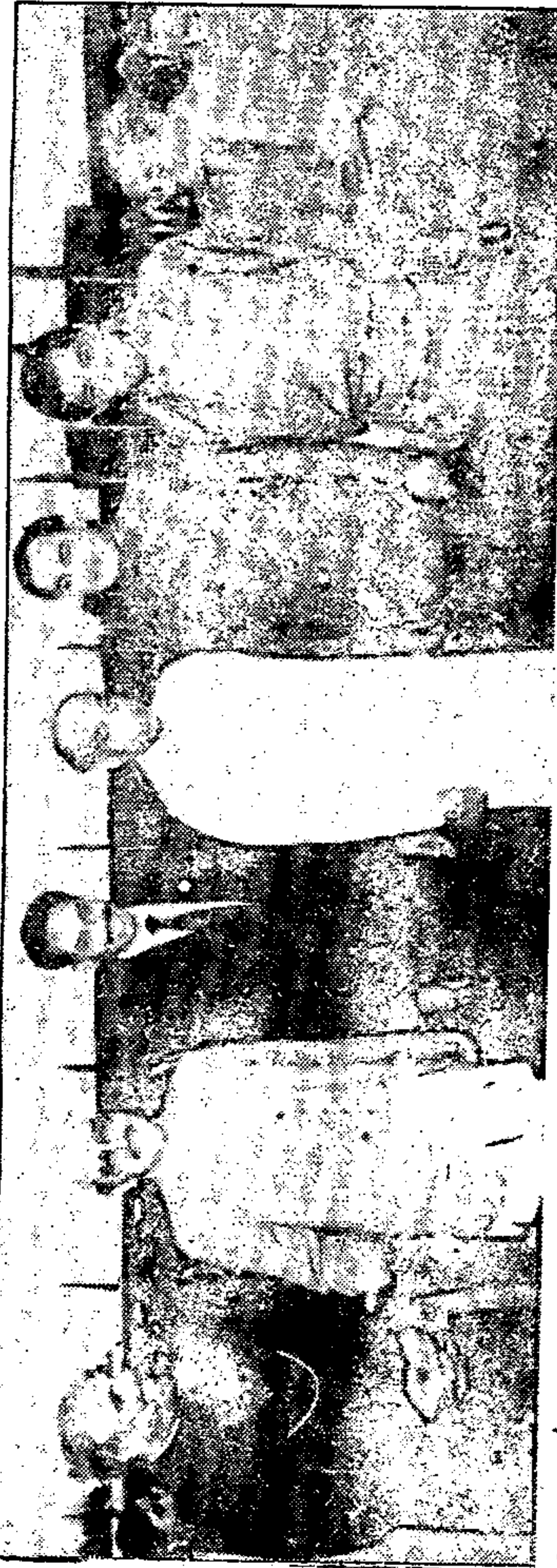


# SAARC for peace, progress,



The Heads of State and Government of seven SAARC nations (from left) Pakistan President Ziaul Haq, Nepalese King Birendra, Bangladesh President Ershad, Sri Lankan President Jayewardene, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Bhutanese King Wangchuk, and Maldives President Gayoom at the civic reception accorded to them on Saturday. —Times

By Alamgir Mohiuddin

The leaders of the South Asian Nations on Saturday opened the first summit with a call for close co-operation for prosperity of a billion people and an end to the historical differences to dispel misunderstanding and suspicion.

The call went out from the plenary session of the two-day conference that will launch the South Asian Association of Regional Co-operation (SAARC). President Hussain Muhammad Ershad opened the summit between King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India, President Abdul Maumoon Gayoom of the Maldives, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev of Nepal, President Ziaul Haq of Pakistan and President J. R. Jayewardene of Sri Lanka at the 53-million-dollar modern Parliament House.

In an unprecedented expression of solidarity, the leaders, true to terms of reference, did not muse over any bilateral issues.

The leaders in their speeches called for a collective pledge to renounce the threat or use of force against one another and work concertedly for the consolidation of good-neighbourly relations for confidence building.

They expressed concern over prevailing tension and

Golden Key of  
Dhaka for  
SAARC leaders

A promise of  
self-reliance

By A Staff Reporter  
President Hussain Muhammad Ershad said on Saturday that South Asian Regional Co-operation symbolised the promise of regional self-reliance and underlined the need for joint and increasingly sophisticated response to global economic compulsions.

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Wangchuk

Larger states  
must be  
magnanimous

By A Staff Reporter  
Bhutanese King Jigme Singye Wangchuk on Saturday called for creating "good neighbourly relationships" among South Asian nations in which "magnanimity of the larger states would

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Rajiv

Suspicion  
dispelled

By A Staff Reporter  
Indian Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi told the inaugural session of the seven-nation summit on Saturday that SAARC member-nations had dispelled the suspicions "that were thought to exist" and demonstrated the possibilities of mutual

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Gayoom

SAARC for peace,  
progress

By A Staff Reporter  
President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of Maldives expressed the hope that South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation could be the instrument for the promotion of peace, progress and stability in this part of the world.

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Birendra

Tapping Nepal's  
water stressed

By A Staff Reporter  
Nepalese King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev on Saturday offered his country's untapped vast reservoir of water resources for exploitation to the mutual benefit of the countries of the region.

The King told the inaugural  
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"The main obstacle is not only to overcome the psychological and emotional barriers of the past, but the fears, anxieties and the apprehensions of the present," he said adding that if the regional cooperation was to be enhanced South Asian nations had to move away from the attitude of suspicion to one of understanding and trust despite major differences in political and security perceptions.

President Gayoom recalled the contribution and efforts of Bangladesh to the creation of SARC and paid tributes to late President Ziaur Rahman for his endeavour to convene a summit meeting of the seven countries. "Our meeting here today will go down as a lasting tribute to that South Asian leader," he said.

He expressed the hope that South Asian regional Cooperation would turn into a 'vibrant reality' for the well being, peace and joy of the peoples of the region.

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He told another questioner that the airlines of the region were working on a proposal to package fare for promotion of tourism and connect capitals of SARC countries by air.



## Ziaul Haq

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own benefit.

Addressing the inaugural session of the summit, he felt that the regional cooperation would inevitably lead to greater understanding, which, he said, in turn would also dissipate mistrust, promote goodwill and help reduce waste and diversion of resources to unproductive uses.

This process, the Pakistani President felt, should be backed and accelerated by concurrent actions in the political field.

President Zia maintained that South Asian nations could take steps to banish nuclear weapons. He also suggested for creation of a system of consultations on matters of common concern to SARC members.

President Haq urged the South Asian countries to resolve not to waver from the path of cooperative endeavour for the common good of the people of the region. He said the search for peace, stability and progress in South Asia could make a vital contribution to international peace, and security, and assist in the world.

President Zia referred to the common commitment to the United Nations Charter and the Non-aligned Movement which provided sound basis for the consolidation of good neighbourly relations among the SARC member countries.

Recorded deep indebtedness to President H M Ershad for the cordial invitation to the summit meeting and for the warm welcome by his government and the generous people of Bangladesh.

### TRIBUTES TO LATE ZIA

The Pakistani President recorded the far sight and statesmanship of late President Ziaur Rahman in recognising the imperatives of regional cooperation and said our meeting in the capital of Bangladesh represents a tribute to him (President Ziaur Rahman) for his dedicated efforts to pioneer the comity of South Asian nations.

The seed sown by President Ziaur Rahman has grown into a sturdy plant thanks to the painstaking care with which it has been nurtured by the Government of Bangladesh.

Departing from the written text, President Zia said the remarks by Sri Lankan President J.R. Jayewardene that the establishment of peace and stability in each of our country and in each of our region were of fundamental importance to strengthen the SARC spirit.

Referring to the informal discussions and consultations at the experts level, he said the views exchanged by the SARC leaders and the remarks by the Sri Lankan President were extremely useful for making the SARC more effective.

He said that the model of co-operation evolved by SARC nations was in accord with realities compulsions and genius of South Asian countries. "We have not sought to melt our bilateral relationships into a common regional identity, but rather to fit South Asian co-operation into our respective foreign policies as an additional dimension."

He said that his country welcomed the diversity of the region and affirmed sovereign equality of seven states of South Asia. "We have profound faith in peaceful co-existence," Mr. Gandhi said.

Indian Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi hoped that the practice of regional co-operation under SARC would have a beneficial impact on bilateral relationships among member-nations.

He said that a spirit of solidarity, sharing and unity of purpose have brought the South Asian nation together.

Mr. Gandhi said that South Asian nations had been able to evolve modalities which did not allow bilateral stresses and strains to impinge on regional co-operation. "Our co-operation tempers enthusiasm with pragmatism and initiative with consensus," he said. The Indian Prime Minister said that the summit had given rise to great expectations among peoples of South Asia and outside world. Its success would depend on the involvement of our peoples in their hundreds of millions, he said.

### ECONOMIC SITUATION

Referring to the global economic situation, Mr. Gandhi said that the world economy remained immersed in deep crisis with international economic institutions in disarray. "The consensus on development has broken down." Multilateralism have come under severe strain.

He said though the South Asian countries had weathered the economic crisis well, they were still being confronted by formidable problems like poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition and disease. He said that SARC nations would have to overcome those problems in a highly adverse external environment.

Mr. Gandhi observed that the endeavours of South Asian nations would strengthen the forces of multilateralism and world-wide co-operation.

The Non-aligned Movement, the Indian Prime Minister said, to whom all South Asian nations belonged had made the pursuit of peace, progress, prosperity and the establishment of a new world order, the centerpiece of its efforts. "SARC gives practical form in our region to the declaration on collective self-reliance adopted at the New Delhi Non-aligned Summit."