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## Fakhruddin to inaugurate as Chairperson 14th SAARC summit begins in Delhi today Afghanistan joins first time

Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed left Dhaka on Monday afternoon for the Indian capital of New Delhi to attend the 14th SAARC Summit beginning there today (Tuesday), reports BSS.

Information Adviser Barrister Maulana Hossain, Finance Adviser Dr. A.B. Mirza Azizul Islam, Cabinet Secretary Ali Imam Majumder, chiefs of the three services, dean of diplomatic core and high civil and military officials saw the Chief Adviser off at the VIP terminal of Zia International Airport.

As the current chairperson of the South Asian regional forum, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed will formally inaugurate the summit. He will also adopt the agenda of the 14<sup>th</sup> SAARC summit.

The high-powered Bangladesh delegation to the summit also includes Foreign Adviser Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Secretary-in-charge Kazi M. Aminul Islam, Press Secretary to Chief Adviser Syed Fahim Munaim, Foreign Secretary Md. Touhid Hossain, Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr. Saïehuddin Ahmed, Chief Editor and Managing Director of BSS Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury and the Financial Express Editor Moazzem Hossain.

Apart from the heads of the state and government of the seven member countries, president of

Afghanistan Hamid Karzai will attend the summit for the first time after his country's induction in the regional forum in the last SAARC summit in Dhaka.

Besides, representatives from the USA, European Union (EU), China, Japan and South Korea will participate in the summit as observers for the first time since the launching of the regional grouping 22 years ago in Dhaka.

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso, South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon will make their brief presentations at the opening session while Richard Boucher, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia will represent his country.

According to official sources,

the SAARC leaders will finalize the outline of the South Asian University, a large part of which will be based in New Delhi and setting up of SAARC food bank. An inter-governmental agreement will be signed during the summit to set up the university.

On the sidelines of the summit, the Chief Adviser will hold meetings with other SAARC leaders on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed will also call on the Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at Rashtrapati Bhavan and attend a banquet to be hosted by Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh tomorrow.

The Chief Adviser returns home on Thursday (April 5) evening.