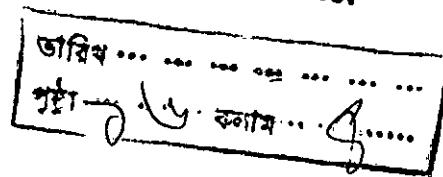


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SAARC summit to be held as scheduled

KATHMANDU, Nov. 30:—Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Nihal Rodrigo has reiterated here that the 11th SAARC summit will be held as scheduled from January 4 to 6, 2002, despite the unstable situation in Nepal. The Rising Nepal said Friday, reports Xinhua.

"Although the situation here has changed now, the SAARC summit

will take place as scheduled," The official English daily quoted Rodrigo as saying while addressing an interaction programme with local people.

"All depends upon the government of the Nepal. It has to tighten security, which is necessary in such conditions," he said, adding that terrorism will be the hottest agenda in the summit in addition to the issues of social and economic cooperation in the region.

The Nepali government imposed the state of emergency across the country after the guerrillas broke the four-month-long ceasefire with the government last Friday and launched massive attacks at police and security personnel, killing about 100 police and army soldiers. More than 200 guerrillas were also killed.

The 11th summit of the seven South Asian countries was originally scheduled to be held in Kathmandu in December, 1999, but was postponed due to the escalating nuclear tests by India and Pakistan.

Established in 1985 to promote regional economic cooperation, SAARC groups seven South Asian countries—Nepal, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.