

# SAARC Charter of Democracy adopted

Dhaka, Feb 9 (bdnews24.com) --The SAARC Council of Ministers has adopted the Charter of Democracy in Thimphu.

Foreign ministers of SAARC member countries on Tuesday adopted the Charter mooted by Bangladesh at the 16th SAARC Summit last April.

The Charter gives expression to the collective commitment of the member states to promote and preserve the values and ideals of democracy as well as democratic institutions, according to a press release issued in Dhaka on Tuesday.

The draft Charter was finalised in Dhaka in Sept 2010 and foreign secretaries of SAARC states in the standing committee meeting recommended endorsement of the charter on Monday.

Foreign minister Dipu Moni is leading the Bangladesh delegation to the SAARC Council of Ministers that was held in the Bhutanese capital recently.

"It also approved the idea of holding the trial run of a cargo train from Bangladesh to Nepal via India," the statement said.

The council endorsed the rules, regulations and modalities of the South Asian University and mandated a steering committee to complete the process of forming the South Asia Forum.

It directed the Food Bank Board to address the issue of price incentive and access threshold to enable the release of grains from their reserve.

The Bangladesh foreign minister in the meeting laid emphasis on redoubling efforts in the agriculture sectors in the face of spiraling food prices globally.

She stressed the need for operationalising the SAARC Food Bank, finalising the Seed Bank agreement and implementing the regional food security projects.

The foreign minister said the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme needed periodic review to promote greater people-to-people contact.

Moni also urged for collective actions of the member countries to fight the menace of terrorism, trans-national organised crimes, illegal trading of drugs and narcotic substances, religious extremism and money laundering.

She reaffirmed Bangladesh's firm resolve to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and extend support to regional initiatives on the same.