

## Indian Press blames Delhi for postponement of SAARC meet

Calcutta's popular Bengali daily Ananda Bazar Patrika on Saturday said the SAARC Summit was deferred again as Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh decided not to attend the meeting in Dhaka at the last moment, says BSS.

The lead item of the paper was headlined: "SAARC postponed for India, wave of Criticisms."

The report said the Summit was earlier scheduled to be held in

January but it was shifted to February 6, and 7 on requests of India and Sri Lanka which were ravaged by tsunami. As per Charter of SAARC a Summit cannot be held if any of the members of the grouping fails to attend, so it was postponed.

The report said following India's decision there has been wave of criticisms in the neighboring countries Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The report also recalled that in the recent past the 12th SAARC Summit held in Islamabad had to be deferred once as India declined to attend it.

The participation of Nepal in the Summit became doubtful following the dismissal of the Deuba government by King Gyanendra, it said.

But the participation of Nepalese king accompanied by the  
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queen at the SAARC Summit was communicated by the Nepalese ambassador to Bangladesh Foreign Minister M. Morshed Khan at his residence late night of February 1.

The daily also quoted Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shamsheer M. Chowdhury as saying that "the reasons given by India for not attending the Summit are not acceptable to Bangladesh."

"India has created more problems than it has resolved through its decision not to participate in the SAARC Summit," the Asian Age, an influential India daily, in its Friday's editorial said.

The newspaper published both from New Delhi and Kolkata said, "The reasons ostensibly are the security situation in Bangladesh and the political turmoil spelling an end to democracy in Nepal."

The newspaper said, "India cannot but be concerned about these issues but the question that has led to widespread resentment in the region whether India should have held SAARC hostage to these considerations."

Continuing the paper wrote: "In fact, South Asia suffers from a major security problem and if it is not Bangladesh today, it could be Sri Lanka tomorrow, and perhaps even India the day after. SAARC then becomes even more relevant today and efforts should have been made by New Delhi to ensure that the "spirit" of the South Asian process does not become subservient to bilateral politics."

The Asian Age also published a story on Friday where the Pakistan Foreign Minister expressed his disappointment over India's decision to opt out of the SAARC Summit saying this would have a "negative impact on India-Pakistan relations".

Khurshed Mehmood Kasuri said that such regional meetings were important to create the goodwill necessary to sustain the peace process.

"It is important that our spirits are high and this decision has had a dampening effect and can be counterproductive," he added.