

SAARC Summit begins today

MALE, Nov 20 (BSS) : The much awaited Fifth SAARC Summit begins here tomorrow after a gap of two years, when the leaders of seven south Asian nations will discuss the ways and means to make the organisation more viable, strong and result-oriented after evaluating past five years performances.

The Maldives Foreign Minister, Mr. Fathulla Jameel, new Chairman of the SAARC council of Ministers, told the council's eighth session that the

SAARC Countries should adopt a "common front" on international economic issues and called for efforts in devising strategies to make developmental goals a reality.

The fourth summit took place in Islamabad on December 31, 1988, when Ms Benazir Bhutto became Prime Minister of Pakistan and the fifth summit was scheduled for Colombo last year (1989). The meeting could not take place following India's refusal to withdraw its troops by a specific date from Sri Lanka

where they (Indian army) were engaged in suppressing Tamil rebels.

The SAARC Foreign Ministers and officials during past seven days had done a serious exercise reviewing reports of the Standing Committee comprising Foreign Ministers, monitored and coordinated various programmes for approval by the Council of Ministers.

The Fifth SAARC Summit will have three founder-members who

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SAARC Summit

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are President Hussain Muhammad Ershad (first SAARC Chairman) King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan and Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom.

Four Prime Ministers of Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal will be the new faces in the SAARC which was established in Dhaka on December 8, 1985, with President Ershad as the first Chairman.

According to SAARC customs, Pakistan's new Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in his capacity as the outgoing Chairperson of SAARC will open the meeting with a few words welcoming his colleagues to the Fifth Summit. The outgoing Chairman will request President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom as leader of host country delegation to inaugurate the Fifth Summit.

After calling the fifth meeting of heads of state or government and adoption of the provisional agenda, the outgoing Chairperson will propose election of the leader of host Maldives after his election by acclamation President Gayoom will take the chair.

Male, capital of the picturesque island nation of the

Maldives wears a festive look on the occasion of hosting the fifth SAARC Summit.

Kurumba village, a tourist resort, has been made secretariat for the Fifth SAARC Summit and another tourist resort, Bandos has been made the media centre. A ferry service takes 45 minutes to reach bandos and 25 minutes to reach Kurumba village from Male.

Nearly one hundred journalists have already gathered here from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka and other countries.