

তারিখ
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Leaders from South Asia, from left to right, Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Chairman of Bhutan's Council of Ministers Khandu Wangchuk, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Nepal's Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Pakistan's President Gen. Pervez Musharraf and Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga stand at the conclusion of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit in Kathmandu, Nepal, Sunday.

Kathmandu Declaration emphasises to combat terrorism

South Asian Economic Union envisaged

KATHMANDU, Jan 6:-The eleventh summit of the seven-member regional forum SAARC ended here this morning with the leaders agreeing to accelerate economic cooperation to realize the goal of a South Asian Economic Union (SAEU) "to give effect to the shared aspirations of a more prosperous South Asia", reports BSS.

The leaders, in the "Kathmandu Declaration" they signed at the end of their reduced two-day summit, also emphasized the need for "the urgent conclusion" of a comprehensive convention on combating international terrorism. International cooperation to combat terrorism, should be conducted in conformity with the U N Charter, international laws and relevant international conventions, they said.

In the declaration, the seven heads of state and government renewed their pledge to strengthen the regional association to make it "more cohesive, result-oriented and forward looking."

Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, Pakistan President Par-

vez Musharraf, Sri Lankan President

Chandrika Kumaratunga attended the summit chaired by Prime Minister of Nepal Sher Bahadur Deuba.

The Declaration underscored the importance of annual summits in charting common strategies for realizing the objectives and principles set out in the charter of the regional association. (The 11th

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Declaration

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summit was held more than three and a half years behind the schedule).

The 11-page Declaration stipulated the goals of regional cooperation in, the economic sector, poverty alleviation, cooperation in social and cultural sectors, welfare of women and children; cooperation in education, international politics and economic environment.

The other goals are security of small states, eradication of terrorism, report of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEP), enhancing political cooperation, setting up a South Asian Development Fund people-to-people contact, rationalization of SAARC and institutional issues and SAARC award.

The SAARC leaders reiterated their support to the UN Security Council Resolution 1373 of September 28, 2001, and expressed their determination to redouble efforts, collectively as well as individually, to prevent and suppress terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including by increased cooperation and full implementation of the relevant international conventions relating to terrorism to which they are parties.

Recognizing the distinct ominous links between terrorism, drug-trafficking, money laundering and other transnational crimes, they emphasized the need for coordinating efforts at national and regional levels to strengthen the global response to this serious challenge and threat to international security.

The SAARC leaders directed their Council of Ministers, comprising Foreign Ministers of the forum, to finalize the text of the draft treaty framework by the end of 2002, recognizing the need to move quickly towards a South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA).

For moving towards the goals of SAFTA, they directed the member countries to expedite action to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers and structural impediments to free trade.