

South Asian cooperation stressed at SAARC summit calls for Iraqi pullout

MALE (Maldives), Nov. 23.—The fifth SAARC summit ended today after three days of deliberations reaffirming their commitment to the principles and objectives of SAARC and reiterating their resolve to intensify cooperation under its aegis, reports BSS.

The SAARC which came into being six years ago in Dhaka was in doubt of viability for the delay in holding the fifth summit by two years. It has ultimately concluded its session successfully as the seven SAARC leaders including four new Prime Minister exchanged views frankly to revitalise the organisation.

Presided over by Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom the summit was participated by President H.M. Ershad, Indian Premier Chandra Shekhar, Pakistan Premier Nawaz Sharif, Nepalese Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dingiri Banda Wijetunga.

The fifth summit of SAARC also issued a 27-point Male declaration reiterating that cooperation among the South Asian countries was necessary for improving the quality of life of peoples of the region. They recalled their conviction that objectives of peace and stability in South Asia could be best served by fostering

mutual understanding cooperation and good neighbourly relations.

Meanwhile, the fifth SAARC summit leaders today entrusted President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and Bangladesh President Hussain Muhammad Ershad to initiate consultation with the member states to make the six-year old South Asian organisation more effective and strong, reports BSS.

"The heads of state or Government stressed the need for adopting a more business-like and functional approach in the conduct of meeting held under the aegis of SAARC. They requested the Chairman of the Fifth SAARC Summit and the president of Bangladesh to initiate consultations with the member states in this regard, Mr.

K.K. Bhargava, SAARC Secretary-General told a Press conference while announcing summit decisions in a joint press release. The Press conference was also addressed by the SAARC Chairman President Gayoom.

The SAARC leaders stressed their desire to promote peace stability amity and progress in the region through strict adherence to the principles of the UN charter and the Non-aligned movement particularly respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, national independence, non use of force, non interference in the internal affairs of others states and peaceful settlement of disputes.

See Page 10 Col. 4

From Page 1 Col. 7

The SAARC convention on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances was signed by the SAARC Foreign Ministers at the concluding session today.

Expressing satisfaction at the growing regional cooperation in combating the problems of drug trafficking and drug abuse the SAARC leaders urged the member states to take early measures to ratify the convention for its coming into force. The SAARC leaders also expressed serious concern over the growing linkages between drug trafficking and international arms trade and terrorist activities.

South Asian leaders endorsed the decision of the Council of Ministers in regard to the time frame for completion of the regional study on the

causes and consequences of natural disasters and the protection and preservation of environment.

Referring to the unprecedented climatic changes predicted by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climatic Change (IPCC) the leaders urged the world community to mobilise additional finance and to make available appropriate technologies to enable the developing countries to face the new challenges arising from climatic changes and sea level rise.

The SAARC leaders expressed concern that member states were compelled to divert their scarce resources in combating terrorism and called for expeditious enactments enabling measures for the implementation of the SAARC regional convention on suppression of terrorism.

The SAARC leaders welcomed the idea of setting up of a fund for regional projects which could make available credit on easy terms for the identification and development of regional projects.

AFP adds: Seven South Asian leaders ended a three-day summit in the Maldives capital with a call for the urgent and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

The call was contained in a joint declaration adopted at the SAARC. The declaration urged Iraq to immediately end its August 2 occupation and subsequent annexation of Kuwait which it said had sparked a crisis that dealt a severe blow to South Asian economies.

SAARC countries also urged international assistance to compensate the losses they suffered because of the sharp drop in remittances by their national employed in the Gulf and increased oil prices.

BSS further adds: The leaders of seven South Asian countries today announced its decision to launch the special SAARC travel document which would exempt its holders from visas for travel with the region, reports BSS.

A joint press release issued at the end of the fifth SAARC summit. At Male said that the leaders decided that Supreme Court judges, members of national Parliaments, heads of national academic institutions, their spouses and dependent children would be entitled to this document.

Endorsing the decision of the Council of Ministers to launch the scheme for the promotion of organised tourism during the first halfs of 1991 the leaders also welcomed this proposal for institutionalised cooperation among the tourist industries of the member states with a view to attracting more tourists from outside this region.

The SAARC leaders decided that measures for cottage industries and handicraft should be taken up forthwith to set a stage for promoting collective self reliance in the Region.

They directed the Secretary General to appoint two to three experts from the region to prepare a paper suggesting modalities for setting up of joint ventures sources of funding and other necessary details for consideration at the next meeting of SAARC Ministers.

The leaders decided to observe the SAARC year of shelter 1991, the SAARC year of the environment 1992 and the SAARC year of disabled persons 1993.