



Panel's title : . SAARC: Challenges and future

Coordinator : Prashant Sawant

Language : English

Topics : (Economics, International trade negotiations, South Asia geopolitics, South Asia history)

Panel presentation :

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), an eight-nation organisation established in 1985, has been increasingly at the behest of disputed bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan, undermining the economic potential of the regional bloc. Indeed, the association has managed a significant progress in terms of lowering the levels of poverty, malnutrition, hunger and unemployment – essential for economic development, and fostering cultural ties among member countries. Nevertheless, the attempts to create a free trading zone within member countries, which account for nearly 6% to global GDP, have had limited success due mainly to trade barriers, including, an extensive list of non-tradeable items. Given that these eight countries are host to one of the largest pool of growing middle class and skilled labour, the region has a strong growth potential, driven mainly by a network of small and medium enterprises.

The panel will look into current challenges faced by SAARC. Can India afford to put aside, albeit momentarily, the border issues and use SAARC to assert its economic power in the region? Can SAARC withstand its independence with China's growing assertion, territorial and economic, in the region? Importantly, can the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) – group of countries from South Asia and South East Asia, excluding Pakistan and China, undermine the importance of SAARC?

Key words : India's foreign policy, South Asia trade, South Asia Economics, Geopolitics in South Asia, India's history, Regulatory environment in South Asia

Participants :

1) **Name: Prashant Sawant, Panel Co-ordinator and Speaker**

Language : English

Presentation :

As a professional economist, Prashant provides insightful analysis of economic and financial risks, in emerging Asian countries. He has worked with a wide range of clients to assess the impact for businesses due to macroeconomic developments. He is based in London and currently working as sovereign and political risk expert with IHS Markit. Prashant holds post-graduate degrees in Economics and Finance from University of Mumbai (India) and an MBA from Griffith University (Australia).

Key words : Macroeconomics, Sovereign Risk, International trade, Emerging Asia, Trade negotiations

2) **Name: Dr S Varalakshmi, Speaker**

Language : English

Presentation :

Dr S Varalakshmi has been providing deep insights into risks arising from geopolitical and socio-economic issues in South East Asia over the last 30 years. The professional experience, spanning through a range of industries, such as, education, media and consultancy, has given a competitive edge to her analysis. Currently, she is Head of Department of Mass Media at Mumbai University's Jai Hind College, India.

Key words : South Asia trade relationship, Geopolitics, Socio-economic issues, Media and communication

3) **Name: Dr Archana Mishra, Speaker**

Language : English



Presentation :

Dr Archana Mishra has a wide and varied teaching experience on such subjects as, Contemporary World, Indian History, History of Asia, Journalism, Business Communication and Mass Media, in several reputed Colleges in Mumbai as a Visiting, as well as, a regular Faculty over the past 17 years. Currently, she is committed to building up strong conceptual foundations in students in the discipline of History and International Relations at the Jai Hind College, Mumbai. She is also the Coordinator for the course, Bachelor of Vocation in Travel; Tourism Management, Co-coordinator for International Relations Certificate Program (Advanced) and has been the Coordinator for Foreign Students Visiting Program in the College. She has written research papers on Education, Neo-Vedanta, Civil Services in India, Globalisation and the need for Niche Courses and is the author of the book, "Early Indian Jurisprudence, Precepts, Practice and Gender Status", published in 2016.

Key words : Asian History, India's legal system, Media, Communication, International Relations, Tourism