

Gayoom, Khaleda talk bilateral issues

SAARC meetings to be made more business-like

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The Maldives President, Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Saturday discussed the ways for making SAARC meetings more business-like and functional, reports BSS.

The Male meeting of SAARC Foreign Ministers had given the mandate to the current SAARC Chairman, Mr. Gayoom for seeking suggestions of member states on how to make the meetings business-like and functional by reducing formalities.

A foreign office spokesman told newsmen the two leaders during their 90-minute talks held at State Guest House Meghna also discussed various matters of bilateral interests.

He said the Maldives President briefed Begum Khaleda Zia about the SAARC activities. Mr. Gayoom also pointed out various previous decisions needed attention for speedy implementation.

The observance of SAARC year of environment in 1992, setting up of a

SAARC regional fund, study on the causes and consequences of natural disaster and protection and preservation of the environment, study on the Green House effect and its impact on the region and setting up of non-governmental and professional associations are the subjects which came up for discussion, he said.

The spokesman said the Maldives had prepared a list of activities in observance of the environment year and those were being circulated among the member states.

Regarding the SAARC fund it was observed that the fund could be constituted by voluntary contributions of member states and also by donor agencies and international financial institutions.

The two leaders, among others also discussed about the status of children in SAARC countries and called for following up of the export meeting held on the subject in February this year.

During the formal talks President Gayoom referred to the vision and wisdom of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman who had first formulated the idea of SAARC as an instrument of peace, progress and cooperation in this region and added that although the translation of this vision into reality took place subsequently all of us owe this idea to him (President Zia).

Begum Khaleda Zia said that SAARC as a concept centred to be very close to us and all of us together should do everything to address the problem of poverty in this region in an environment of peace, security, and stability.

Begum Khaleda Zia described the existing relations between the two countries as "excellent" and said the volume of cooperation was very satisfactory.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister offered seats in the medical, en-

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gineering and other institutions for the Maldives students. She said Bangladesh could send both skilled and unskilled labours to Maldives.

She welcomed more economic cooperation between the two countries in the form of joint ventures for the mutual benefit of the two peoples.

Begum Khaleda Zia extended all support to the SAARC current Chairman President Gayoom in leading the organisation to its cherished goal of improving the lot of the people of this region. She hoped that SAARC would become more meaningful and purposeful in future.

During the talks, Prime Minister Begum Zia was assisted by Foreign Minister A.S.M. Mostafizur Rahman, State Minister for Food Minister Nazmul Huda, Foreign Secretary Abul Ahsan, Member of the Planning Commission, Dr. Sheikh Maqsood Ali, Additional Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman and Additional Secretary In-charge Prime Minister's Secretariat Dr. Kamaluddin Siddiqui.

President Gayoom was aided among others by Mr. Abdul Rasheed Hussain, Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, Mr. Ibrahim Hosain Zaki, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. Ahmed Abdullah, High Commissioner of the Maldives to Bangladesh.