the summit, strongly pleaded for increasing peoples'

connectivity, working closely for alleviating poverty in South Asia and taking concerted efforts to face the challenges of climate change.

"In this independent world, we could only prosper if we act in unison. It is incumbent upon us who have gathered here to clearly prepare the roadmap for SAARC for the greater prosperity and welfare of the peoples of South Asia," he said in his speech to the inaugural session of the 15th summit.

SAARC leaders highly applauded Dr Fakhruddin when he announced Bangladesh's firm stand against terrorism in all of its form and manifestation.

Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, Pakistan Prime Minister Syed Yusuf Raja Gilani, Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai, Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala, Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigme Y Thinley and the Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoon led their respective countries to the summit.