

SOUTH ASIAN ECONOMICS STUDENTS' MEET



IN THIS ISSUE

- Celebrating 15th edition of SAESM
- Conversation with Selim Raihan
- Invited Articles
- Country Focus : Afghanistan
- SAESM Experiences
- About SAESM

NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING 15TH EDITION OF SAESM



In January 2019, we will celebrate our 15th edition of the annual SAESM conference in Colombo. It was only the other day, when in 2004 the idea of SAESM – a regional platform of undergraduate students of economics was conceived in the classroom of Ramjas college (University of Delhi) with a bunch of enthusiastic young undergrads of the Department of Economics. The journey that began with the first conference in 2004 has now engaged more than 1000 students from different colleges and universities of South Asia (SA) towards building a new hope amongst youth of the regions. There remains several economic challenges that need to be overcome to make the region achieve higher standards of living and welfare for its masses of population and SAESM makes a small but significant contribution in educating and creating awareness amongst economics undergraduates about the enormous economic potential that the region of SA has for its future.

The journey so far owes a lot to the informal network of colleges (as well as universities) of SA that bring the best students to the table to discuss economic issues through paper presentations, discussions and various competitions. This remains a unique conference where economics undergrads reach out to each other under a common platform – “Developing the region”. We are witnesses to competitive behavior when presenting papers of their own country experiences on different dimensions of development as well as camaraderie of the highest order outside the confines of competition. The friendships and bonding created continue with their respective career paths. Having organized these conferences with the support of several multilateral as well as regional well wishers, we strive out to reach the

next goals- to reach out to the rest of the world to share SAESM experiences with them and learn from them.

Our endeavors for future remain to integrate educational institutions (and students) to institutions in rest of the world through various schemes-(1) Opportunities for academic exchange for students in advanced countries to know and understand SA countries and its culture and vice versa; (2) Study tours for South Asian college students to leading educational institutional of the world; (3) Internships for young undergrads both within South Asian universities and abroad to learn and experience the working of firms, industries, social sectors, research and development institutions to garner knowledge which will help in SA.

As SAESM continues its pursuits of creating knowledge sharing platform amongst South Asian countries and the economics undergrads fraternity, it also focuses to reach out to wider community of scholars, researchers, institutions and communities in other similar countries to help make our endeavor stronger and more firm in our commitment to make ONE SOUTH ASIA where regional boundaries and barriers are positive agent of change for SA.

In 2013, we celebrated our 10th anniversary in Lahore and in 2019, we meet again to celebrate our 15th year of existence, small milestones such as these give us the energy to walk the long road ahead for South Asian economics undergraduates.

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14TH SAESM 2018, CHITTAGONG, BANGLADESH

The 14th South Asian Economics Students' Meet (SAESM), hosted by South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM), was held during 17th-22nd January 2018 in Chittagong, Bangladesh. The theme for 14th SAESM was "Sustaining South Asia" focussing on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 14th SAESM emphasised the need for greater integration in South Asia and the benefits accruing from it to its member countries and the region as a whole. It gave youths of South Asia a platform to examine past experiences, critically evaluate the effec-

tiveness of the existing regional integration regime, and suggest a way forward in building an integrated "one South Asia".

Sub-themes and Winners:

Under the broad theme of "Sustaining South Asia", there were ten sub-themes encompassing various areas based on the SDGs. One student from each member country presented a paper on one of the sub-themes. The sub-themes and their respective winners are given below.

Sub-theme		Winners	Title of the Papers
1.	No poverty, Zero Hunger, and Reduced Inequalities	Md. Ibrahim Khan, Pakistan	Child nutrition in social safety net beneficiary households in Pakistan
2.	Good Health and Well-being	Nithya Srinivasan, India and Manab Prakash Poudel, Nepal	An analysis of social demographic factors affecting household out of pocket health expenditure and a comparison of alternative models of health insurance versus tax-financed health systems in achieving universal health coverage Equity in healthcare: Incidence of catastrophic payments in Nepal
3.	Quality Education	Avinno Faruk, Bangladesh	What matters for the quality of education in South Asia: An empirical examination of the determining factors with a QEI
4.	Gender Equality	Ramsha Hisham, Pakistan	Sex composition and son preference in Pakistan: An empirical investigation
5.	Clean Water and Sanitation	Tamanna Tabassum, Bangladesh; Amol Singh Raswan, India and M. G. C. N. Madadeniya, Sri Lanka	Inadequate sanitation as an impediment to sustainable development: A qualitative approach Open defecation in India: Causes and consequences The impact of rural water supply and sanitation on economic growth in South Asia
6.	Affordable and Clean Energy	Harshit Garg, India	Energy consumption and its impact on economic growth and environmental performance
7.	Decent Work and Economic Growth	Wasik Sajid Khan, Bangladesh and Abdul Hadi, Pakistan	Analyzing unpaid labor: What makes a woman stay far away from decent work? Labor standards and economic performance in Pakistan—An empirical approach
8.	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Semab Rahman, Bangladesh	Countering premature deindustrialization: Can South Asia overcome the innovation conundrum?
9.	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Farhana Kabir, Bangladesh	Rainwater harvesting: The best solution to mitigate urban water supply crisis of South Asia
10.	Climate Action, Life Below Water and Life on Land	Md. Raied Arman, Bangladesh and Rohit James Joseph, India	Emission control: Nudging towards a better future Revisiting the commons: Sustainable resource management strategies for inclusive growth

HAQ-SEN AWARD

To commemorate a decade of SAESM (2013), an award was instituted honoring two of South Asia's most influential economists - Nobel Prize winner Professor Amartya Sen and Founder of the Human Development Index - late Dr. Mahbub Ul-Haq for the best research paper of the competition, across all sub-themes.

The Haq-Sen Award 2018 was shared by Harshit Garg (Christ University, India) and Ibrahim Khan (LUMS, Pakistan).

Paper Titles :

Harshit Garg: Energy consumption and its impact on economic growth and environmental performance

Md. Ibrahim Khan: Child nutrition in social safety net beneficiary households in Pakistan

The details of these papers can be accessed from the following link: <http://sanemnet.org/saesm/index.html>



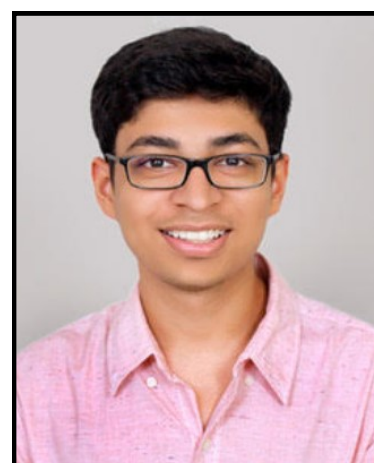
Ibrahim Khan (left) and Harshit Garg (right)

BUDDING ECONOMIST

The Budding Economist is a competition that seeks to test individuals on a variety of skill sets. SAESM 2018 competition consisted of the following events:

1. **Paper Presentation** : The total marks obtained from writing and presenting the research paper will be carried forward for this competition.
2. **Written test** : There will be a written exam testing students on the concepts of economic theory.
3. **Visual Round** : The participants will discuss an image shown to them by applying any economic theory and vocabulary.
4. **Panel Interview** : The participants will have to answer questions from a panel of judges in the final round of the competition.

First round of elimination was done by combining the marks of the research paper and the written test. Top Twelve participants qualified for the next round and take part in the visual round. Top six participants proceeded to the final round of panel interview. The participant with highest aggregate marks was declared the winner.



At the 14th SAESM, Archit Jain (St. Stephens College, India) won the Budding Economist South Asia 2018.



Archit Jain, economics student at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, being awarded the Budding Economist of South Asia 2018 award. Photo Credit: SANEM Bangladesh.



Dr. Syed Turab Hussain (LUMS), Dr. Selim Raihan (Executive Director, SANEM), H.E. Amb. Bishwambher Pyakuryal (Nepal's Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives), Dr. Deb Kusum Das (Ramjas College, Delhi University), and Dr. Sanjay Kathuria (The World Bank Group) addressing the students.

CONVERSATION WITH SELIM RAIHAN



Dr. Selim Raihan is Professor at the Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and the Executive Director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Manchester, UK. He is the Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Manchester, UK. He is the alumni of the Harvard University's program on "Cutting Edge of Development Thinking". Dr. Raihan possesses vast expertise in empirical research on international trade, economic growth, poverty, labor market, macroeconomic policies, political economy, and climate change issues. He has worked quite extensively on applied economics, especially assessing impacts of trade and economic policies, using country-specific and global Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) models, and micro and macro-econometric modeling and estimation techniques. Dr. Raihan has published 17 journal articles, 23 books, 35 book chapters and 45 working papers.

Question: You have been working on economic integration of South Asia for many years now. How low is the regional trade in South Asia?

Intra-regional trade in South Asia has hovered around 5% for the past decade, which is significantly lower when compared to other regional arrangements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the European Union (EU). Such inferior performance is despite the focus of the current pattern of regional integration on improving intra-regional trade in goods. There is, however, a growing perception that South Asia's intra-regional trade is underestimated since a large volume of informal trade among South Asian countries is not fully captured. Additionally, while formal intra-regional trade is low in the region as a whole, bilateral trade among South Asian countries, namely between India and other smaller countries such as Bhutan and Nepal, is exceptionally high. Furthermore, trade in services, particularly in education, health care,

information technology and construction, is vibrant at best, but is not recorded well.

Question: Given that there is low trade amongst South Asian countries, how important is economic integration for the future of South Asia?

There are strong arguments for deeper regional economic integration in South Asia, as it is believed to generate significant intra-regional trade and welfare gains for the countries involved. Deeper regional integration is supposed to provide countries in the region improved market access in each other's markets, and thus help boost their exports, which would augment the significance of intra-regional trade and associated investment flows. These are static gains that the countries involved would be able to realize. Dynamic gains could be even greater due to the possible expansion of the scale of operation owing to easy access to the large regional market buoyed by increased investment and more efficient allocation of regional resources.

Consequently, intra-regional trade in agriculture and food products is crucial to improve the situation of food security in the region.

Inarguably, deeper regional integration through trade and transport facilitation, along with the presence of efficient regional supply chains, will dramatically improve intra-regional trade and increase the competitiveness of South Asian countries to better participate in the global market. Meanwhile, peace dividends of intra-country stable political relations— a pre-requisite for regional integration— will also be immensely high.

Question: Can you highlight the challenges that still remain for an effective integration of South Asia?

Effective regional integration in South Asia is constrained by a number of factors including tariff and non-tariff barriers, weak infrastructure, poor awareness among stakeholders, a lack of political will, and low levels of investment. Though tariffs continue to be reduced bilaterally, regionally, and even globally, the burden of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) remains a serious challenge in South Asia. NTBs can be formal restrictions on trade that range from quotas to sanctions, or they can be administrative bottlenecks, inefficient customs procedures, and standards-compliance hurdles that include everything from strict packaging and sanitary requirements to the mandatory multiple weighing of consignments at borders.

There are some important structural differences among the South Asian countries. While, Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan are the landlocked countries, Maldives and Sri Lanka are the island countries. Being the landlocked countries and having the land-boundary with only India, both Nepal and

Bhutan are heavily dependent on India with respect to their exports and imports. Also, majority of the trade among South Asian countries happen through land borders with inadequate infrastructural facilities. There are problems of easy cross-border movement of goods, vehicles and people, leading to a time-consuming and costly process. This results in a high-degree of trade costs between countries and thus restricts smoother transactions and discourages trade.

Question: Given that manufacturing has traditionally played a key role in the economic development, how important do you think is manufacturing sector for driving growth in South Asian countries especially for countries like India?

Making the manufacturing sector as the driver of growth has several benefits, especially in the long run, such as diversification of the economy, employment generation, technology transfer, and welfare improvement of the people. Through this process, an economy experiences an increase in the share of manufacturing in Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

An analysis of the data of the share of manufacturing value-added in GDP for five South Asian countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) for 1970-2016 suggests that India increased its share of manufacturing value-added in GDP from 16.2% in 1970 to 19.1% in 1980. However, since 1980, India had been experiencing declining share of manufacturing value-added in GDP, and the share fell to 16.5% in 2016, which depicts some signs of a premature deindustrialization. The trend in share of manufacturing value-added in GDP for both

Pakistan (declined from 16.1% in 1970 to 12.8% in 2016) and Nepal (increased from 3.7% in 1970 to 9.4% in 2000, but declined to 5.9% in 2016). Recently Sri Lanka also showed signs of a premature deindustrialization. Contrary to all other South Asian countries, Bangladesh had been experiencing an increasing share of manufacturing value-added in GDP. In 2016, Bangladesh had the largest share of manufacturing value-added in GDP (17.9%) among the South Asian countries.

However, the pace at which South Asian countries, and especially India, have increased their manufacturing shares in GDP, have been considerably slower than those of many newly industrialized countries in East and Southeast Asia. Newly industrialized countries from East and Southeast Asia saw rapid rises in shares of manufacturing value added. All these contributed to the massive reduction in poverty, large-scale employment generation, and rise in per capita incomes by many folds within a much shorter time in those countries.

There are few major issues which need to be in order for a rapid manufacturing growth in South Asia. There are a number of policy-induced challenges, which need to be addressed. Also, several supply-side constraints, in the form of weak infrastructure and the high cost of doing business, need to be addressed within a short time span. Furthermore, the current state of human capital is not conducive at all for a rapid manufacturing growth in South Asia. Finally, the political economy factors, especially the institutional development for rapid manufacturing growth is a dire need.

Question: Bangladesh has seen broad-based gains in health, education, infant mortality and life expectancy,” said Daniel Gay, Inter-Regional Adviser on LDCs in UN DESA’s Development Policy and Analysis Division. How do you react to this?

Over the past four and half decades since independence, notwithstanding many external and internal shocks, Bangladesh has increased its per capita income by four-fold, and cut poverty by more than half. Bangladesh’s economic growth rates in recent years have been higher than most of the South Asian countries and many of the sub-Saharan African countries. These positive development experiences provide the basis for optimism that despite many policy and institutional constraints and despite the global uncertainties, Bangladesh is expected to make inroads in improving the living standards of its citizens. Such high growth performance and social development have been perceived as a ‘paradox’ or ‘development surprise’ by many.

However, there are genuine concerns that the business-as-usual process of economic and social development might not lead Bangladesh to achieve much larger and important development goals like SDGs by 2030 and becoming an upper-middle income country in next two decades. For example, regrettably, Bangladesh is among the bottom list of countries in the world with the lowest ratio of public expenditure on education and health to the GDP. Bangladesh, therefore, has to make some extraordinary efforts in its economic and social development process in the days to come.

Question: Bangladesh has done exceptionally well in Garment sector and it is now very common to find a “Made in Bangladesh” tag in majority of retail chains in advanced countries? Has this sector peaked or is there more to achieve yet?

From a small base of only around US\$ 32 million in 1984, garment exports have grown to around US\$ 31 billion by 2018, accounting for more than 80% of export earnings in Bangladesh. Garment has been an important contributor to growth and employment generation in Bangladesh. Female participation in the formal labor market underwent a major shift with the rise of the garment industry in Bangladesh. However, the garment industry of Bangladesh is now at a crossroad. It is now time to focus on how Bangladesh could retain its comparative advantage and continue its success story in the future given the increased competition from other countries, growing stringent compliance issues, and the fact that to what extent the country will be able to enhance its competitiveness in doing business. There is a critical need for enhancing labor productivity, moving up to the higher value-added products through introducing new technology along the production line spurring innovation, and enhancing Bangladesh's competitiveness by reducing the cost of doing business. The sustainability of this industry also depends on how carefully and properly the issues related to the welfare of the workers are addressed.

Question: You have been associated with SANEM, a leading think tank of South Asia. How do you see SANEM in future contributing to the development of young economists of the region and as a platform for discussing regional issues?

SANEM is a leading think tank of South Asia with a network of economists and policy makers. SANEM works in the areas of international trade, macro economy, poverty, labor market, environment, political economy and economic modeling. SANEM has maintained strong research collaboration with global, regional and local think-tanks, research and development organizations, universities and individual researchers. SANEM always promotes young researchers from Bangladesh and South Asia through regular training programs, workshops, conferences, and research programs. One of SANEM's flagship events is the South Asian Training Program on CGE modeling, where every year more than 30 young researchers from South Asia participate. Also, there is always a separate session for the young economists in SANEM's Annual Economists Conference (SAEC). Young economists also write in SANEM's flagship monthly publication 'Thinking Aloud'. SANEM also has a close relationship with the SAESM. Many of the SAESM participants have worked with SANEM in different capacities.

Hot politics, cold economics – the need to bridge the connectivity gap in South Asia: Siegfried O. Wolf



Siegfried O. Wolf is a German political scientist and a researcher with South Asia Institute, Universität Heidelberg. Additionally, he is the Director of Research at Brussels-based geopolitical think tank, South Asia Democratic Forum and also, an affiliated researcher at the Pakistan Security Research Unit (PSRU), Durham University. Wolf is a political writer and commentator in international media on South Asia. He has been quoted regularly in Al Arabiya English, Business Standard, China Global Television Network, The Daily Star (Bangladesh), Deutsche Welle, The Economic Times, E-International Relations, The New York Times, The Straits Times, Ouest-France and The Wall Street Journal. He completed his degrees in Master of Arts (Class of 2003) in South Asian political science and Doctor of Philosophy (Class of 2009) from University of Heidelberg.

South Asia has reached a pivotal point in time. Comprising the states of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and The Maldives, and home of around one-fourth of the world's population, the region has witnessed remarkable up and downs in all spheres of state and society. Even a passing view of its current developments shows that the entire subcontinent is in transition and has reached a crossroads. Despite a more or less shared colonial past, the time of the so-called British Raj (colonial rule), the South Asian states have progressed along widely diverse paths of statehood, nation-building, and different strategies of development. This finds its most visible expression not only in the tremendous variety of types of regimes ranging from democracies to authoritarian regimes (including monarchical systems and military dictatorships), but also in the subcontinent's emergence as a hub for international terrorism, religious fundamentalism, large socio-political movements with separatist and anti-systemic or pro-

democratic dispositions. On top of this, several states faced the challenge of boosting their economies to address the worrying manifold socioeconomic difficulties. Having this in mind, it does not come as a surprise that South Asia is home to persistent encounters between Eastern and Western concepts and notions of institution- and nation-buildings as well as normative foundation of nations to address the manifold tasks. The fact that the region is struggling not only with multi-layered social-economic uncertainties but also with deeply entrenched national disharmonies and bilateral crisis makes it a site of some of the world's most intractable intra- as well as inter-state conflicts. This has lead critical analysts -already some decades ago- to identify the region as a part of the global 'Arc of Crisis' (Rehman, 2013, March 7; Lenczowski, 1979). In this context one must state that South Asia was not able to fully recover from the traumatic partition that followed the end of the European presence. Latter phenomenon turned into a ma-

-jor source for intraregional diplomatic conflicts and fully fledged wars became rampant and prevailed over the logic and rational of effective and cohesive regional co-operation.

Subsequently, South Asia has not stood out as one of the great success stories when it comes to regional integration and cooperation. This finds its most visible expression in the limited achievements of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Instead of functioning as a vehicle for multi-lateral collaboration, since its final establishment in 1985 it is hampered by inadequate political will or insufficient capacities or resources to promote sustainable integration and cooperation process (Rahman, 2004). Fundamental state-building tasks and bilateral issues caught the main attention of the South Asian political leaderships after gaining independence. Subsequently, regionalism and inter-region cooperation was a distant concern for these newly founded states (Datta, 2017, p. 17)

However, one has to understand that regional integration and cooperation is not a linear process; it is an evolutionary path marked by various heights and lows. The appearance of persistent challenges within the EU, which is often portrayed as the world's pioneer of regionalization, can be seen as a proof. Despite having experienced several deep crises, the EU continues to function without undermining its basic normative principles and stresses the resilience of the integration process in Europe. In other words, the traumatic legacies of the past -foremost the experience of two world wars, the destruction of Europe and the experience of radical ideologies leading to the death of so many millions of peo-

ple, the collective memory of it as well as the political determination to finally change the unfortunate trajectories- created a path towards European integration which sometimes takes loop ways but does not change its direction.

Today it seems that South Asia finally reached a turning point too, which could lead the region towards more regionalization. Therefore, it is most important that one takes the current developments in the respective countries into account since it seems that several trends occurred which have the potential dynamic to break with entrenched, unfortunate patterns of the past. Here, besides the steady rise of religious extremism, Jihadism, and cross-border terrorism (including the state-sponsorship of it) turning bilateral ties sour, there is an awareness among South Asian political decision-makers that the steady process of regional disintegration needs to be reversed. Additionally, suffering from a multitude of socio-economic inequalities but at the same time having the opportunity to evaluate one's own situation in a comparative national as well as international perspective, South Asia's growing civil societies are starting to question the harmful logic of fragmented national interests and conflicts. Consequently, the argument that most of the current problems are rooting in unfavourable colonial legacies is losing its credibility in justifying underdevelopment and political instability. This of course will not force the individual national governments immediately to increase trust and transparency of state behaviour, but it might help to overcome the endemic unwillingness to initiate any cohesive, purposeful action in the direction of ending the



-ful action in the direction of ending the traditional political and economic disunity in the region. Today one can state that there is a greater perception of the necessity for interstate rapprochement and cooperation to unleash new dynamics in the direction of a more integrated South Asia.

This process is undoubtedly enforced through voices from within the region which are increasingly advocating a break with unfortunate historical paths to achieve security, economic development and public welfare, and the complex identity crises of the South Asian states. Along with all the major stakeholders in the region, India is of crucial importance for the success of any kind of regional project. Not only because of the tremendous asymmetries in size and population, which make India the natural centre piece of South Asia, but also because of newly and partly rediscovered interests in the energy resources and trade potential that new routes, allegiances and transport agreements may yield. This is gaining momentum since all South Asian states share a border with India, but practically none share a common border, except for the troubled Durand Line between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Furthermore, it is important to note that the smaller states of South Asia too are not spared by the global dynamics and subsequent regional processes of transition. Each of them has discovered their geopolitical leverage within the emerging regional dynamics. Yet they are still constrained by complex internal politics. Needless to say, whichever the outcome of this process may be, it will define the international perception of South Asia as an area of persistent crisis or as a region which still has the potential to develop fruitful cooperation.

But what could the driving forces and appropriate instruments for improved regional cooperation be? It becomes clear, that besides some individual success stories, South Asian states have to contend with endemic poverty, tremendous inequalities, mega-urbanisation, and extra-ordinary challenges when it comes to infrastructure, environmental issues, food and energy security. Most of these issues can be linked with the lack of connectivity within South Asia and its interconnections with other regions, like South East Asia or Central Asia. Against this backdrop, the concept of Economic Corridors (ECs) could contribute significantly. The establishment of a South Asia wide network of ECs would improve trade and transport facilities which would undoubtedly make trading between the countries easier, more stable and less costly. Additionally, it would improve the infrastructure which is still 'abysmally inadequate and of poor quality' compared to the one in other regions (Karim, 2017, p. 15). If this challenge is sufficiently addressed, ECs are able to create more opportunities for the successful establishment of cross-regional linkages. Additionally, it will help to link South Asia with global transport and logistic networks and production chains. In this context, ECs are not only able to play a key role in integrating economies (Vickerman, 2002) across a region and function as essential building blocks of regional economic integration (Kuroda et al, 2007) but they can be seen as an important confidence building measure in a political non-congenial environment. However, in order to be able to benefit from these potential positive impacts, the planner of an EC needs to move beyond the economic prism and consider the larger political and social context. If this will be not sufficiently done, the development of an EC can also lead to fur-

-ther entrenchment of existing conflicts and cleavages, turning a peaceful regional cooperation into an even more distant dream, especially in South Asia.

However, taken into account the persistent tensions in India-Pakistan relations as well as New Delhi's unease with Beijing's major development vision, the 'Belt and Road' initiative/BRI (currently the strongest driving force of economic corridor constructions world-wide), and its extensions into South Asia, foremost the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), it seems highly unlikely that the political differences can be sufficiently bridged in the new future. One must expect, that the ongoing distrust and subsequent lack of political consensus will continue to hamper severely cross-border connectivity within the region. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the challenges which major, cross-border infrastructure projects in South Asia are facing.

To sum up, by monitoring several economic corridor projects, like the ongoing implementation of the CPEC and the attached challenges, it becomes obvious that a comprehensive approach to the concept of ECs is needed, not only to guide the formulation and implementation of such a mega development initiative, but also to measure its effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. An assessment of the performance of an EC just on the basis of economic cost-benefit calculations or the increase in trade volumes, build-up of physical infrastructure, logistics, services, or industrial and manufacturing areas among other quantitative indicators is crucial but far too narrow. To consider the social and political dimensions of the EC implementation is of utmost importance, especially in South Asian countries facing a multitude

of domestic as well as bilateral challenges. The case of South Asia clearly underlines the challenges for a smooth implementation and further functioning of ECs when overt or clandestine, simmering social, political and economic flashpoints are not taken account sufficiently. The unwillingness and/or inability to create a regional political consensus as well as the gap in local ownership of the people in remote areas due partisan economic interests of the national decision-makers, the lack in communication and transparency are increasingly provoking additional resistance towards EC initiatives. In tackling this puzzle, first South Asian experiences with development strategy based on ECs are showing that numerous aspects have to be factored in to ensure not only a successful implementation but also a smooth functioning offering maximum benefits for the actors involved.

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A capture of the entire SAESM group at the 12th SAESM, Colombo, 2016.

National amnesia and the Khudai Khidmatgar movement: Mukulika Banerjee



Mukulika Banerjee is the inaugural Director of the LSE South Asia Centre and is Associate Professor in Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She studied in Delhi and Oxford universities and taught at Oxford and UCL before joining LSE. She has conducted ethnographic research in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (NWFP), Pakistan between 1990-1993 and in India since 1998. She has published widely and her publications include *Why India Votes?* (2014), *The Pathan Unarmed* (2001) and *The Sari* (2003) and edited *Muslim Portraits* (2007). She is currently completing a monograph entitled *Cultivating Democracy* based on fifteen years of research in rural India.

Consider a recent terrorist attack in London, which stood out. It was an attack on Muslims as they spilled out of the mosque after prayers by a lone white man in the early hours of the morning. The Finsbury Park incident took place during Ramadan and the man was alleged to have shouted “I want to kill all Muslims – I did my bit” after the hired van hit a crowd that had gathered to help an elderly man who had collapsed near a mosque.

What made this a startling event was not the copycat attack of other terrorist attacks, but the response of the victims and bystanders. The driver was apprehended and about a 100 people surrounded him, ready to punish him – but were stopped by the imam of the mosque who had been alerted to the incident. He shouted at the crowd: “No one touch him – no one! No one!” Using his status as a religious leader, he pushed back the crowd, pleaded for calm and had a group of men encircle the attacker to ensure his safety, flagged down a police van and handed him

over. The man was unscathed. This remarkable imam Mohammed Mahmoud is no wise grey beard but a young man of 30, a London lad who loves cooking, films and hanging out with friends. But on this Ramdan night, he emerged a hero. When celebrated by the media and others for his bravery, he was modest. “It was” he insisted, a “community effort” and “collective effort of restraint”. During a sermon the imam gave the following Friday prayers, he praised his community for controlling their anger after the attack and reminded everyone: “All life is sacred.”

I start with this vignette of a recent event for it raises the key issues that I would like to address in this brief paper; the issues of Islam and its relationship to violence, the nature of restraint and patience, the honouring of law over personal revenge, the challenge of motivating a group to behave in a civil fashion rather than a mob – are all issues that are at the heart of the Khudai khidmatgar movement that was the subject of my research

nearly thirty years ago. The repercussions of the amnesia about this remarkable movement for independence, in Pakistan and also in India, are acute in today's world dominated equally by Islamic terrorism and Islamophobia.

The contemporary significance of the Khudai Khidmatgar story

The world has changed beyond recognition since the first edition in January 2001, in a way that has made the present more closely resemble the past and the book more relevant and contemporary than I could have guessed at the time. Then, the name 'Pathan' or 'Pashtun', being the largest population group in Afghanistan and the North-West Province of Pakistan (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) was little known outside the sub-continent or beyond circles of old British officials and some historians and anthropologists. So, a first book by an academic based on interviews with elderly revolutionaries that discussed the Pathans' non-violent movement against the British in the 1930s and 1940s appeared to have niche interest at best. Nine months later, however, the Twin Towers in Manhattan were felled and the US invaded Afghanistan to pursue al-Qaeda. The Taliban, born during the earlier war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, revived and fought the new invaders, and very soon, the Pashtuns, who dominated the Taliban, had become well-known throughout the western media.

Suddenly then, the Pashtuns were once more stereotyped and essentialised - as they had deliberately been by the British - as violent and uncontrollable and as religious fanatics. More generally, the 'shock and awe' strategy after 2001 encouraged similar anti-Muslim rhetoric and actions from London to Mos-

cow. In my own country, India, February 2002 saw a terrible pogrom against Muslims in the state of Gujarat, abetted by the authorities. The following fifteen years has seen growing strife, chaos and suffering throughout the Muslim world.

This tragic sequence of events thus gave my book great resonance and, amid the political hysteria, made more important than ever its central point - that violence is not intrinsic or essential to the Pashtuns or to Islam or to masculinity. This is eloquently illustrated by the photographs of the towering Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan and unarmed 'soldiers' of the Khudai Khidmatgar movement, composed, well drilled and turning the other cheek, facing down the British batons, guns and provocation. For seventeen long years, they reformed their own communities, put aside their internal feuding and vendettas, and unified in a peaceful, brave and principled non-violent struggle, which they sustained despite persecution, torture, imprisonment and execution. Faced with the military power of the British, they grasped the moral and practical superiority of non-violence as political praxis, and creatively used their cultural and religious resources and moral concepts to justify it and to develop new forms of social organisation and action to support it.

So, for example, Badshah Khan highlighted the virtue of patience in Islam, and stressed the idea of the greater jihad (jihad-i-akbar) to help people understand that the real struggle was the spiritual one within, to conquer fear of the enemy, and anger, and to forgive them. The movement also utilised the key values of Pashtun custom - of ghairat (courage), melmastia (hospitality), badal



(revenge), nanawatai (offering refuge to anyone, even the enemy) - to treat the colonial government as unwanted guests who had breached the code of hospitality and needed to be evicted, politely but firmly. The uncivilised and violent response from the visitors was met with great dignity and unwavering courage, until eventually they did leave in 1947. The revolutionary ideology the Khudai khidmatgars fashioned was thus rooted organically in their society and therefore readily communicable and comprehensible to its rank and file.

The Khudai Khidmatgars also recognised that an adherence to the difficult idea of non-violence required not only spiritual discipline but bodily discipline too. For that, they adopted the idiom of the army, instituting drills and manoeuvres for picketing and protest, and dressing in red uniforms cheekily imitating those of the elite Frontier Constabulary, replacing English broadcloth with homespun khadi.

This approach incensed the colonial officers. They had expected the Frontier to be their playground, a scenic setting for dashing young officers to hone their skills in warfare fighting against the elusive crack shot Pash-tuns who they considered to be 'real men', in contrast to the 'down country Hindoo'. Instead, they now found themselves confronted with static lines of red shirts and brown belts, looking strangely like their own, and occupying a dignified high moral ground of civil disobedience, claiming to serve no lineage, tribe or king but to be only 'servants of God'.

At the first Bacha Khan lecture in London that I was privileged to deliver in November 2016, I was overwhelmed by the interest in the story of the unarmed Pashtuns from the

younger members of the audience and globally through social media. They wanted to know why Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan was held in suspicion in their country, even though he had led such an important independence movement. This is a process of rediscovery for them, as the Khudai Khidmatgars had long been suppressed and silenced in Pakistan for having first allied with the Indian National Congress and opposed Partition of British India, and then favoured greater provincial autonomy within the new nation. Banned, its papers and buildings seized and destroyed, and many of its activists, including Badshah Khan himself, spending more time in jail after independence than before, the Khudai Khidmatgar movement was written out of the national narrative.

As Pakistan marked its 70th anniversary of independence, with a new more self-confident generation that is curious about its own history, the story of the Khudai khidmatgars fills an important gap in the creation story of the nation, and will help young Pakistanis learn, own and tell this story in various ways for future generations. And in the contemporary climate of Islamism and Islamophobia, with the risks and temptations of radicalised young men desperate to believe in a cause, the lesson of the success of non-violence among Pashtuns is certainly one to spread and ponder.

Challenges of right to clean environment in Nepal: Dadhi Adhikari



Mr. Adhikari is an applied micro-economist with focus on environmental and natural resource economics. He graduated with his Ph.D. in economics from the University of New Mexico. His primary focus lies on interdisciplinary modeling to analyze issues of climate change, water, land and forest resources. He received his master's degree in development and resource economics from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Norway along with an M.A. from the Tribhuvan University, Nepal. Besides having long experience of teaching at the Tribhuvan University, he also holds substantial research experience in various issues facing Nepal.

The constitution of Nepal that was promulgated three years back establishes the right to the clean environment as the fundamental right in its article 30. The article 30 states:

- (1) Each person shall have the right to live in a healthy and clean environment.
- (2) The victim of environmental pollution and degradation shall have the right to be compensated by the pollutant as provided for by law.
- (3) Provided that this Article shall not be deemed to obstruct the making of required legal provisions to strike a balance between environment and development for the use of national development works.

Sub article 1 and 2 have direct economic consequences. In the context of current environmental quality in Nepal, especially status of air and water quality, enforcing sub article 1 needs to make several new arrangements in the country. Although the government has not brought out laws and bylaws to enforce the article 30, government must define the healthy and clean environment first. There

are severe confusions around the world while defining the clean and healthy environment. The adjectives "clean" and "healthy" added to the word "environment" in the constitution exacerbate the problem (Daly 2012). It is not clear how clean and healthy the environment should be to meet the constitutional requirement.

One approach to define clean and healthy environment can be to accept some internationally agreed standards. For example; the clean and healthy air could be the one where one-hour PM_{2.5} level is less than 25 . Similarly, the clean and healthy water could be the one that does not exceed the recommended limits on naturally occurring constituents that may have direct adverse health impact.

Once the clean and healthy environment is defined then the next step is to maintain the environment as per the definition. The average PM_{2.5} level in Kathmandu is 95 (measured at Phora Durbar, Kathmandu on 16th December 2018 at 1:00 PM). This level of PM_{2.5} is way higher than the recom-

recommended level i.e. 25 . The situation is not different for drinking water too. One study found that pH, conductivity, turbidity, chloride, iron, arsenic, ammonia, and Coli-form bacteria in the drinking water of Kathmandu exceeds the WHO standard guideline (Koju et al. 2014).

Bringing air and water quality within the limit set by the definition requires several measures to be adapted. For example, some of the broad areas to be addressed for maintaining air quality in Kathmandu could be: Developing environmentally sustainable transport system, environment friendly construction activities, reducing emissions of industries in the valley, environmentally sound Management of wastes (dealing with toxic air pollutants), promoting cleaner fuel and technology to minimize domestic pollution (indoor air pollution). All these activities will require to adopt new technology, new equipment, and improved behavior. All these activities require new investment that incurs into cost for individual and society. Same story is true of other environmental issues too.

Sub-article 30(2) has even more complicated cost issue. This sub-article as guaranteed a victim to be compensated by the pollutant. The complication arises to make decision on the issues like (i) was the victim really victimized by pollution? (ii) If yes then who is the polluter? (iii) if the polluter is identified then what is the level of compensation? (iv) if the polluter is not identified then how the compensation will be made? Let's explain these issues with an example.

The department of health services (DOHS) in Nepal reported that respiratory diseases are the top most reason for outpatients' consultations in 2013-2014 (MoHP 2014a). Similarly, obstructive pulmonary disease is the

topmost cause of mortality among inpatients (MoHP 2014b). Respiratory diseases can be the outcome of unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, tobacco use, indoor air pollution, outdoor air pollution, allergens, occupational agents, age, heredity (Cruz 2007). Owing to this fact, if some victim suffering from respiratory disease knocks on the door of the court then the court needs first to decide that disease was caused by the air pollution fully or partly. This is a very difficult task. The court needs to take the help of doctors, experts, and reference of international practice.

Once it is decided that the victim was victimized by the air pollution then the need is to decide the amount and method of compensation. There are some theories to determine such compensation based on losses. The major three types of losses are: death economic losses, chronic disease economic losses and other disease economic losses. Different methods can be used to calculate the health economic losses caused by air pollution (Yu and Hui 2016). It is not that simple and straight forward to estimate such losses and determine the amount of compensation. But let's assume that the court is able to decide the level of compensation. Another million-dollar question is who will be responsible for paying the compensation for the victim. Outdoor air pollution is not an outcome of a single polluter. In this situation court has to find some way out so that the victim could be compensated.

To sum up, establishing right to clean and healthy environment as the fundamental right in Nepal is a very progressive move. However, implementation of this right faces severe challenges. It possesses not only the administrative challenges but also



economic challenges. The need is to first bring out laws, bylaws, and procedures following the international practices.

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LAKSHMI MITTAL
SOUTH ASIA
INSTITUTE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Founded in 2003 to further Harvard University's engagement with South Asia, The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute is a university-wide research institute at Harvard that engages faculty members, students, and in region institutions through interdisciplinary programs to disseminate knowledge, build capacity, inform policy, and engage with issues that are shaping South Asia today.

With 2 billion people facing similar challenges throughout South Asia, there is a critical need for solutions and systems to support such a significant global population. The Mittal Institute programs and projects are working to actively address issues of equity, sustainability, and livability. Through research conducted by students and faculty, to partnerships with governments and organizations to seminars held on campus and across the world, The Mittal Institute is working to improve the lives of all people throughout the region and beyond.

Harvard University formally recognized the South Asia Initiative as an academic institute in 2013, signaling the university's longstanding commitment to the region and the beginning of an exciting new era for South Asian studies at Harvard. The Mittal Institute now serves as the premier center on regional studies, cross-disciplinary research, and innovative programming, pertaining to South Asia.

Goals:

- Facilitate scholarly exchanges among Harvard faculty and students, international South Asia specialists, visiting academics, and public figures from South Asia.
- Sponsor lectures and conferences at Harvard and in the region by distinguished academic, governmental, and business leaders whose work contributes to a better understanding of the challenges facing South Asia.
- Support Harvard students with grants for language study, research, and internships in-region.
- Bring knowledge from South Asia to Harvard by supporting faculty with grants for research.
- Build a community of stakeholders committed to building scholarship on South Asia at Harvard and in-region.

Countries they work with:

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tibet and diaspora populations from these countries.

COUNTRY FOCUS : AFGHANISTAN



This newsletter starts with a new section, where we review a South Asian economy through pen of the young budding economists of the country. For the first such attempt, our country of focus is Afghanistan. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, is a landlocked country located within South-Central Asia. It has been in news for reasons of political economy for many decades. Real GDP growth continues to remain at the level of below 3% and is mainly driven by the agriculture sector. Economic reforms/modernization, and social transformation are still waiting to happen. The indicators of development – poverty, inequality, health and education remain low and in need of strong and stable growth to transform the economy.

PARTICIPANT INSIGHTS



FOOD & SECURITY

Shawkatullah
Muslimwal
(Kabul University)
2018 participant

Afghanistan is an unstable economy. Unexpected and volatile changes can be seen in all indicators of its economic profile. Poverty and food security are two big challenges that always hinder the efforts of reaching sustainable development and meeting global goals in 2030.

Poverty has been a big challenge for welfare development of the Afghan population. Figures from the last one and a half decade can illustrate the status, determinants and effects of the extreme poverty rate in Afghanistan. The most recent figures that we have access to, is the Afghanistan Living Condition Survey (ALCS) conducted and presented by the Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan (CSO) on May 8, 2018. This survey indicates a sharp deterioration in the welfare of Afghan people; the proportion of the population living under the national poverty line is 54.5% in 2016–2017 which shows a significant increase from 2011–2012 and a very high increase from 2007–2008 (38.3% and 33.7%, respectively).

The poverty rate spreads across the urban and rural Afghanistan despite there being an obvious difference in the poverty rates of rural Afghans and the urban Afghans. Looking at the findings, we observe that not only the poverty rate has been increased, but also the depth or intensity of poverty – the poverty gap ratio – has been more than doubled during 2007 and 2017, increased from 7.2 to 15 percent in 2016–2017 (CSO, 2018).

There are many factors which have prevented the Afghans from having access to the very basic needs of life and finally live below the poverty line. The dependency ratio, relatively having more inter-household members, education and literacy are pointed as the most favorable leading factors of these 16 million poor Afghans. A 23.9% of unemployment rate, which hits mostly the young and unskilled Afghans, is another potential factor which in long-run firstly injures the financial accessibility of Afghans and secondly pushing them under the poverty line. Afghanistan has land and other natural resources for an economy to be relying on agriculture, and 80.2 % of the total employed population are working in agriculture and food production. In a broad view, Afghans shall have good food security level but the comprehensiveness and multidimensionality aspects of food security do not easily let individuals be in a good situation. In another view, lot of conditions should be met before we call an individual or a household a food secure one.

Considering above arguments, food insecurity is the next phenomenon hitting Afghans welfare after poverty. 44.6% of Afghans are food insecure (the proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption) which shows a tremendous increase from 2011–2012 (approximately 30%). Of 44.6%, roughly 13% of the population is even very severely food insecure (CSO, 2018). Close to one third (30%) of Afghan population do not meet the daily protein requirement of at least 50 grams per person per day. Two out of five Afghans have food consumption with poor dietary diversity, lacking adequate amounts of nutritious items, proteins and micronutrients.

A bunch of factors are pointed out which pushed Afghans to this chronic food insecurity situation. A multivariate analysis of household-level factors conducted by the author of this article, indicates household income, education, food securing sources, household size and physical access to market are favorable effecting factors which lead Afghans to be either severely or moderately food insecure (Muslimwal, 2017).

To sum up, poverty and food insecurity are two items which look always emergent and in high difference with SDG indicators. In a view, we can dis-

cover that the factors affecting food security and poverty, themselves are affected by poverty and food insecurity situation of Afghan households. This means that Afghans are located in a cyclical hazard and by every cycle basic needs of lives of the vast majority of Afghans are eliminated.

Overall enhancement of social security, political, governing and public services situation and specially improving economic opportunities like employment, per capita income, education and skill-based literacy development for young and adults, women participation in income generation, long-run agricultural development through global market access and maximizing rural-urban linkages are the points which are highly recommended in order to have a well sustained Afghanistan and a population with no poverty and zero hunger.

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LSE-SOUTH ASIA CENTRE (LSE-SAC)

London School of Economics (LSE) launched its South Asia Centre in June 2015, to deepen its engagement with South Asia and to provide coordinated and sustained engagements with the region to seek innovative solutions to the region's economic, demographic and development challenges. The collaboration of LSE with South Asia started in year 1912, when the school started the Department of Social Sciences, with a gift by the Indian industrialist, Sir Ratan Tata. Since then, there have been numerous initiatives of collaboration of the school with not only India, but also other countries of the region. Currently, the South Asia Centre has collaborations with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, and Nepal. The centre facilitates multi-disciplinary and multi-country research activities, organizing events, policy-focused Working Papers and research programmes, and fellowships to the students. It facilitates interaction among researchers, academicians, policy-makers, and others who are interested in the work. Major activities that the centre is engaged in are to provide a platform for the exchange of knowledge between UK and South Asia-based academics, through developing and coordinating new research projects in collaborations; to expand academic engagement with new South Asian partners, and to host public events, including lectures and seminars; to forecast political, economic, environmental and development trends across the region; and to facilitate online debate on South Asian issues, through blogs and social media. Some of the previous collaborations of the centre are: LSE Pakistan Submit, 2017, in Karachi; the 'Colombo Development Dialogues'; and LSE-UC Berkley Bangladesh Submit, 2018. Students from South Asia join LSE-SAC either as Master's students, PhD students, or as post-docs. Students from India and Pakistan jointly comprise one of the largest international contingents on their campus. The centre provides an opportunity to the South Asian students who want to conduct research on South Asian issues and challenges, while enrolled at LSE.



FRAGILITY IN HEALTHCARE

**Ebadulrahman
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2017 and 2018
participant.

After three decades of war, political instability, severe drought, and a collapsed economy, Afghanistan's health system became one of the most fragile systems in comparison to other countries in South Asia. Health care facilities are in an urgent need of restoration. Obtaining basic shelter, food, safe drinking water, clothing are everyday's struggle of each Afghan. Further, there is a critical shortage of healthcare workers and expert human capital in every level of the field. There are inadequate supplies of medicine, vaccines and equipments. In addition to mentioned shortcomings, saving lives in Afghanistan depends on having health workers in the field and sufficient medical supplies as well as food, shelter and security.

On top of mentioned health problems, according to Health Profile, Afghanistan by World Health Organization (WHO), the population of the country has increased by 63.3% in the past 25 years, reaching 32 million in 2015, and is projected to increase by an additional 37% in the next 25 years. An increasing population itself is a threat for Afghanistan's fragile health system. Life expectancy at birth is estimated to be 60 years. In addition to the mentioned statistics, the burden of disease attributable to communicable diseases is 46%, non-communicable disease is 36.6% and injuries is 17.4%. The high share of out of pocket expenditure (78.8% in 2013) and reliance on donors to support health services is unsuitable in the long term.

In order to develop health system and provide quality health services to the people around the country, the Ministry of Public Health of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was developed and is currently implementing the national health and nutrition policy 2012-2020. Within this policy, the Ministry of Public Health translates their health's vision into ten strategies. These strategies target the areas

of human resource, nutrition, access to quality services, good governance, developing health financing, improved regulations and standardizations of private health sectors, creating a healthy environment and increasing the access to health technology and medicines.

Implementing the ten strategies within the national health and nutrition policy 2012-2020 has been very effective for overall health service provision to the people. According to WHO, total expenditure on health per capita on international exchange rate has increased from 23.3 to 55.0 US Dollars between 2005 and 2013. Additionally, general government expenditure on health during the same period increased from 2.1 to 11.7 US Dollars. General government expenditure on health as a percentage of total expenditure on health has also increased from 9.2% to 21.2% over the same period.

Additionally, Central Statistics Organization of Afghanistan (CSO) has recently published health indexes and their data in Afghanistan. It shows an overall health situation in the country which is in a good shape. For example, number of basic health centers has increased 290 to 923 from year 2003 to 2016. This directly increased medical supplies and lives savings. On the other hand, number of health sub centers skyrocketed from 69 to 833 centers in the year 2016. In addition to a considerable increase in the number of hospitals, doctors, and medical supplies, cases of severe diseases such as Malaria have been decreased from 13000 cases in 2004 to 358 in 2016.

Thus, overall it can be said that even though fragile, the health system of Afghanistan is improving and the country is moving towards providing better healthcare services to its people over time.



AFGHANISTAN'S EDUCATION SECTOR

Nazila Jalaly
Kabul University
2018 participant

Afghanistan shows how a country emerges from decades of war and conflicts together with its donors, to prioritize education for all segments of society. It is a success story in increased accessibility of and participation of both boys and girls in education.

The Ministry of Education of Afghanistan estimates that there are presently 8.35 million students (39% of which are girls) in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary government schools, including Islamic schooling, out of a school-aged population of 10.33 million. However, 3.3 million children, the majority of which are girls, are still out of school. The share of the population that is 25 years or older and has completed any level of formal education is less than 7% for men and 3% for women.

The major inequities in the Afghan education system include gender, geographic location, and language. Afghanistan has the highest level of gender disparity in primary education in the world, with only 71 girls in primary school for every 100 boys. Only 21% of girls complete primary education, with cultural barriers, such as early marriages, and a lack of female teachers being two of the main obstacles. There are also major differences in enrolment between rural and urban areas.

Additionally, the Afghan education sector is faced with several blocks. Issues of supply include insecurity, limited human resources, infrastructure, teachers and teacher training, and teaching material, while issues of demand side include economic factors, cultural barriers, and governance and capacity.

Afghanistan is presently the world's second largest recipient of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and dependent on external donors to main-

tain and develop their education sector. A noted concern is the expected reduction in external funding and the ensuing ability of the Afghan government to maintain their own revenue generation. The majority of donors channel their funding for education through the World Bank administrated Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund and the Education Quality Improvement Project. Afghanistan has joined the Global Partnership for Education. Private sector contributions are virtually non-existent.

There are a number of opportunities for action in the education sector, particularly to increase education for girls and increase the quality of the education. First, the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan (MOE) is to strengthen and develop teacher training, increase the number of qualified teachers, and assess if and how the NGOs and CBOs might take on a larger role. On the other hand, it is equally important to strengthen the MOE, specifically data and coordination efforts, to create mechanisms for competency-based hiring, improve the system for collecting and handling education data, and strengthen linkages and collaborations with other Ministries.

The Government of Afghanistan and donors can also explore any possibility for more girls to attend and stay in school. The government is advised to communicate transparently with donors on achievements and challenges to gain and maintain trust. In addition to that, the Afghan government is indorsed to build domestic resources and support base, advocates the Afghan Parliament for the continued prioritization of funding for education in upcoming Afghan budgets, find ways to tap into private sector funds, and ensure a dialogue with local communities on their role in resource mobilization and support for education.



INDO-CHINA COOPERATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Hashmatullah
Shafiq
Kabul University,
2018 participant

Afghanistan has long been victim of competitions among superpowers and they tried to beat each other on this ground. Afghanistan's geography has mostly been reason for contestation among super powers in which all sides have been losers. Seeing the geographic importance, Afghanistan has the potential for being the hub of cooperation among competitive nations. Stable situation and existence of basic infrastructure in Afghanistan can give birth to new opportunities to the region and can totally change the picture of the region from an economic perspective. It can be a building block for gaining more benefits and creating new opportunities in this economic climate. Afghanistan's value for being cheap corridor between South Asia; China to the central Asia; and Europe, wealthy of mines and capacious for energy production, urge leading economies of the region take part in rebuilding Afghanistan. Considering China-India's increasing role in global economy, these two competitors strive to find remedy to the obstacles that can stop them strengthen their increasing part in global economy. Build on this, China and India two contestant nations proceed hand in hand and cooperate in

Afghanistan that both have recently agreed to implement shared projects at "Wuhan" in China and this proves that Afghanistan can be a ground for regional cooperation rather than regional contrast.

China as leading economy in Asia now try to facilitate trade in the region to reach more of the world markets to maintain its magnitude in global economy. For achieving this goal, China has planned a project worth \$3 trillion in 2013 named as "one belt one road" to facilitate trade in the region and to easily reach the markets of neighboring countries

and the world. In implementing this project, Afghanistan is in the first phase of this project that must have basic infrastructure like roads, pipelines, and railways. This way China can access the markets of Afghanistan's north and north west neighbors of central Asia like Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and from that way to the markets of Europe, which is considered to be a closer way to the markets of Europe. India also accesses safer markets for selling its goods and services if South Asia region connects with Central Asia.

Afghanistan can contribute to India's lack of energy for its economic activities and fulfilling the needs of its residents in short run from central Asia as current projects like KASA1000 and TAPI can be named in top. Afghanistan also has the potential in the long run to export energy to the countries in its neighbors including India and China. Seeing this obligation, India strive to help Afghanistan in the field of infrastructure typically in boosting Afghanistan capability in producing energy.

Afghanistan is known as the treasure of natural resources of different kind which is matchless in the region and in the world to some extent. Afghanistan's natural resources are considered a potential value for economic development in Afghanistan and in the region. Afghanistan is capable of extracting and to have control over its natural resources for the betterment of the lives of Afghans in the future, and to help the region experience the dream of economic development.

A crucial question that arises: couldn't they help Afghanistan independently in the field of building basic infrastructure? China-India cooperation in Afghanistan has been of particular importance. Firstly, for having a unit definition of developmental intention in the region and commitment for the regional development strategy by two competitive countries. Cooperation is needed in the region to ensure that investment in region are shared and that gains go to all nations of the region not only to China. Secondly, India which is considered strategic partner of USA in the region, cooperation can solve the concerns of USA in Afghanistan over the investment of China in Afghanistan. China has acted reluctantly in the case of Afghanistan so far.

Cooperation between these two countries can help China follow its economic interests without any prohibition by USA (its economic rival) which without any doubt would create barriers in Afghanistan to the growing friendship of China with other nations.

Afghanistan is in sake of those regional and international partners to help Afghanistan overcome these serious conditions and pick it up from fragile states to improved states. India and China can be most effective countries to help Afghanistan overcome the difficulties because these countries have the international influence to convince other nations contribute to stabilizing Afghanistan's fragile condition. India and China's long run economic development is conditional on the peaceful and conflict free region. Build on this, India and China would struggle for peaceful Afghanistan on their own behalf as well. Stability in Afghanistan guarantees prosperous Afghanistan and developed region.



*Team Afghanistan
14th SAESM*



*Young economists from South Asia at South Asia Economics Students'
Meet (SAESM) 2018, Chittagong, Bangladesh*

SAESM EXPERIENCES

Getting & valuing an opportunity: Chanuka Swarnathilake, Sharunya Gnanasubramaniam and Chethini Madadeniya



From left to right:

Chethini Madadeniya
Sharunya Gnanasubramaniam

Chanuka Swarnathilake
Members of Team Sri Lanka, 14th SAESM.

Three of the final year undergraduates of the University of Peradeniya; Chanuka Swarnathilake and Sharunya Gnanasubramaniam from the Department of Agricultural Economics & Business Management of the Faculty of Agriculture, and Chethini Madadeniya from the Department of Economics and Statistics of the Faculty of Arts; attended the 14th South Asian Economics Students' Meet (SAESM) at Chittagong, Bangladesh, held from 18th-22nd January 2018. This event was organized by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), with the sponsorship of the World Bank.

SAESM is an annual event which provides a unique platform for the young Economics undergraduates from South Asia to come together and share their views and opinions on the thematic issues. The theme of SAESM 2018 was "Sustaining South Asia". Chethini Madadeniya presented on "The Impact of Rural Water Supply and Sanitation on Economic Growth in South Asia". Chanuka Swarnathilake presented his research paper on "Total Factor Productivity of Sri Lanka's Food Manufacturing Industries", and Sharunya Gnanasubramaniam presented her research paper on "Climate change adaptation in agriculture and drawbacks in policy implementations: an In-depth study in Sri Lanka and broader study in South Asia".

Each year a team of ten students represents each South Asian country at SAESM. The University of Colombo, who is the SAESM coordinator for Sri

Lanka, calls for research proposals from economics undergraduates in Sri Lankan universities. The students are selected based on the competitiveness of the research paper and the performance on an Economics quiz.

Representatives of Sri Lanka competed with students from other South Asian countries in four competitions at SAESM 2018 which are, the competition for the Best Research Paper, a quiz competition, Budding Economist competition, and a cross-country debate. It was for the first time ever in SAESM's history, that a debate competition was organized. It was titled as "Allowing China's Relationships among South Asian Countries".

Apart from these competitions, SAESM 2018 was filled with many other exciting events such as ice-breaking sessions consisting of various games to help build friendship among participants, cultural shows and panel discussions on contemporary economic issues in the South Asian region. Further, the participants could also visit several places in Bangladesh, and the retreat included a delightful boat ride at the Bay of Bengal.

SAESM gives an invaluable opportunity for international exposure. Economics undergraduates throughout the South Asian region can get together and share this experience as young, energetic and enthusiastic individuals who aspire to make a difference in the world.

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Business Management and the Department of Economics and Statistics, as well as their respective faculties, should be appreciated as they played a massive role in coaching and preparing the students of

the University of Peradeniya for SAESM. The experience gained by these students will be helpful in encouraging their junior batches to utilize this opportunity

It's not just an academic meet: Harshit Garg



*Harshit Garg
14th SAESM
participant
(Team India)*

On my flight to Bangladesh, things on my mind were something like “how will I present my paper to smart and knowledgeable strangers from all over South Asia”, “oh, I’m selected!?” and while flying back to India, only one thing, “how can we make the flight turn back and sing ‘alga korogo khopar badhon’ with everyone like we did every evening for the last 5 days” (a Bengali song, which our Bangladeshi hosts introduced us to). It didn’t take more than a dinner at Dhaka for all the strangers to become compadres and for all that fear of presenting the paper to disappear.

SAESM is not just an academic meet, it effectively blurs all the cultural, lingual and philosophical borders to create the essence of One South Asia. SAESM gives undergraduates an established dais to reflect upon their research interests with comments from the best economists from all over South Asia. It encourages academic research with an underlying interest in the unity and welfare of South Asian nations. The best part of the meet is saved for the end, cultural program and a retreat. We enjoyed the retreat on a cruise, to witness the sun set in the Bay of Bengal which was as beautiful as the relations I had made in those days, which I cherish till this day as the Bhutanese friends Skype from their schools amidst mountains of Thimphu and the Bangladeshi friends call to share love on Eid ul-Fitr.

I got to know about SAESM in my final year and it’s the best academic, social and personal experience I had as an undergraduate.

United by History, Divided by Present : Alizeh Arif



*Alizeh Arif
14th SAESM
participant
(Team Pakistan)*

SAESM 2018 was a culmination of days of debate and discussion on economic issues so key to our region and the coming of young minds together was the ideal introspection into South Asia. How-

ever, it was the lessons learnt off the record in the midst of conversations with the best economic thinkers of the region and through uniting over the same culture that defined SAESM for me. It is a belief that I hold in my heart that what our region needs the most is unity that comes from within. The said unity comes, maybe, only from instances like SAESM, where dialogue compels each one of us to understand the other, their story and then empathize with them. And it is in such dialoguethat we find the power to understand how truly important it is to achieve the seemingly utopian goal of regional integration.

A teaching of SAESM that is the closest to my heart perhaps is one stated above that has taught me how similar we are in spite of our dissimilarities, and of how the common history that binds us makes us but the same people. United by history, we're divided by the present, and a future dominat-

ed by regional integration will only be certain if the lessons of the present and the unity of the past are amalgamated to lead us to the truly unified region that we must be – to the *One South Asia* that we all must be.

Exchanging our knowledge and wisdoms beyond borders:

Tamanna Tabassum



*Tamanna
Tabassum
14th SAESM
participant
(Team Bangla-
desh)*

Life is the summation of countless number of experiences that persistently add to our wisdom. "South Asian Economics Students' Meet" (SAESM) 2018 was undoubtedly such an experience for me.

It is a matter of great honor to get the chance to share my experience of participating in SAESM. From the very beginning of my under graduation life, I initiated the countdown to participate in SAESM being inspired by the seniors of my department. At last I picked the winning horse by getting the opportunity to participate in SAESM 2018,

hosted by Bangladesh. I was extremely overwhelmed being a participant and also being a part of the hosting country as well. Getting awarded with the "Best Paper Winner" was the most outstanding of all experiences all throughout my life. The moment was as hilarious as discovering a treasure to me.

Extending undergraduate Economics students the idiomatic opportunities of exchanging their views and ideas through constructive research, analysis and exploring the problems and challenges of regional integration, SAESM successfully advocates the task of working as a stepping stone for the students into the world of research and professionals. Being one of the least integrated regions of the world, South Asia is beset with the problems of poverty, malnutrition, unimproved sanitation, lack of education, trade barriers, political conflicts and many more. Under such circumstances, SAESM brings the juvenile minds across South Asia closer to each other and paves the way towards building a more integrated South Asia by establishing much



Top economics undergraduates and faculties from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka at the 14th South Asia Economic Students' Meet (SAESM) in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Photo Credit: SANEM Bangladesh

ABOUT SAESM

South Asia has long been a paradox. With some of the highest trained professionals, engineers, doctors, scientists and economists, the region nevertheless continues to be one of the poorest regions of the world. Over the last 20 years, however, there has been a rekindling of hope in the region with economic growth rates picking up and some industrial and services sectors such as software and pharmaceuticals beginning to attract global attention. Despite emerging notions of an Asian century, some of South Asia's fastest growing economies lack trade collaboration and unified efforts at shared prosperity. In this context, the emergence of cohesive forums for dialogue, especially at a student level is important to actualize South Asia's potential.

South Asian Economics Students' Meet (SAESM) is an independently organized, World Bank supported annual academic event, involving undergraduate economics students from South Asian Countries. SAESM provides a unique platform for the young economics undergraduates from South Asia to come together and share their views and opinions on the thematic issues. Each SAESM has a particular theme that is relevant and related to the contemporary economic issues of South Asia.

SAESM is a novel initiative which started in 2003. The founding institutions of SAESM are Ramjas College from University of Delhi (India), Lahore University of Management Sciences (Pakistan), Dhaka University (Bangladesh) and University of Colombo (Sri Lanka). Over the years, we have been joined by Tribhubhan University (Nepal), Royal Thimpu College (Bhutan) and Kabul University (Afghanistan).

The meet spread over 2 days brings together some of the brightest undergraduate students of economics, to discuss and deliberate regional issues which act as barriers to improving the lives of the people. Students present research papers on important development issues of their own countries and discuss with students from other regions. This promotes a greater understanding of regional problems, and results in the exchange of innovative solutions and best practices of each country and provides capacity building for tomorrow's leaders and policymakers. After two days of rigorous academic activities, the participants have a day of retreat. The retreat provides an opportunity to witness the historical and natural beauty of the host country and enjoy outdoor activities.

The past SAESMs have been themed on topical issues pertaining to South Asia, and most notably, the South Asian integration has been amongst the most discussed core theme for several years. The themes of the SAESMs held by respective host countries are given as follows :



1. **2004 - New Delhi - Economic Developments in South Asia: Which Way Ahead**
2. **2005 - Lahore - Issues for South Asian Development**
3. **2006 - Dhaka - Sharing Ideas for a Better Understanding of South Asian Development**
4. **2007 - Colombo - Economic Development and Regional Cooperation in South Asia**
5. **2008 - New Delhi - Economic Challenges to Make South Asia Free from Poverty and Deprivation**
6. **2009 - Dhaka - Young Economist's for an Integrated South Asia**
7. **2010 - Colombo - Economic Freedom and Poverty Reduction in South Asia**
8. **2011 - New Delhi - Development Alternatives in South Asia**
9. **2012 - Kathmandu - Towards a Green South Asia**
10. **2013 - Lahore - The Political Economy of South Asia**
11. **2014 - Thimphu - South Asian Integration: Prospects and Challenges**
12. **2015-16 - Colombo - South Asia in the Asian Century**
13. **2016-17 - Kathmandu - One South Asia**
14. **2018 - Dhaka - Sustaining South Asia**

PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

AFGHANISTAN | KABUL UNIVERSITY

Kabul University is the oldest and largest institution of tertiary education in Afghanistan. Throughout its long history since 1930 not only it has provided training to a large number of Afghans but had enjoyed popularity in the region by attracting many students from their neighbouring countries. Kabul University (KU) had a rich culture, history, academic excellence and devastated by decades of wars and instabilities in Afghanistan. The vision of the university is to transform itself into an internationally recognized institution of learning and research, a community of stakeholders committed to shared governance, and a centre of innovative thought and practice.



BANGLADESH | UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA



The University of Dhaka is the oldest university in modern Bangladesh. Established in 1921, during the British Raj, it became the focal point of progressive and democratic movements in Pakistan after the Partition of India. As the pioneer and the largest seat of learning in the country, the university has taken the task to foster the transformation processes of the individual students and the country as a whole through its educational and research facilities keeping up with demands of the day. The University of Dhaka is one of the leading institutions of higher education in Asia.

BHUTAN | ROYAL THIMPHU COLLEGE / SHERUBTSE COLLEGE

Royal Thimphu College (RTC), Bhutan's first private college, is affiliated to the Royal University of Bhutan. The college offers undergraduate degrees in a variety of fields under the auspices of the university. RTC has since established a number of international partnerships, including with Wheaton College. in the United States, the alma mater of the Fifth King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. In 2016, the Bhutan Accreditation Council awarded it its highest grade of A+. Sherubtse College is one of the oldest and largest colleges in the Royal University of Bhutan. The college was established as a public school in 1968 and became a junior College in 1976. It offers a wide range of undergraduate programmes in arts, humanities, social science, physical and biological sciences. Sherubtse College offers a unique learning opportunity for local as well as international students.



SRI LANKA | UNIVERSITY OF COLOMBO



The University of Colombo (informally Colombo University or UoC) is a public research university located primarily in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The oldest institution of modern higher education in Sri Lanka, it is also the largest university in the island, specialised in the fields of natural, social, and applied sciences as well as mathematics, computer sciences, and law. It is ranked among the top 10 universities in South Asia. The University of Colombo was founded in 1921 as University College Colombo, affiliated to the University of London.

NEPAL | CENTRAL DEPT. OF ECONOMICS, TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Established in 1959, Central Department of Economics (CEDECON) is one of the oldest and biggest departments at Tribhuvan University (TU). Primarily a teaching faculty, the Department also undertakes research activities and publication works. CEDECON is well equipped with high-level specialized faculty members recognized for their academic and professional contributions within and outside Nepal. Today, CEDECON is considered as one of the best departments at TU. Its role is crucial for modulating policies and implementing programs by the government as well as producing a high-level manpower urgently required for both private and government sectors.



PAKISTAN | LAHORE UNIVERSITY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

The Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) is an independent research university located in Lahore, Pakistan. It was founded in 1984 by the patronage of the business-industrial community. It established a business school in 1986 and the undergraduate school was initiated in 1994, and in 2008 launched an engineering school. The university is sponsored by the National Management Foundation which is sponsored by Lahore's business community. The university is also a member of Association of Commonwealth Universities. As the years unfold, the university remains committed to offering new programmes in relevant, emerging fields for the youth of the region.



INDIA | SAESM INDIA






SAESM is coordinated in India by a network of colleges and teachers facilitated by the Association for South Asian Scholars (AFSAS). The first SAESM was held in Ramjas College in 2004. Ramjas College has hosted it twice more, in 2008 (with Miranda House as co-host) and 2011. Since its inception SAESM has seen wide participation from not only different colleges of University of Delhi but other colleges and universities from all over India. Over the years, student participants have been drawn from colleges like St. Stephens College, Lady Shriram College for Women, Shri Ram College of Commerce, Hindu College (all from University of Delhi), St Xavier's College (Mumbai), Symbiosis School of Economics (Pune) Christ University (Bangalore), Jadavpur University (Kolkata), Presidency University (Kolkata), Madras Christian College (Chennai) and many more including Ashoka University and Shiv Nadar University.



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The Newsletter was designed by Samiran Dutta, an undergraduate student of economics at Ramjas College.



A capture of the Dambulla Cave Temple, Kandy - Jaffna Hwy, Dambulla, Sri Lanka, a UNESCO World Heritage site.