

SAARC CCI BIZ

ANNUAL ISSUE 2018



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SAARC CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
APEX BUSINESS ORGANIZATION OF SAARC



SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION



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- For further details on the SAARC CCI headquarter building project, write to us at info@saarcchamber.org



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Note from **SECRETARY GENERAL**

SAARC CCI



Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Annual issue of SAARC CCI biz!

The year 2018 has been rather exciting for SAARC CCI with President led delegations to Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China, and Turkey. With a combined GDP of \$3.29 trillion in 2018 and the economy being 5th largest in the world, our region remains the most attractive region to trade with and invest in. It is evident that SAARC region is on the verge of unleashing its true potential as the rising costs in other Asian regions are steering foreign investors towards South Asia as the next best alternative.

However, our region remains least integrated when we talk about regional cooperation. At SAARC CCI we believe that the potential we hold together cannot be overlooked and the answer to the challenges the region faces is only in regional economic cooperation. The SAARC CCI Annual Issue brings you highlights of various initiatives undertaken in 2018 that contributed to taking SAARC CCI forward. We are thankful to our members for sharing their success stories with the SAARC biz team and we look forward to sharing more successes going forward.

Our partners have contributed with knowledgeable articles we proudly share herein. We invite all members to share your successes and be a part of SAARC biz by contributing via an article, interview or advertisement of your esteemed organization and products and services offered.

We have been receiving constructive feedback on our SAARC biz initiative and we strive to enhance the layout and content on an ongoing basis. To stay up to date, please follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

We hope you find this Annual Issue a rewarding read and we look forward to your continued feedback and cooperation.

Happy Reading!

Hina Saeed



Message from **PRESIDENT** SAARC CCI

I am pleased to share the Annual Biz of SAARC CCI with you being the President of this prestigious organization.

The SAARC Annual Biz reflects the programmes, projects and initiatives of SAARC CCI and a wide array of economic data and trade information of the region which would be useful for all our stakeholders. We as a team of leaders in the region, has been working together with great passion and commitment sacrificing time, knowledge and wealth in achieving the objectives of SAARC CCI and our region.

South Asia has enjoyed a growth rate of over six percent during the recent years. Despite the robust economic growth, South Asian intra-regional trade accounts for only just over 5 percent. Daunting challenges from climate change, environmental degradation, low level of economic integration due to difficulties in connectivity and security barriers, and increasing inequalities pose serious threats to South Asia's growth and prosperity. However, enhancing regional cooperation and integration creates vast potentials for accelerating socioeconomic development, reducing poverty and economic disparity within and across the SAARC countries.

The region has a huge market of 1.788 billion people which creates a paramount platform for economic ventures within and across the region. South Asia is a youthful region with a median age of 26.4 years and with a considerable amount of world's youth living in South Asia. Harnessing these potentials of the region and creating conducive environments for business development in the eight nations, i.e. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, ensure the success of SAARC CCI

I reckon that the time has come for us to urge the governments in South Asia and beyond to realize the importance of efficiently facilitating SAARC CCI's efforts in economic integration thereby fully utilizing the market potentials for the benefit of people. Over a time of successful participation of our leaders and members, SAARC CCI has built confidence, trust, mutual understanding, shared values and friendship among the eight countries through various forums, cross border dialogues and conferences facilitating economic and cultural activities that benefits everyone in the region.



In this New Year 2019, we need to be well prepared to meet the increasing global demand for South Asian products capitalizing the opportunities and facing the challenges. At SAARC CCI I took several initiatives to take the vision and mission of SAARC CCI forward. I have established ten committees and councils on small and medium enterprises, information and communication technology, youth, women, investment, trade, entrepreneurship, culture, sports and tourism. With your support and commitment, I would like to reinforce my commitment and vision to make this chamber as one of the best chambers in the world by 2030. Great service done by our leaders, members and the secretariat family is indeed praiseworthy. Finally, I would like to convey my gratitude to all who are continuously supporting our journey with their work and commitment for the past 25 years. I wish you all with grand fortune in all your future endeavours.

Ruwan Edirisinghe

President
SAARC CCI



MESSAGE FROM SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT SAARC CCI



Iftikhar Ali Malik
Senior Vice President
SAARC CCI

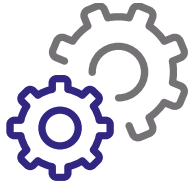
It is indeed a privilege to be a part of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry since its inception, which is the most prestigious apex body of SAARC engaged in promoting economic integration through trade and mutual understanding. I would like to reaffirm my support and commitment to SAARC CCI to take this region to new heights with the cooperation of member states and the experienced business leaders.

Today the South Asian region looks very different than it was three decades ago. About quarter of world population now lives in the South Asian region. Despite the tremendous growth the region has achieved during the past few years, it still lags far behind when it comes to intra-regional trade, connectivity and people to people contacts.

I'm confident that the vibrant and the dynamic youth of the region will make a difference in years to come. To make South Asia prosperous, the youth of the region needs to be more proactive in all socio economic and political domains. I often share my story with them, that I am self-made businessman, who started his career with marketing of auto filters across various cities of Pakistan. Today by grace of Allah Almighty, our brand "GUARD" is a market leader in Pakistan. I am a firm believer of pursuing dreams and making them happen.

I believe that, effective dialogue among SAARC nations, with a strong spirit of solidarity is very much needed to address trust deficit, which will be key to eliminate poverty, to enhance regional cooperation, to foster peace, and to uplift the standard of living of the people of South Asia.

Our commitment, integrity and unity will facilitate achieving our dream to transform SAARC to a South Asian Economic Union. I am confident that our collective efforts could make this region prosperous and a peaceful living for its people. I also appreciate the contributions of our dedicated staff.



MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT SAARC CCI (AFGHANISTAN)



Mohammad Yonass Momand
Vice President
SAARC CCI

It's a great honor to serve as the Vice President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Afghanistan.

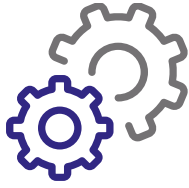
Our region has a great potential to reach any realistic development goal and play a major role in global peace and prosperity. To reach its aspiring goals, SAARC and the member countries need to address the challenges that hinder practical efforts to improve economic integrations and regional cooperation. We believe that SAARC can be more effective if member countries develop a coherent economic vision for the regional developments.

Considering the geo-economic situation of Afghanistan, our country can play a constructive role in this region. Afghanistan sits on the route between South Asia and Europe. It also connects our region to Central Asia. Therefore, other SAARC members can reach Central Asian and European markets through Afghanistan. Besides, the Central Asian energy resources can contribute a lot to the South Asian growing economies.

Afghanistan is rapidly approaching the development of a free market economy and we hope it will bring more economic prosperity and success for Afghans and the people of the region.

There are great investment opportunities in mining, agriculture, infrastructure and services sectors in Afghanistan, with special incentives for the private sector, and we invite regional investors to explore these opportunities and try to contribute in rebuilding Afghanistan's economy and infrastructure, which are a prerequisites for real regional connectivity.

Finally we expect that all members would work together to overcome our shared challenges and promote our common goals.



MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT SAARC CCI (BANGLADESH)



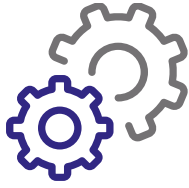
Mahbubul Alam
Vice President
SAARC CCI

I feel honored to be associated with SAARC and to share my thoughts about South Asia in SAARC CCI Annual Biz.

South Asia belongs to the fastest growing regions in the world. At the same time, trade and economic interaction among the members of SAARC are hardly well developed – hovering around five percent only. We need to take concrete and result-oriented steps for greater economic integration of the region. We feel that closer collaboration amongst businessmen of SAARC are integral for regional integration and is a win-win situation for all stakeholders. The close partnership of the business communities will further facilitate businesses of South Asia and to encourage investors from SAARC region and beyond to invest in SAARC countries.

SAARC Chamber has been proactively advocating stronger commercial and economic relations, for a prosperous and integrated South Asia. Since its inception, SAARC CCI has played an integral role in providing an institutional framework for promoting economic and regional cooperation in South Asia. As a founding Member of SAARC and SAARC CCI, Bangladesh always attaches high importance to the principles and objectives of the SAARC and SAARC CCI both. Bangladesh is willing and eager to pursue closer cooperation with SAARC countries.

We need to be persistent in our approach to bring about reforms in the intra-SAARC trade policy, liberalize our services, logistics, shipping, etc. With a view to ensuring trade facilitation in the region the problems regarding SAARC VISA Sticker, removal of trade barriers including NTMs, acceptance of standard certificate, limitations of infrastructure in the land ports, etc should be addressed properly. Despite certain setbacks and challenges, I am optimistic about South Asia and SAARC economic integration. I believe we can overcome the existing challenges in near future through close cooperation.



MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT SAARC CCI (INDIA)

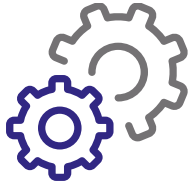


Vinod Juneja
Vice President
SAARC CCI

I would like to convey my greetings and felicitations to all our members, distinguished leaders and delegates for their efforts and contributions towards taking SAARC forward. I foresee a bright future for SAARC as it has a very important role to play in the near future not only from the point of view being strategic neighbors but also for development of trade and commerce between member countries. Government of India too has given high importance to the SAARC countries and is keen to build strong economic ties. There is huge potential for cooperation in infrastructure development, power, and manufacturing apart from trade and services.

SAARC CCI is relentlessly working towards harnessing the entire potential of member countries and, makes the Governments realize the importance in promoting business development amongst these eight countries. The success of SAARC CCI depends on getting these eight countries to increasingly involve themselves into doing business amongst them.

The contributions of SAARC CCI, National Federations and local chambers to the development of regional cooperation as well as to the peace, stability and security of the South Asian region are commendable. I am confident that the forthcoming high-level meetings, investment forums, fairs and engagements across SAARC countries will help to shape global engagements and generate commitments on developmental challenges, sustainability, strengthening political dialogue, socio-economic stability and cultural exchanges.



MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT SAARC CCI (NEPAL)



Chandi Raj Dhakal
Vice President
SAARC CCI

SAARC is the regional, intergovernmental and geopolitical organization in South Asia formed with an intention of enhancing regional cooperation, accelerating growth and promoting economic and social development. SAARC provides a platform for the people of South Asia to work together in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding. It aims to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life through accelerated economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region.

Over the last 33 years, despite extremely difficult political circumstances, SAARC has enabled South Asian political leaders to meet regularly and carry on formal discussions to address their problems. SAARC has also tackled important topics such as social harmony, development agreements, and even the sensitive area of fighting terrorism. Ever since its formation in 1985, SAARC has made several attempts to address the issue of poverty. But what is bit disappointing is SAARC is failing to harvest the benefit with intra SAARC trade compared to ASEAN, the EU and NAFTA.

SAPTA could not make any significant impact on intra-regional trade of SAARC and SAFTA has not been proved very fruitful till now.

With abundant natural resources SAARC has potential to become world's largest economy after U.S.A. and China. The member nations are resource rich and territorial neighbors. Bhutan and Nepal have hydro power potential in excess of their demand for electricity over the foreseeable future and offer the best prospects for intraregional electricity export.

India, Pakistan and Bangladesh account for the major share of natural gas and coal resources in the region. These countries can share a lot of resources. To raise cooperation and achieve mutual benefits, countries need to make strong policy with one another.

For SAARC to progress and to promote prosperity and growth, it must first capitalize on less contentious issues. Short-term success will create the momentum to work on long terms goal of regional connectivity, resource sharing and investment. SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's role towards promoting intraregional cooperation is appreciative and expected to play more effective role to promote regional trade, commerce and social and cultural harmony.

I congratulate SAARC CCI for publishing SAARC Biz. It is indeed a great achievement and you have made us all proud.



MESSAGE FROM VICE PRESIDENT SAARC CCI (SRI LANKA)



Dr. M. Rohitha Silva
Vice President
SAARC CCI

It is indeed a great honour for me to serve as the Vice President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry which has been playing a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of the South Asian region since its inception in 1992. The South Asian economy is in fact momentous in the global economic progress. Numerous challenges and emerging opportunities create the economic advancement of the region. We as a great team, have been working together in a spirit of friendship, trust, mutual understanding, along with great passion to face the challenges and reap the benefits of opportunities presented within the SAARC region and beyond. In general, the economy of South Asia is performing in a significant manner. The growth of the region has been stronger than most of the regions in comparison with the global economy, where the global economy has been growing at approximately 3.1 percent, South Asia has been progressing at around 6.9 percent in 2018, extending its lead over East Asia and the Pacific.

Nevertheless, youth unemployment, extreme poverty, gender and environment issues, economic disparities and social inequalities remain predominant in the region. According to research, South Asia's economic integration is, due to multifaceted reasons, one of the lowest in the world and the regional trade accounts for merely 5% of the global trade. Furthermore, infrastructure development in the region is in need of significant momentum. We as economic agents and corporate leaders in SAARC have an effective role to play in overcoming these challenges ensuring a sustainable and equitable development in the region. We should encourage young entrepreneurs, startups, e-commerce, small and medium scale enterprises which are the engines of economic growth and employment creation. We need to strengthen SAARC CCI's relationships within the region and beyond. In this regard, we expect to build more partnerships with international trade bodies, intergovernmental organizations, governments, corporate experts, academia, civil society and young people.

Through more inclusive and integrated development policies and strategies, SAARC CCI would be able to ensure sustainable development in the region. Over the past 27 years, SAARC CCI leaders as a great team have strived to achieve our objectives sacrificing time, knowledge and wealth. Our leaders' enthusiasm, passion, commitment and effective work are indeed praiseworthy. Moreover, SAARC CCI Secretariat team is also remarkable in all its activities and achieving tasks. I would like to take this as an opportunity to convey my gratitude to our team, secretariat and all who supported in achieving the sustainable development in the region. I wish you all good luck with all your future endeavors.

For the current year I would propose the region to develop m-commerce, green technology, keeping in line with the health and well-being in societies which in turn will enhance the happiness index of our countries.

the wheel history....



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SAARC TRADE LEADS



LEADING INDUSTRIES OF SAARC COUNTRIES

AFGHANISTAN

Agriculture Industry

Agriculture is the backbone of the Afghan economy, contributing 22% of the GDP and employing 75% of the workforce.

Afghanistan produces organic fruits, vegetables and livestock products including skin, cashmere and wool, and a significant quantity of these commodities heads to the export market. Afghanistan exported approximately 9725.5 metric tons of agricultural commodities.

Manufacturing Industry

Afghanistan's industrial sector survives on the small-scale production of textiles, woven carpets and fertilizer.

Around 10% of the country's population is engaged in this sector. The industrial sector contributes 22% of the revenues for the GDP of the country.

Services Industry

The contribution of the services sector of Afghanistan to its GDP is 56%. The revenues primarily come from the transport, retail and telecommunications sectors. Approximately 10% of the Afghan population earn its livelihood from the services sector of the country.

BANGLADESH

Apparel Industry

The export-oriented Bangladeshi garment manufacturing industry has boomed into a US \$28.6 billion a year industry. The textile and garment manufacturing industry is accounted for almost 20 % of Bangladeshi GDP and it employs around 20 million people in the country and is the major driving force of the country's economy. The apparel sector, in particular, contributes to 80% of all exports. Bangladesh has set itself a target of achieving apparel exports worth \$50 billion by 2021.

Leather Industry

In 2017, the total value of leather and leather goods exports from Bangladesh stood at \$1.2bn, accounting for 3.54% of the country's total merchandise exports. The industry's contribution to total output or GDP is estimated to be 0.35%. Total employment in the industry in 2016 was 129,000 up from 91,000 in 2013.

During the same period, the industry's share in total employment rose from 0.16% to 0.22%. There are around 220 tanneries, 2500 footwear making units and 90 large firms that produce 190 million square feet of hides and skins per year. The sector directly employs approximately 558 000 people in Bangladesh.

Fisheries Industry

Bangladesh has ranked third in the world in terms of inland fish production in 2018, according to a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization.

In FY18, Bangladesh earned Tk4, 500 crore by exporting

around 69,000 metric tons of fish and fish products.

Fishery sector contributes 3.57 % of the Bangladesh GDP and employs around 1.5 million people out of its total workforce. In recent years, exports of fish and fishery products were estimated at USD 592.5 million, with shrimps and prawns as the main species exported.

BHUTAN

Hydropower Industry

Bhutan's hydropower exports comprise 32.4% of total exports and contributes 8% to its nation's GDP. Bhutan is the largest exporter of hydropower to India. Bhutan boasts a very high hydropower potential, estimated at around 30,000 MW, of which 23,760 MW has been identified as economically feasible. A total of 1,615 MW of hydropower capacity has been installed in the country to date. Bhutan's domestic demand for electricity is relatively low, but power exports to India are already an important source of revenue; hydropower contributes over 27 per cent of government revenue.

Agro Industry

Bhutan's economy is based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and sale of electricity. Around 56% of the population depend on agriculture. The agro based industry contributes 15.6% to its nations GDP, major exports from this industry includes processed food and fruit products.

Mining Industry

The Mining industry contributes only 2% in Bhutan's real GDP that constitutes for US\$ 908.69 million. Major industries that fall under this sector include cement, coal, ferroalloys, and calcium carbide, particleboard and polythene pipes.

INDIA

IT Industry

IT industry has emerged as a major leading industry in India that has led the services sector account for a whopping 64% of the entire GDP. The IT sector contributes almost about 9% of the national GDP. Exports form the essence of the IT-ITES industry and earn 77% of the total industry income. As far as national exports are considered, IT industry accounts for 25% of the total national exports.

Textile Industry

The textile sector accounts for 14% of the total industrial production, contributes about 4% to the national GDP, and earns India 17% of its total exports. Around 35 million people are directly employed in textile industry.

Transportation industry

The transportation industry of India is large and expansive. The roadways, highways, ports, aviation industry and railways, all form a part of the transportation industry.

It is a growing sector which contributes around 8.5% to India's GDP. The roadways are the dominant transportation system in India, with the highway density of 0.66 km of highway per square km of land.



DIALOGUE WITH MS. KIRAN GERA

International Executive Council Member Of SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (India)

SAARC CCI editorial team's journey to find inspiration from successful women entrepreneurs from the region brings us to the International Executive Council Member of SCWEC (India), Ms. Kiran Gera.

Please share any interesting experience as International Executive Council Member of SCWEC.

As an International Executive Council Member of SCWEC (India), we need to work in the organization, before I can garner a cache of interesting experiences. However, I was happy to participate at the event, Change of Guard, held in Colombo in 2017, and interact with my colleagues from different member countries. It has always been a good learning experience.

What is your vision for SCWEC and SAARC CCI?

I believe that the member countries of SAARC have a dichotomous advantage. In some ways, culturally, we are similar and yet at the same time there are aspects that bring out the diversity amongst us. Because of this, we can use a two pronged approach to cooperate with each other and, simultaneously, learn to deal with issues, which make us different from each other.

We have similar problems. We can transplant best practices from one region to the other, quite easily. Markets can open up because many products consumed are similar. I think we have a lot of untapped potential here.

Being a female, what are the challenges women entrepreneurs face going across geographical borders to grow their business? What kind of support system do they need? Please share some examples.

Frankly, a woman entrepreneur has a 'special' set of challenges, wherever in the world she might be. I think many of these are common, whether she is in South Asia or Europe. But there are challenges, that stem from social and cultural scenarios in the SAARC Region, which I feel, we, the women of this region can manage quite well.

For example, if I, an Indian entrepreneur, have to go to Afghanistan, for business, I am conversant with the basic mode of conduct and dress code, appropriate in that country. Perhaps better than a businesswoman from a western country. That makes it easier for me.

How important is the SAARC platform for women entrepreneurs?

If there is a helping hand from all the Governments, and various facilities are provided to make "ease of business",



and SCWEC gets support and clout from SAARC CCI, I think it can become a very attractive platform.

What 3 qualities every successful entrepreneur must have?

- Understanding the market.
- Flexibility to change and adapt to new developments.
- Tenacity. Nothing comes easy. There are always ups and downs. The entrepreneur has to remain steadfast in her belief in herself.

What are the 3 key challenges, faced by entrepreneurs; you would like Governments to address?

Help young women entrepreneurs to have access to loans with low interest rates and micro-finance methods. Create ongoing training facilities with respect to various requirements needed to run business and give them tax concessions to encourage them to take the plunge and especially to tide through the initial period.

What three things would you request member states for?

- Create Trust.
- Create Peace.
- Give reciprocal concessions and advantages to member countries.

What is your vision for the SAARC region?

My vision and my prayer for the SAARC Region is a place of peace and prosperity, conflict free and economically strong.

Is regional integration a win-win situation for all stakeholders?

Of course, there are so many unique resources and strengths, the individual member countries are blessed with. If we were to share them, develop each other and divert our resources to economic development, the entire SAARC region would become far more developed.

“TOGETHER WE CAN, AND WE WILL, MAKE A DIFFERENCE”

PROMOTE YOUR CORPORATE PROFILE AND BRAND WITH SAARC BIZ!

SAARC Biz is an initiative of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry to keep its stakeholders abreast of business opportunities across the SAARC region and provide our valuable members a platform to project your company, brand, products and services.

Key features of the SAARC Biz magazine include

- Glimpses of SAARC CCI events and initiatives across the region
- Corporate profiles and advertisements of leading Businesses across SAARC region
- Business Opportunities and Events across SAARC Region
- Interviews with SAARC Governments, Business community, think tanks and academia
- News and Views
- In the spotlight
- SAARC Insights

Distribution where it matters most!

The magazine is distributed to over 5,000 key stakeholders across SAARC region, which include Government organizations, National Federations, business community, press and media, NGOs and donor organizations and academia among others. It is also accessible online on the SAARC CCI website and sent via e-mail on all SAARC CCI and partner mailing lists across the region.

Be Known and Your Business Known via SAARC Biz!

What's in SAARC Biz for you?

- SAARC biz provides your business a one window-marketing opportunity for complete outreach in the SAARC countries.
- SAARC biz enters the door steps of national federations, local chambers, foreign missions, multinationals and international organizations operating in the SAARC region.
- SAARC CCI exchanges its publications with WTO-Geneva, European Union-Brussels, World Bank-Washington and United Nations Information Centre-New York. This gives your business investment a global coverage.

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Participating in SAARC Biz is easy

SAARC Biz is pleased to present this opportunity for your leading Company to advertise your products and services in the upcoming SAARC Biz issue.

You may participate in SAARC Biz with an advertisement or by sharing your company profile.

We hope that you will be as eager to participate in SAARC Biz as we are to have you on board with us in this initiative.

Please send in your interest to participate in SAARC biz at info@saarcchamber.org and we will revert with the details.



CLIMATE CHANGE

THE NEED TO BUILD AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE IS NOW!

We are living in a world where many are still circumspect about the scientific forecasts on climate change. Their view is that the forecasts are still very uncertain and the debate around it is louder than it deserves to be. In short, the warning-bells are simply false alarms. Add to this a huge chunk of our population who are simply unaware of the changes occurring in our environment and natural resources due to the impact of climate change, many of parents of children who will grow up on this earth in the years to come; and one can understand why building awareness and acceptance of the impact of climate change is all the more imminent.

While the latest UN-IPCC scientific report on Global Warming of 1.50C was particularly worrying, let us, as a layman, just observe the general happenings around us. The timing and frequency of rains has been shifting in recent years. Take the June-September monsoon rains across South Asia as an example. A region which is still predominantly rain-dependent for its agriculture, erratic rain patterns are causing massive swings in the final output of key crops, thus impacting its supply and ultimately the price consumers like us pay. Frequent incidents of floods in our cities due to reducing wetlands floods, erratic freshwater supply to our homes due to drying up of key rivers and lakes and lung related ailments

as a result of breathing polluted air are just some more examples. Apart from direct impacts like these, there are indirect impacts too. For instance, the distress that erratic rainfall and cyclonic patterns causes to our rural agrarian community is leading to higher rates of rural to urban migration of people, causing significant pressure on our cities' civic resources and a social challenge due to a large inflow of unemployed youth. Another indirect impact is that the severe pollution and reduction of our natural capital is leading to the disappearance of several flora and fauna around us, all of whom play a key role in the natural ecosystem. Take the case of beneficial insects and birds who play a vital role as pollinators and predators to pests in our farms. How many do we see left today?

All in all, one can either live in denial of this issue or else convert this into a multi-billion business opportunity to give people new solutions to tackle the challenge. Both options may not be really feasible in developing countries of South Asia. The first option is not feasible for obvious reasons. The second reason is also a challenge because most high-tech solutions are expensive and hence, out of the purchasing power of a mass chunk of our population. And our region is a large population and relatively poor region, at the end of the day!

So what is the best solution in such circumstances? We need breakthrough solutions that are both low-cost, hence can be implemented by masses, and have long-term benefits, so that we are not forced to invest in new

plans every year. Andhra Pradesh, a state in southern India, offers such a solution on one of our key needs - food. Its Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) policy aims to cover all the farmers of the state by 2025. The ZBNF farming practices involve using natural inputs as bio-inoculants instead of chemical fertilizers. Chemical inputs in our farms are seen to have caused significant damage to our natural resources over the last fifty years, from ruining the soil-health to reduced absorption of rain water.

The natural inputs used in ZBNF farming are available within the villages and at a far lower cost than the expensive fertilizers and pesticides of the chemical industry.

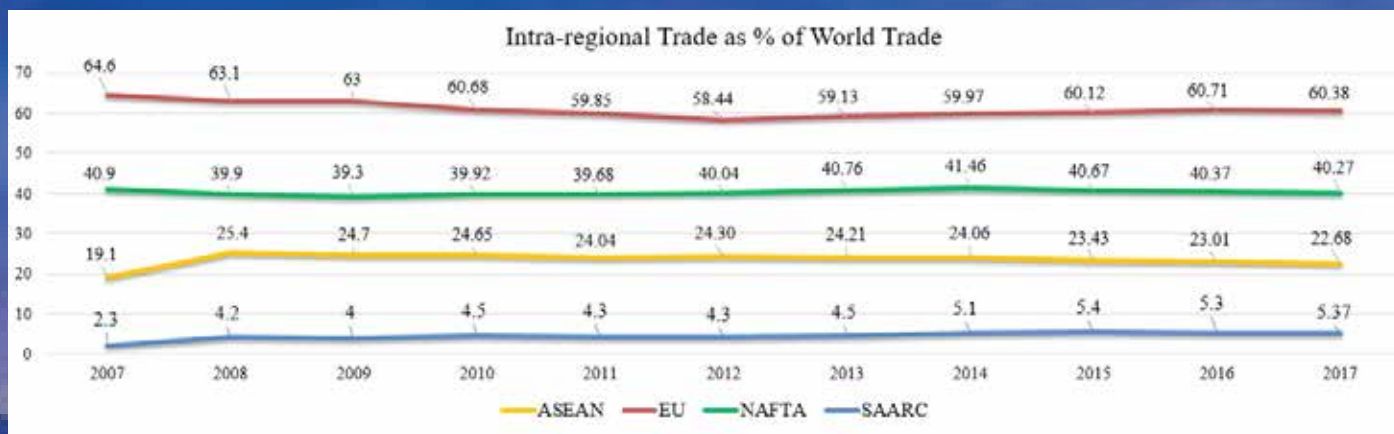
Moreover, the natural farming system is seen to create a better quality crop, which has long-term benefits for

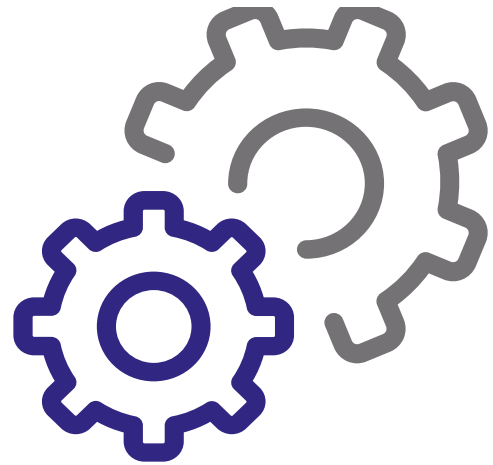
the health of the consumers, unlike food from chemical-based farms which often have chemical residue. Thus, the lower medical and pediatrician bills is an indirect benefit in itself! Low-cost and long-term beneficial solutions like these can help us combat the impacts of global warming and climate change better, especially in the South Asian community.

In conclusion, it may already be too late to say that we should desire to leave behind a better planet for our next generation, but there is still time to say that we should desire to leave behind a slightly less ruined planet for our next generation. The time to build our awareness and acceptance of this pressing issue, and then act upon it, is now!



SAARC INSIGHTS





SAARC CCI Diaries;

Taking SAARC CCI Forward

SAARC CCI PRESIDENCY TAKEOVER BY SRI LANKA

March 26, 2018, Colombo, Sri Lanka



Mr. Suraj Vaidya, Outgoing President SAARC CCI presenting a Gold Pin as a symbol of handing over SAARC CCI Presidency to Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe

SAARC CCI Presidency Handover Ceremony was organized by the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SAARC CCI) in collaboration with Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry Sri Lanka (FCCISL) on March 26, 2018 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe took over as the President of SAARC CCI for the term 2018-2019. Hon'ble Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Ranil Wikramasingahe, Hon'ble Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister of Industry and Commerce, Hon'ble Mr. Faiszer Musthapha, Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government, Hon'ble Mr. Patali Champika Ranawaka, Minister of Mega-polis and Western Province Development and Hon'ble Mr. Daya Gamage, Minister of Primary Industries graced the occasion with their presence.

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe is the Chairman of RN Group of Companies Sri Lanka. RN Constructions (Pvt) Ltd was established in 1996 with a capital of only Rs:500.00 and just three workmen, which today encompasses over 2500 workmen with over 400 professionally

qualified staff members. It has become today's one of the leading construction companies in Sri Lanka with strong professional and financial background. Furthermore, the company owns all required machinery equipment and vehicles, over 400 units, for the use in its all construction activities.

The brilliant rise of the company has been rewarded with the highest accolade in the construction industry as well as in industrial achievement in Sri Lanka. More than three hundred business leaders from South Asian region, Sri Lankan politicians and media representatives were present during the ceremony.

SAARC CCI 74TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

March 27, 2018, Colombo, Sri Lanka

The 74th Executive Committee Meeting of SAARC CCI and the 1st EC meeting of the new Presidium was held under the Chair of Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in Colombo, Sri Lanka on March 27, 2018.

Former President SAARC CCI, Mr. Macky Hashim in his address congratulated Mr. Edirisinghe and the newly elected team of Executive Committee members for term 2018-2019 on their first EC meeting.

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI, welcomed the SAARC CCI Former Presidents, SAARC CCI EC and GA members and National member bodies of SAARC CCI.

He reinforced that the SAARC CCI new term Presidium shall keep focusing on and making united and integrated efforts to unleash the resources of South Asia. Mr. President shared the team's short term and long term vision to make SAARC CCI world's best chamber by 2030.



PRESIDENT SAARC CCI HOLDS A MEETING WITH SAARC CHAMBER WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS COUNCIL (SCWEC)

March 27, 2018, Colombo, Sri Lanka



Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI, Secretary General SAARC CCI, Ms. Hina Saeed and Mrs. Rifa Musthapha, Chairperson SCWEC, during the SCWEC meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka

SAARC Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs Council on March 27, 2018 under the chair of Ms. Rifa Musthapha, Chairperson SCWEC had a brief meeting with Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI to discuss a way forward for SCWEC, upcoming activities along with SCWEC rules and regulations.

SAARC CCI SECRETARIAT TEAM COURTESY CALL ON

April 24, 2018, Islamabad, Pakistan

Secretary General SAARC CCI, Ms. Hina Saeed paid a courtesy call on High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan, H.E Maj. General (R) Jayanath Lokuketagodage.

During the meeting, Ms. Hina Saeed apprised Excellency about the SAARC CCI Presidency handover takeover ceremony which was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on March 26, 2018 and that Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe has taken over as the President of SAARC CCI for term 2018-2019.



Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General SAARC CCI with H.E Maj. General (R) Jayanath Lokuketagodage

PRESIDENT SAARC CCI, MR. RUWAN EDIRISINGHE VISITS SAARC CCI SECRETARIAT OFFICE

April 28-29, 2018, Islamabad, Pakistan

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI made his first visit to SAARC CCI secretariat after assuming the office of SAARC CCI Presidency.

During his first visit he was accompanied with SAARC CCI Senior Vice President (Pakistan) Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, SAARC CCI Vice President (Sri Lanka) Dr. Rohitha Silva, SAARC CCI Vice President (Nepal) Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Mr. Shafquat Haider, Executive Committee member SAARC CCI (Bangladesh), Executive Committee member



SAARC CCI (Nepal) Mr. Basudev Prasad Gautam and Former President SAARC CCI Mr. Macky Hashim visited Islamabad, Pakistan on April 28-29, 2018 and conducted meetings with key stakeholders of SAARC CCI. They visited the iconic SAARC CCI Headquarter Building project.

Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Senior Vice President (Pakistan) welcomed President Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe along with the office bearers of SAARC CCI to SAARC CCI President's office at the SAARC CCI secretariat, Islamabad, Pakistan. The President led delegation visited and held meetings with contractors and consultants.

ORIENTATION & TRAINING SESSION ORGANIZED BY SCWEC PAKISTAN

May 10, 2018, Islamabad, Pakistan.

SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC) Pakistan Chapter, in collaboration with USAID small and medium enterprises (SMEA) organized a one day orientation and training session on SMEA Grants in the Hospitality and IT sector and Training Guidelines for Marketing and proposal writing on May 10, 2018, in FPCCI Capital Office, Islamabad, Pakistan.



Group picture of participants with Ms. Zubia Zubair, Vice Chairperson SCWEC (Pakistan Chapter) & Secretary General SAARC CCI, Ms. Hina Saeed

The objective of the workshop was to optimize the management skills and learning experience of women entrepreneurs through self-motivation, discipline and by motivating them to explore opportunities in the IT and Hospitality sectors.

PRESIDENT SAARC CCI LEADS A DELEGATION TO CHINA FOR THE 13TH CHINA SOUTH ASIA BUSINESS FORUM

June 12-15, 2018, Kunming, China



Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI delivering the keynote address at the inaugural session of 13th CSABF, Kunming, China

President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SAARC CCI), Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe led a high-level business delegation to attend the 13th China South Asia Business Forum (CSABF) from 12 to 15 June 2018 in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China. The forum was held under the theme of "Shaping Future Together—Industrial Cooperation of Mutual Opening".

The 13th China South Asia Business Forum was organized by China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and People's Government of Yunnan Province in collaboration with SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry to boost regional economic cooperation between China & SAARC member states. The Chair of 13th China South Asia Business Forum was with Afghanistan.

The event featured insightful speakers including Leader of Yunnan Province, Leader of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), H.E Sun Zhenyu, Former Vice Minister of Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation, Ms. Bhawani Mishra Rana, President of Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Xiang Wenbo President of Sany Heavy Industry Co.Ltd, Mr. Ganesh Kumar Gupta, President of Federation of Indian Export Organizations and Mr. Liu Guangxi, Chairman of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Yunnan Sub-council.



SAARC CCI delegates at the opening ceremony of 13th China-South Asia Business Forum (CSABF), Kunming, China

SAARC CCI delegation comprised of Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President SAARC CCI (Nepal), Dr. Rohitha Silva, Vice President, SAARC CCI (Sri Lanka), Mr. Suraj Vaidya, Immediate Past President SAARC CCI, Mr. Basudev Prasad Gautam, EC Member, SAARC CCI (Nepal), Mr. Gyanendra Lal Pradhan, EC Member, SAARC CCI (Nepal), Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, EC Member, SAARC CCI (Pakistan), Mr. Shehryar Ali Malik, Vice Chairman, SAARC Young Entrepreneurs Forum (Pakistan), Mr. Naseem Ur Rehman, EC Member, SAARC CCI (Pakistan), Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General, SAARC CCI, Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Butt, Deputy Secretary General, SAARC CCI, Mr. Keerthi Gunawardane, EC Member, SAARC CCI (Sri Lanka), Mr. Ruwan De Silva, GA member SAARC CCI (Sri Lanka) and Mr. M. K Sahriya, Life Member, SAARC CCI (India).

President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe in his address thanked the Department of Commerce of China for its thorough preparations and thoughtful arrangement for this meeting for China-South Asia Business Cooperation. He urged for deeper economic cooperation with China saying that this collaboration will usher in a new era of advancement, prosperity, development, economic growth and welfare of people of the two regions.

The 13th China South Asia Business Forum comprised of sub forums including the 3rd Symposium on China-South Asia, Southeast Asia Commercial Legal Cooperation, Youth Sub-Forum: Youth and New Economy, Yunnan and Indian Ocean Economic Cooperation (YIOEC), and 1st China- South Asia Cooperation Forum High Level Roundtable Meeting for China-South Asia Business Cooperation.



President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe addressing the inaugural session of "The 3rd Symposium on China-South Asia, Southeast Asia Commercial Legal Cooperation"

PRESIDENT SAARC CCI LEADS DELEGATION TO CHENGDU, SICHUAN PROVINCE



CCPIT- Chengdu President Mr. Li Gang meeting with SAARC CCI delegation led by President SAARC CCI Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe to Chengdu, China.

Prior to meetings in Kunming, SAARC CCI delegation visited Sichuan Province and met the leadership of CCPIT, Sichuan Council to exchange views to strengthen the China South Asia collaboration and enhance member countries

participation in forthcoming China-South Asia Promotional seminar scheduled in September, 2018.

Mr. Le Gang, President, CCPIT Sichuan, while welcoming President SAARC CCI and delegates from SAARC member states said that we want to strengthen our 8 years of cooperation and strengthen the outcome of this forum along with B2B meetings during the forthcoming seminar. Nepal was announced as the focal country of the 2018 forum.

President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe while acknowledging the role of CCPIT-Sichuan in strengthening the relationship between China and South Asia countries said that he would ensure participation from all SAARC member states in the forthcoming forum.

The SAARC CCI delegation comprised of Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President, SAARC CCI (Nepal), Mr. Suraj Vaidya, Immediate Past President, Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, Executive Committee member SAARC CCI (Pakistan), Mr. Naseem Ur Rehman, Executive Committee member SAARC CCI, Mr. Sherhyar Malik, Vice Chairman SYEF (Pakistan), Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General SAARC CCI, Mr. Zulfiqar Butt, Deputy Secretary General SAARC CCI and Ms. Zeenath Lay, Secretary to President, SAARC CCI.

VISIT TO OBOR BUILDING, SICHUAN PROVINCE, CHINA

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President, SAARC CCI along with SAARC CCI members visited the OBOR office in OBOR building in Chengdu, Sichuan Province allocated for SAARC CCI sub office. SAARC CCI had signed an MoU in September 2017, with the OBOR management to open SAARC CCI sub-office in the OBOR building.

The team finalized the opening of SAARC CCI sub office in OBOR building during meeting with OBOR representatives.

SAARC CCI MEETING WITH CAFTEC AND VISIT TO CHENGDU INTERNATIONAL TRADE CITY

The SAARC CCI delegation led by President, SAARC CCI Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, had a meeting with Mr. Chen Xiao, Secretary General, CAFTEC (Chengdu Association for Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation) and his team to strengthen trade relations between China and South Asian countries.

The CAFTEC team led by Mr. Chen Xiao, Secretary General, CAFTEC, arranged SAARC CCI delegation visit to International Trade City (ITC), in Chengdu, China. The CAFTEC team offered space in International Trade City to SAARC CCI which could be utilized to strengthen trade between SAARC member states and China.



SAARC CCI Presidential delegation meeting with Chengdu Local Government.

SAARC DEVELOPMENT FUND PARTNERSHIP CONCLAVE 2018

July 1-3, 2018, Delhi, India

President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, led a delegation from SAARC member states to New Delhi, India from July 1-3, 2018 to attend SAARC Development Fund Partnership Conclave 2018.

The aim of the conclave was to solicit cross border project co financing under the social, economic & infrastructure windows of SDF in SAARC member states and building partnership with various organizations for fund mobilization and investments in SAARC member states.

Mr. Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog, Government of India graced the event as Chief Guest for the Conclave.

The SAARC CCI President led delegation comprised of Mr.



President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe presenting souvenir to Mr. Sunil Motiwal, CEO SDF in the presence of Mr. Vinod Juneja, Vice President SAARCCCI (India) at the SDF Partnership Conclave 2018 on June 3, 2018, New Delhi, India

Vinod Juneja, Vice President SAARC CCI (India), Mr. Chandi Raj Dakhal, Vice President SAARC CCI (Nepal), Dr. M. Rohitha Silva, Vice President SAARC CCI (Sri Lanka), Mr. Shafquat Haider, Executive Committee Member SAARC CCI (Bangladesh) and Deputy Secretary General SAARC CCI, Mr. Zulfiqar Butt. During the visit President SAARC CCI called on Mr. Piyush Srivastava, Joint Secretary (BIMSTEC & SAARC).



Speakers during the SAARC Development Fund Partnership Conclave 2018

SAARC CCI DELEGATION CALL ON MR. BHUPINDER SINGH BHALLA, JOINT SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

July 3, 2018 in New Delhi, India

SAARC CCI delegation comprising of Mr. Vinod Juneja, Vice President SAARC CCI (India), Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President, SAARC CCI (Nepal), Mr. Basudev Prasad Gautam, Executive Committee member SAARC CCI (Nepal) and Deputy Secretary General SAARC CCI, Mr. Zulfiqar Butt called on Mr. Bhupinder Singh Bhalla, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, in his office on July 3, 2018 in New Delhi, India.

During the meeting VP SAARC CCI (India) apprised Mr. Bhalla about the two days meetings of SAARC CCI delegation in New Delhi. He further shared about the delegations meeting with Joint Secretary MoFA.



SAARC CCI Delegation picture with Mr. Bhupinder Singh Bhalla, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India

Mr. Dhakal shared that the delegation participated in the SDF conclave with an objective to understand the funds disbursement modalities of SDF. He added that SAARC CCI is keen to undertake various regional initiatives with support of SDF fund. Vice President SAARC CCI (Nepal) also requested Mr. Bhalla to play his role to energize the relations between SAARC member states. He urged that India being the biggest economy and market of the region can lead an active role in regional cooperation and take appropriate measures for a trade friendly environment in the region.

SAARC CCI INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) COUNCIL MEETING

July 15, 2018, Dhaka, Bangladesh

The SAARC CCI ICT Council meeting was held under the Chair of Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President, SAARC CCI in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Mr. Shafquat Haider, Chairman ICT Council and Executive Committee Member, SAARC CCI (Bangladesh), Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, Executive Committee Member, SAARC CCI (Pakistan), Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General, SAARC CCI and Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Butt, Deputy Secretary General, SAARC CCI were present during the meeting. While addressing the members, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI, stressed that the ICT council will establish an environment that encourages networking of services and applications and thus promoting e-commerce and trade in the South Asian region.

It will also provide an opportunity for the South Asian nations to address the digital divide and reduce poverty while ensuring regional economic growth, he further shared. Emphasizing on the importance of ICT sector, he said that, across the globe the developed nations have seen the emergence of a vibrant ICT sector that significantly contributes towards their economies. Mr. Shafquat Haider, Chairman ICT council informed about the initiatives of ICT Council including "INFOCOM" on December 8, 2019 to be held in Calcutta, India.

SAARC CHAMBER WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR COUNCIL (SCWEC) MEETS IN DHAKA

July 15, 2018, Dhaka, Bangladesh

The meeting of SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC) was held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka, Bangladesh, under the Chair of Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI.

The Chair of SCWEC Council, Ms. Rifa Musthapha, along with Ms. Rita Bhandary, Vice Chair, SCWEC (Nepal) and Executive Members including Ms. Jezaayar Hassendeen (Sri Lanka), Ms. Sajeda Mein Raj, Ms. Hasina Newaaz, Ms. Naz Farhana (Bangladesh), Ms. Shova Gyawali and Ms. Prabha Rajbhandary Pradhan (Nepal) and Life Member, Ms. Sabera Ahmed (Bangladesh) were present during the meeting.

Addressing the members, President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, said SCWEC has become a vibrant part of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry that has contributed to the economic empowerment of women

both regionally and internationally and it has stimulated the spirit of entrepreneurship in South Asia by conducting various awareness and support programs for women and youth during the past years.

While enlightening the members about the sanitary Napkin project, Ms. Rifa Musthapha, Chairperson, SCWEC, said that SCWEC has already been working for the empowerment of women in South Asia. In this endeavor, SCWEC has launched a new initiative of sanitary health and hygiene project, and has imported machinery from India that can produce sanitary napkins at low cost, along with providing women with an opportunity to earn money. The production process will start from August 1, 2018, Ms. Rifa shared.



SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneur Council (SCWEC) meeting in progress

SAARC CCI 75TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

July 14, 2018, Dhaka, Bangladesh

The 75th Executive Committee Meeting of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry was held on July 14, 2018 under the Chair of President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



SAARC CCI 75th Executive Committee Meeting in progress

The agenda items of the 75th Executive Committee Meeting included the approval of agenda of 75th Executive Committee Meeting, approval of the Minutes of the 72nd, 73rd & 74th Executive Committee Meeting, Brief of activities undertaken during March 2018 till July 2018, SAARC CCI Building, accounts and council update along with the approval of SAARC CCI life memberships.

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI proceeded with the 75th Executive Committee Meeting. He reinforced the importance of the SAARC CCI 75th EC Meeting and shared the way forward with the EC members including the short and long-term vision of SAARC CCI, to transform SAARC CCI as one of the most vibrant Chambers in the



Welcome address by Mr. Mahbubul Alam, SAARC CCI Vice President (Bangladesh)

World by 2030. Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI, also thanked Mr. Suraj Vaidya, SAARC CCI Immediate Past President, and Mr. Om Raj Bhandary, Former VP Nepal, for their contribution during last term to SAARC CCI headquarter building project construction.

Mr. President thanked the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) for hosting SAARC CCI 75th Executive Committee Meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The meeting commenced with the welcome address of Mr. Mahbubul Alam, SAARC CCI Vice President (Bangladesh). He congratulated the SAARC CCI President and welcomed the distinguished guests in Bangladesh. He shared that Bangladesh is aiming for economic development to become a developed country by 2041 and stressed that in order to achieve this vision, the support of SAARC CCI is essential. In continuation to the 75th Executive committee meeting, Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General, SAARC CCI presented the SAARC CCI initiatives and two-year plan, as per the vision of SAARC CCI term 2018-2019 team.

On July 17, 2018, SAARC CCI delegation called on Mr. Kazi M. Aminul Islam, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), to discuss investment opportunities in Bangladesh.



SAARC CCI delegation with Mr. Kazi M. Aminul Islam Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) in Bangladesh

SAARC CCI SEMINAR ON “A CLIMATE -RESILIENT SOUTH ASIA: TURNING CLIMATE-SMART INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES INTO REALITY”

July 15, 2018, Dhaka, Bangladesh

SAARC CCI organized a one day seminar entitled “A Climate -Resilient South Asia: Turning Climate-Smart Investment Opportunities into Reality” in collaboration with Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) on July 15, 2018 in Dhaka, Bangladesh and FBCCI, with an objective to provide a roadmap and relevant guidelines for spotting investment opportunities in the climate change adaptation mitigation.

Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh, Mr. Anisul Islam Mahmud, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and delivered a keynote address. The inaugural session was also addressed by Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Senior Vice President SAARC CCI, Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President (Nepal), Mr. Mahbulul Alam, Vice President (Bangladesh), Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General, of SAARC CCI, and Mr. Md. Shafiul Islam (Mohiuddin), President, FBCCI.

In his inaugural address, the hon'ble Minister said that Bangladesh has already adopted effective preventive measures to manage risks being one of the vulnerable countries of South Asia. Shafiul Islam (Mohiuddin) said that Climate change has emerged as one of the greatest developmental challenges for the 21st century.

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President, SAARC CCI said that for South Asia, one of the most climate vulnerable regions, climate change acts as a key driver of poverty and food security posing a major challenge.

He urged the concerned authorities to take immediate measures in saving the region from the adverse impact of the climate change.



Address by Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI at the inaugural session of conference on "A Climate Resilient South Asia: Turning Climate Smart Investment Opportunities into Reality" in Dhaka, Bangladesh



Welcome address by Mr. Mahbulul Alam, SAARC CCI Vice President (Bangladesh)



Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Senior Vice President SAARC CCI addressing "A Climate Resilient South Asia: Turning Climate Smart Investment Opportunities into Reality" conference organized by SAARC CCI in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Group photo of hon'ble delegates from SAARC member states with Hon'ble Minister Mr. Anisul Mahmud, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS WITH DIGITAL MARKETING

July 19, 2018, New Delhi, India

Digital Marketing is not only an essential tool for businesses to build a competitive advantage, it has become a requirement for every entrepreneur to have a digital strategy.

Considering this need, SCWEC (India chapter) with its proactive approach, commenced a series of workshops in India aimed to equip the members with the know-how of digital marketing channels and platforms, along with strategies to develop an organized and methodical online approach for their business.

A one day workshop was organized by SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Chamber (SCWEC) in collaboration with FICCI – FLO on July 19, 2018 at Hotel Vivanta by Taj Ambassador in New Delhi, India.

The workshop emphasized on the digital marketing strategies, brand building and customer engagement, social media platforms along with the best practices shared by the industry practitioners.



Interactive session during 'Growing your Business with Digital Marketing' workshop in New Delhi, India

Ms. Kavitha Dutt, Vice Chairperson, SCWEC (India) in her address welcomed the participants and emphasized on the need to enhance and strengthen the women entrepreneurs of South Asian nations.

The high degree of interactive session of the audience with the moderator and speakers who were drawn from the industry, made the program highly successful.

PILOT PROJECT OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM FOR BIO-DEGRADABLE SANITARY NAPKIN: THE PINK REVOLUTION

August 7, 2018, Colombo, Sri Lanka

SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC) Sri Lanka launched a pilot run of the Bio-degradable sanitary napkin project title "The Pink Revolution" on August 7, 2018 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The aim of the program was to enable more women to have access to affordable, convenient and eco-friendly sanitary napkins to introduce safe hygiene of women in the SAARC region, 30 women were trained by an Indian technician on the process of making low cost sanitary napkins under the Women Empowerment Program.

The training commenced with welcome remarks by Ms. Rifa Musthapha, Chairperson SCWEC. She said that the empowerment of women in South Asia has far reaching benefits on the economy of the SAARC nations. The napkins produced by this machine will be about 50% - 60% cheaper than commercially available products, she further added.



Ms. Rifa Musthapha, Chairperson SCWEC and participants witnessing the process of making bio-degradable sanitary napkins

SAARC CCI PRESIDENTIAL DELEGATION TO CHENGDU, SICHUAN PROVINCE, CHINA

September 16-19, 2018, China

President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries (SAARC CCI), Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe led a high-level business delegation to Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China to participate in the 9th China South Asia- Sichuan Business Promotion Roundtable and 2018 Chengdu Dialogue on South Asia, Production Capacity Cooperation scheduled from September 16-20, 2018, in Chengdu, China.

9TH CHINA SOUTH ASIA- SICHUAN BUSINESS PROMOTION ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE

SAARC CCI and China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) have been organizing the South Asia – Sichuan Business Promotion Round-Table Conference since 2010. The 9th South Asia – Sichuan Business Promotion Roundtable Conference was organized under the theme "Promoting Deep Integration of China – SAARC Economy: Cross Border E-Commerce, Industrial Transfer and Infrastructure Cooperation" which aims to enhance

regional economic cooperation and integration between China and SAARC region.

The 9th South Asia – Sichuan Business Promotion Roundtable conference provided a significant platform to the South Asian business community for striking new partnerships, sharing of best business practices and exploring virgin business opportunities in China.

Hon'ble Mr. Buddhika Pathirana, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was the Chief Guest of the 9th South Asia – Sichuan Business Promotion Roundtable Conference.

At the inaugural ceremony, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI, Mr. Li Gang, President, China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), Sichuan Council, Hon'ble Mr. Buddhika Pathirana, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Hon'ble Minister of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Nepal, Mr. Lal Babu Pandit, Mr. Mohammad Yonass Mohmand, Vice President SAARC CCI (Afghanistan) and Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President SAARC CCI (Nepal) delivered keynote addresses in the inaugural session.



Hon'ble Mr. Buddhika Pathirana, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka addressing the 9th South Asia – Sichuan Business Promotion Round-Table Conference



Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI addressing the 9th South Asia – Sichuan Business Promotion Round-Table Conference

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI while addressing the inaugural session said that SAARC CCI and China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) has brought benefit to two peoples of both regions and has encouraged stability and prosperity in South Asia. He further added, “One of the sectors in South Asia that needs attention is renewable energy. South Asia region endows huge potential and benefits of promoting renewable energy sources, due to low level of investment and high initial capital cost, such projects take time to materialize”.

Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President SAARC CCI (Nepal), while addressing the august gathering said both China and South Asian nations need to promote mutual investment and cooperation and hoped that this platform would bridge Sichuan enterprises with South Asian enterprises and promote mutual investment and cooperation. “Today’s once again the participation of business delegation from South

Asian countries showcases the consistency of our mutually beneficial relationship that will go long way in unlocking the economic opportunities for both Sichuan province and South Asian countries”, Mr. Dhakal said.

SAARC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SAARC CCI) INKED MOU WITH CHINA COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE (CCPIT) SICHUAN COUNCIL

The MoU was signed between SAARC CCI and CCPIT Sichuan Council during the 9th China South Asia- Sichuan Business Promotion Roundtable Conference, with an objective to enhance mutual cooperation and to strengthen economic ties and linkages between Sichuan province and South Asian region. Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe President, SAARC CCI, and Mr. Li Gang, President, China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), Sichuan Council signed the MoU in auspicious presence of Hon'ble Mr. Buddhika Pathirana, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Industry and Commerce (Sri Lanka), Hon'ble Minister of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Nepal, Mr. Lal Babu Pandit and Mr. Yonass Mohmand, Vice President SAARC CCI (Afghanistan) along with the dignitaries from South Asia.



Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI and Mr. Li Gang, President CCPIT Sichuan Council sign an MoU for enhanced mutual cooperation and strengthening economic ties & linkages between China and South Asia

INAUGURATION OF SAARC CCI SUB-OFFICE IN CHINA

During the 9th South Asia – Sichuan Business Promotion Round Table Conference, Hon'ble Mr. Buddhika Pathirana, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Sri Lanka & Hon'ble Minister of Federal Affairs and Government of Nepal, Mr. Lal Babu Pandit, and Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI, officially inaugurated the first sub-office of SAARC CCI in People's Republic of China, in the iconic One Belt One Road (OBOR) building in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Senior Vice President SAARC CCI, Mr. Yonass Mohmand, Vice President SAARC CCI (Afghanistan). Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President, SAARC CCI (Nepal), Former Chief Representative of WTO in Maldives, Mr. Abdullah Thowfeeq, Secretary General FBCCI, Mr. Hussain Jamil, Director General ICC, Dr. Rajeev Singh and Counselor of Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Ugen Rangdol, witnessed the sub office opening ceremony.



Hon'ble Minister Nepal, Deputy Commerce Minister Sri Lanka, President SAARC CCI, President CCPIT Sichuan Council, VP SAARC CCI (Nepal), VP SAARC CCI (Afghanistan), SVP FPCCI inaugurate the SAARC CCI first sub office in China in Chengdu in OBOR building.

The Sub office will promote and facilitate the business community, trade and commerce activities of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry across China. Furthermore it will provide technical and administrative support ensure cooperation between SAARC and China.

2018 CHENGDU DIALOGUE ON SOUTH ASIA, PRODUCTION CAPACITY COOPERATION

September 17, 2018



Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI addressing the inaugural session of Chengdu Dialogue on South Asia (Pan-Asia) Production Capacity Cooperation

The “9th South Asia – Sichuan Business Promotion Roundtable Conference” was allied with “2018 Chengdu Dialogue on South Asia, Production Capacity Cooperation” and it was hosted by Chengdu Municipal People's Government, undertaken by Chengdu Municipal Commission of Commerce and executed by Chengdu Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (CAFTEC). SAARC CCI along with business delegation from South Asia attended the “2018 Chengdu Dialogue on South Asia, Production Capacity Cooperation”

The Dialogue highlighted four different key areas including Chengdu traditional trade, Chengdu new economy ventures, market needs of South/Southeast Asian countries and special exchange meeting which aimed to provides an opportunity for the business people to strengthen and enhance regional and bilateral relations with Chinese enterprises. Addressing the inaugural session, The Chief Guest, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce, Mr. Buddhika Pathirana shared that Chinese investors have an opportunity to tap into the Indian

and Pakistani markets through Sri Lanka's free trade agreements. While inviting investors from the Sichuan province to invest in Sri Lanka, Deputy Minister Pathirana said that the summit has helped in strengthening the historic relationship between Sri Lanka and China. Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President SAARC CCI (Nepal), while addressing the inaugural session said that, Integration of economies among South Asia, Pan-Asia, Eurasia, Central Asia, Africa, Europe and beyond, means a lot for the development prospects at the global level. South Asian region, which is one of the least integrated regions in the world, sees this as the great opportunity to march towards greater prosperity, harmonious integration and wellbeing of its people.



Group picture of President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe along with the Hon'ble SAARC CCI delegates with Mr. Chen Lin, Director, Chengdu Municipal Commission of Commerce, China

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI he said that the businessperson's participation from South Asia in this Dialogue conference, for b2b matchmaking with the prospective partners is a sign of good indication of our partnership in the days ahead. While concluding his address, he highlighted the importance of Chengdu dialogue conference and said that 2018 Chengdu Dialogue would be an important platform for sharing views and connecting for project cooperation for shared prosperity.

SCWEC BAZAAR

September 19 - 20, 2018, New Delhi, India

SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneur Council (SCWEC India) organized "SCWEC BAZAAR", an International Exhibition in collaboration with FICCI Ladies Organization (FLO) at Ashok Hotel, in New Delhi, India on September 19 - 20, 2018.

SCWEC BAZAAR aimed at developing and promoting women entrepreneurs in the South Asian region by bringing them together under one roof and providing an attractive platform to showcase their products and enhance the ongoing trade engagements and knowledge on trade related issues. Ms. Pinky Reddy, National President FLO, inaugurated the event on September 19, 2018 and renowned Columnist and Former Actor, Ms. Twinkle Khanna was invited as the Chief Guest on September 20, 2018. FLO, inaugurated the event on September 19, 2018 and renowned Columnist and Former Actor, Ms. Twinkle Khanna was invited as the Chief Guest on September 20, 2018.

"SCWEC has been playing an important role in working towards development of women entrepreneurship in the SAARC Region. SCWEC BAZAAR aimed at bringing together businesswomen from the SAARC Countries, under one roof to provide a platform to showcase products and give them an opportunity to explore large Indian consumer Market. We are delighted for the enthusiastic response to the SCWEC BAZAAR this year" said Ms. Kavitha Dutt, Vice Chair SCWEC (India).



Ms. Kavitha Dutt, Vice Chair SCWEC (India Chapter) speaking at the SCWEC BAZAAR in New Delhi, India



Columnist and Former Actor, Ms. Twinkle Khanna with the women entrepreneurs from South Asia at SCWEC BAZAAR

BUILDING BRIDGES DIGITALLY - ECOMMERCE AND ITS POTENTIALS

October 13-14, 2018, Colombo, Sri Lanka

SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry organized a two day workshop with an objective to assess the state of e-commerce in the region and also discussed best e-commerce practices, new opportunities for growth and strategies to enhance cross-border online trade between the SAARC member states.

SAARC CCI organized this workshop in partnership with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) and in collaboration with the Federation of Sri Lanka Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FCCISL) on October 13-14, 2018 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

E-commerce experts from South Asian countries were invited to deliberate on the possibility of e-commerce collaboration among member states from a common platform.

Hon'ble Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen, Sri Lanka's Minister for Industry and Commerce graced the event with his presence. "Comprehensive regional e-commerce will strengthen the notion of SAARC", said Hon'ble Minister while addressing the e-commerce experts and practitioners from the region. He invited SAARC CCI to develop and propose a comprehensive policy for the SAARC region to regulate the e-commerce sector to safeguard the interests of the players and users.

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI,



Group photo of workshop participants along with Hon'ble Mr. Rishad Bathiudeen, Minister for Industry and Commerce of Sri Lanka, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President, SAARC CCI and Dr. Ronald Meinardus, Regional Director, FNF.

highlighted the benefits of e-commerce. Online trade, will create trade and business opportunities and contribute to social cohesion and the overall economic development of the region shared Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe. The 20th Century belongs to Asia and Asia cannot progress without South Asia, he further added.

The meeting concluded with the formation of an expert group which will promote cooperation of e-commerce businesses from the SAARC member countries, share best practices, inform the members about latest trends in e-commerce and advise the SAARC CCI in their efforts to lobby with governments to formulate a comprehensive SAARC e-commerce policy frame work.

SAARC CCI 76TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

November 10-11, 2018, Chennai, India

The 76th Executive Committee Meeting of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SAARC CCI) was hosted by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) convened on November 10, 2018 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The Honorable President of SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, chaired the meeting.



President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe with Dr. Rohitha Silva, VP, SAARC CCI (Sri Lanka), Mr. Vinod Juneja, VP SAARC CCI (India), Mr. Chandhi Raj Dhakal, VP SAARC CCI (Nepal) & Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General, SAARC CCI during the 76th Executive Committee Meeting, Chennai, India

Senior leadership of SAARC CCI including Vice President Mr. Chandhi Raj Dhakal, VP SAARC CCI (Nepal) Dr. M. Rohitha Silva, VP SAARC CCI (Sri Lanka), Mr. Mahbulul Alam, VP SAARC CCI (Bangladesh) and Dr. Sunil Motiwaal, CEO, SDF made a brief presentation on highlighting the role of SDF on cross border cooperation in South Asia and apprised the house on dynamics of SDF financing at the conclusion of the 76th Executive Committee meeting.

RESILIENT SOUTH ASIA: REGIONAL AGENDA FOR CLIMATE CHANGE COOPERATION

November 11, 2018, Chennai, India

SAARC CCI seminar titled “Resilient South Asia: Regional Agenda for Climate Change Cooperation” was held on November 11, 2018 in Chennai, India in collaboration with Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF). The seminar aimed towards stimulating professional exchange between environment experts on the prospects arising from the transition to a low carbon and green economy and the way forward for the private sector. Furthermore, the seminar discussed streamlining strategies based on innovation and entrepreneurship as the key drivers to address the larger challenges of climate change. Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General SAARC CCI welcomed the hon’ble delegates from the SAARC region. During the address, Secretary General SAARC CCI urged upon the need for collaborated efforts to develop mechanisms to tackle the adverse effects of climate change. The one day seminar was addressed by the leading experts from the region who deliberated and chalked out a way forward to address climate change issues in South Asia.

The inaugural session was followed by technical sessions i.e. Plenary Session-I: “Climate Change Adaptation: From Economic to Social Perspective” and Plenary Session II: “Climate and Inclusive Economy”. The seminar was attended by prominent academicians, business community, civil society representatives, journalists, environment experts, think tanks representatives working on climate change, and SAARC CCI life members. Mr. Vinod Juneja, Vice President SAARC CCI (India) stated that climate change is now widely recognized as the defining challenge of our time. It is a global threat which can only be addressed through combined and co-operative efforts and actions.



Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe addressing the hon’ble delegates at SAARC CCI seminar titled “Resilient South Asia: Regional Agenda for Climate Change Cooperation” on November 11, 2018 in Chennai, India

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI during his address said that Climate discipline is an extensive field of knowledge that has attained great success in occupying the public consciousness. Human activities, particularly emissions of greenhouse gases, are the leading cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century and in the current era, it requires great amount of attention, he further added.

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS WITH DIGITAL MARKETING

November 09, 2018, Chennai, India



Ms. Kavitha Dutt, Vice Chairperson, SCWEC (India) addressing the women entrepreneurs during the seminar "Growing Your Business with Digital Marketing"

SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneur Council (India Chapter) of SAARC CCI, organized a workshop titled "Growing Your Business with Digital Marketing" in Partnership with FNF on November 9, 2018 in Chennai, India.

The aim of the workshop was to equip women entrepreneurs with the know-how of digital marketing and to enable the women entrepreneurs to learn digital and social media best practices to enhance their trading skills and to maximize their products outreach. The workshop was attended by the women entrepreneurs from SAARC countries, members of FICCI Ladies organization and policy makers from India.

Ms. Kavitha Dutt, Vice Chairperson, SCWEC (India) while welcoming the participants of workshop said that such workshops will facilitate the women entrepreneurs to learn digital and social media best practices and skill set to effectively market their business products and grow businesses.

Mr. Soumitra Das moderated the workshop and apprised the participants about the platforms, tools, analytics and techniques required for succeeding in the new media environment. The high degree of interaction of the participants with the speaker made the program highly successful.

PRESIDENTIAL DELEGATION TO 32ND CACCI MEETING

November 23-24, 2018, Istanbul, Turkey

Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI led a business delegation comprising of members from SAARC member states to Istanbul, Turkey on November 23-24, 2018 to attend the 32nd edition of Confederation of Asia Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the Asia-Pacific Region (CACCI) summit titled "Asia: Expanding Borders". Leaders of commercial associations from Turkey, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka attended the conference, discussing the development opportunity between public and private sectors in Asia-Pacific Region, and cooperation in trade, industry and economy.

Turkish Vice President, Mr. Fuat Oktay, Turkish Trade Minister Hon'ble Mr. Ruhsar Pekcan, CACCI President and SRCIC Honorary Chairman, Mr. Jemal Inaishvili, Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) President and SRCIC Honorary Chairman M. Rifat Hisarcikliolu addressed the opening ceremony respectively. Vice President of Turkey, Mr. Fuat Oktay was invited as Chief Guest at the opening ceremony who delivered a key note address. Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President, SAARC CCI, was invited as the key note speaker on Regional Integration and Connectivity for Sustainable Development.

Earlier, Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President, SAARC CCI (Nepal), addressed the auspicious gathering during the session on Tourism. While addressing the august gathering, President SAARC CCI, Mr. Edirisinghe, said that South Asia represents one fifth of world's market and is an untapped market for investment and business ventures. He invited the investors to explore the business opportunities of South Asia and strengthen ties. Earlier he also addressed the dinner gathering of 32nd CACCI meeting.



Welcome address by Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI, addressing the 32nd CACCI Conference on November 24, 2018 in Istanbul, Turkey.

PRESIDENT SAARC CCI CALL ON TO MR. RIFAT HISARCIKLIOGLU, PRESIDENT, TOBB

SAARC CCI President Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe and Vice President SAARC CCI (Nepal), Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal held a meeting with President of ToBB, Mr. Rifat Hisarciklioglu, to discuss cooperation between SAARC CCI & ToBB Chamber on sideline of 32nd CACCI meeting. While extending felicitations to the President of TOBB for successfully hosting 32nd CACCI meeting, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI said that SAARC is a region blessed with countless resources and is a market yet to be explored. He invited the



32nd CACCI Meeting in progress, Istanbul, Turkey

President of ToBB Chamber to visit SAARC region and explore the areas of mutual cooperation to enhance trade relations. While reciprocating the offer, Mr. Rifat Hisarciklioglu, President, ToBB, requested to initiate this era by signing an MoU between SAARC CCI and ToBB Chamber. He also urged SAARC CCI to renew the MoU signed between SAARC CCI and ECO. Mr. Hisarciklioglu, proposed to organize a joint summit of SAARC CCI and ECO in any of the SAARC member states which was highly appreciated and acknowledged by leadership of SAARC CCI.

Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President (Nepal), Mr. Desh Bhandu Basnet, Executive Member (Nepal) and Mr. Zulfiqar Butt, Deputy Secretary General, of SAARC CCI were also present during the meeting. Furthermore, SAARC CCI leadership had a meeting with Mr. Arnaldo Abruzzini, CEO, EUROCHAMBRES to explore meaningful cooperation under the SAARC CCI and EUROCHAMBRES' MoU. The leadership of both the chambers agreed to enhance mutual cooperation and strengthen ties in the best interest of the people of both the regions.

SAARC STARTUP FEST

December 03-05, 2018, Bengaluru, India.

A three-day workshop was organized by SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bengaluru, India, on December 5, 2018 in cooperation with the World Start up Foundation (WSF) and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF), which aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and innovation in South Asia. Participants from SAARC member states participated and held in depth discussions on the



Group picture of participants of SAARC CCI Workshop "Startup Vision Summit" in Bangalore, India.

basic requirements of a beneficial start-up ecosystem in their respective countries. They also shared best practices from their countries and discussed strategies and policies related to the start-up scenario in their countries. Vice President SAARC CCI (India), Mr. Vinod Juneja, welcomed the delegates from SAARC member states to Bangalore, India, highlighting the importance of the city as the hub of start-ups in Asia.

"India has sophisticated policies in place and we are happy to cooperate with regional ecosystem players at the SAARC level," said Mr. Juneja. Dr. Ronald Meinardus, Regional Director, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, highlighted the immense potential for economic cooperation between startups of the region and said that the challenges of South Asia can only be overcome by adopting innovative technologies. During the three-day workshop, senior members of leading start-up companies from India shared their perspectives and offered ideas on how best to push for regional cooperation in South Asia.

Dr. Shantha Thoutam emphasized the crucial importance of mentorship. "Right mentorship and moving your product to the market is acceleration," she explained. Secretary General SAARC CCI, Ms. Hina Saeed, called the Start-up Vision Summit 'another milestone in promoting economic cooperation in South Asia'. "India has ample best practices to share and we are here to take back home some of these practices" she further added. The delegates agreed on a strategic plan and a roadmap for future activities. Before leaving Bengaluru, the regional guests joined a tour of renowned start-up companies and eco-system players for discussions with some of India's most promising business leaders.

34TH SAARC CHARTER DAY

December 8, 2018, Islamabad, Pakistan

SAARC Chamber Of Commerce & Industry, in partnership with Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), celebrated the 34th SAARC Charter day with great enthusiasm and vigor on December 8, 2018 at Marriot Hotel, Islamabad, Pakistan. The event commenced with a welcome address by Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General SAARC CCI. During the address, Ms. Hina Saeed read out the message of H.E Mr. Amjad B. Sial, Secretary General SAARC on the auspicious occasion of SAARC Charter Day.

Ms. Tehmina Janjua, Foreign Secretary, Government of Pakistan graced the event with her presence as the Chief Guest and addressed the gathering.

Ms. Janjua said, "I am a strong believer of practicality. While endorsing and fully subscribing to the values of SAARC, we must realize that, in order to achieve the aims and objectives of SAARC, we need to have an action-oriented plan rather than being dependent on rhetoric."

On this occasion, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI, urged SAARC member nations to utilize this platform for the prosperity of the region. If the potential is utilized in its true order, the region could gain a higher pace of development within the next decade, although currently, it lags behind in terms of development, he added. Mr. Ruwan further said that, he strongly believes that the members of SAARC, sooner or later, will overcome the weaknesses and work on the region's commonalities and strengths to make inroads for shared prosperity and will transform SAARC into a successful organization of friendly neighbors.

The occasion was also addressed by former Secretary General of SAARC and High Commissioner of Maldives, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Saleem, Chargé D'affaires of Afghan Embassy in Islamabad, Mr. Rahim Ullah Qatra, Ambassador of Nepal Her Excellency Ms. Sewa Lamsal and High Commissioner of Sri Lanka His Excellency Mr. Noordeen Mohmed Shaheid.

Addressing the occasion, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, SAARC CCI Senior Vice President said that South Asian cooperation faces multiple challenges, as this constitutes the world's second least developed region after Sub-Saharan Africa and its per capita GDP, in terms of purchasing power parity, is three times below the global average. He further said that SAARC region is home to more poverty struck people than any other part of the world.

The Celebration concluded with a cake cutting ceremony, witnessed by the congregation of SAARC diplomats, senior government officials, policy makers and top leadership of the business community of Pakistan.



Ruwan Edirisinghe, President SAARC CCI addressing the distinguished guests during the occasion of 34th SAARC Charter Day in Islamabad, Pakistan



Address by Ms. Tehmina Janjua, Foreign Secretary, Government of Pakistan at 34th SAARC Charter Day Celebration in Islamabad, Pakistan.



Address by Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Senior Vice President, SAARC CCI at 34th SAARC Charter Day in Islamabad, Pakistan



Closing remarks by Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, Executive Committee Member, SAARC CCI (Pakistan) at 34th SAARC Charter Day in Islamabad, Pakistan

PREPARATORY MEETING OF 14TH CHINA-SOUTH ASIA BUSINESS FORUM

December 15, 2018 in Beijing, China

SAARC CCI, as a collaborative partner in China South Asia Business Forum (CSABF) with China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT), Kunming organized a preparatory meeting for 14th China-South Asia Business Forum (CSABF) to be held in June 2019, on December 15, 2018 in Beijing, China.

The objective of the meeting was to seek valuable input from member states for the 14th CSABF, scheduled to be held in June 2019 and to boost cooperation for CSABF 2019.

Leaders from various Chambers and Business organizations participated and the meeting also addressed the rotating Chair Country for CSABF 2019, the theme, invites and cooperation mechanism for CSABF 2019. The Chair of CSABF for 2019 was conferred to Sri Lanka.

CHINA INTERNATIONAL IMPORT EXPO

November 6-10, 2018, Shanghai, China

China International Import Expo was held on November 6-10, 2018 at the National Convention & Exhibition Center, Shanghai, China. During the event, Yunnan Trade Delegation led by Governor of Yunnan Province held "Everlasting China-South Asia Expo" on November 6, 2018. The program was hosted by Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, Shanghai Municipal People's Government. Mr. Chandi Raj Dhakal, Vice President SAARC CCI (Nepal) attended the event on behalf of President SAARC CCI, accompanied by Ms. Hina Saeed, Secretary General SAARC CCI in Shanghai, China. The event was attended by the government officials, business communities, exhibitors and professional purchasers from across the world and provided them new channels for countries and regions to do business, strengthen cooperation and promote common prosperity of the world economy and trade.

During the visit, CCPIT Yunnan also signed Cooperation Intent Agreement with SAARC CCI to work together with SAARC CCI members and contribute to "Everlasting China-South Asia Expo" system.

JOIN SAARC CCI PRESIDENTIAL DELEGATION TO KUNMING, YUNNAN PROVINCE, CHINA, June 10-15, 2019

President SAARC CCI, Mr. Ruwan Edirisinghe will be leading a business delegation to Kunming, Yunnan Province, China from June 10-15, 2019 to attend 14th edition of China South Asia Business Forum (CSABF). The event will reinforce and strengthen economic and trade cooperation between China and SAARC member states.

ALLIED ACTIVITIES:

- SAARC Pavilion at South and Southeast Asia Commodity Expo
- Investment Fair (SSACEIF), Kunming, China

Become a part of SAARC CCI Presidential Delegation

Respected invitees may join the SAARC CCI Presidential delegation by writing to SAARC CCI Secretariat at info@saarcchamber.org latest by May 15, 2019.

Exclusive Interview with

MS. SHOVA GYAWALI

A Leading Woman Entrepreneur from Nepal



SAARC CCI editorial team interviewed **Ms. Shova Gyawali**, who is also the **General Assembly member of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Nepal) for year 2018-2019.**

Ms. Shova Gyawali, possesses the qualities and the capability of a successful business entrepreneur. **She shares her journey and experiences with SAARC CCI.**

Please Share A Brief On Your Business.

Nepal Republic Media (NRM) established in 2008, is a multi-million dollar media empire that employs more than 800 people in Nepal.

NRM brings out two broadsheet dailies: Nagarik Dainik in Nepali & Republica National Daily in English, Shukrabar (a weekly tabloid) and Pariwar (a monthly magazine).

We started the media house to be the true voice of the voiceless, a firm supporter of democracy and the most trusted companion of the society.

We reach out to more than three million people every day and as the director of the company, I oversee its daily operations.

How Did You Get Your Idea Or Concept For The Business?

I link ideas to creativity. You start imagining a world and then try to marry the real world with your world. You (hopefully) see that there is room for some efficiency in doing something, as we would do it today. Then you think of how this can be done.

This should possibly be your idea. Sometimes it may be deliberate exercise or just a realization as compared to an experience that you already have. Ideas are a plenty. The true test is that would the mass adopt your dream. That is selling / marketing. Everything after the 'idea' stage is 'implementation'. Let's say in a successful business: idea / dream / vision is the leading light of where the business should be. It is an important stage. But more crucial is how you implement it. That is tough and where almost everyone fails (at least once).

What Major Problems Did You Encounter During Start-Up?

Starting a new business can lead to personal and financial rewards in the future, but you will likely face a number of challenges when starting out. The demands on your time may be greater than you anticipated, and having enough money to keep things going can also be a problem. With some careful planning, you can anticipate some of these challenges and be able to overcome them.

What Advice Would You Give To The Beginners Thinking About Starting A Business?

I am often asked what advice I would give someone who is interested in starting a business. It is easy for me to discuss having a business plan and a strategy, but most importantly executing that strategy and staying on course. However, I found that the greatest lesson I have learned as an entrepreneur is you have to be willing to fail to succeed. According to the Small Business Administration, over 50% of small businesses fail in the first year.

There are many reasons for this

- Insufficient capital (money)
- Poor location
- Poor inventory management
- Over-investment in fixed assets
- Poor credit arrangements
- Personal use of business funds
- Unexpected growth
- Competition
- Low sales

Looking at this list makes you think that failure is inevitable. I look at failure as an opportunity.

What are the 3 Keys Characteristics of a Successful Entrepreneur?

As an entrepreneur who's attending college, I am often approached by classmates who are seeking to start their own business. Some have great concepts, yet when I ask them what they've done to advance their ideas, the answer is usually nothing.

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Anyone can start a business, regardless of his or her age. After growing my own companies and mingling with successful entrepreneurs, I've come to realize that most entrepreneurs share that these are 3 common characteristics.

- Adaptability
- Persistence
- Work Ethics

What Motivated You to Explore Trade Across Borders?

Never in the history of the world has the entrepreneurial spirit-the spirit of adventure-been more alive or in a more favorable position to reach out to the world of business. International trade increases sales and profits, enhances a company's prestige, creates jobs, and offers a valuable way for business owners to level seasonal fluctuations.

What is your vision for the SAARC region?

If I visualize expanding my business within the SAARC region then my vision would be:

- Identify my business goals
- Identify my marketing goals
- New market analysis
- Profile my new potential customers
- Profile my new competitors
- Develop strategies to support my goals

How Do You See The SAARC CCI Platform For Business Entrepreneurs?

SAARC CCI is a great platform for business entrepreneurs as it gives a great opportunity to bring improvement in the business environment. It disseminates information about potential tradable goods and identifies joint ventures in the SAARC region.

What are The Key Steps For SAARC CCI Member States To Take And Consider For Taking The SAARC Region Forward?

There are few key steps for SAARC member states to take and consider for taking the SAARC region forward which are as follows:

- Clear elaboration of sustainable development goals
- Detailed identification of short term and long term, monitorable and doable indicators
- Benchmarking of these indicators along with projected targets for the next five years
- Developing a credible monitoring and evaluation frame work

Your Thoughts On SAARC CCI Regional Economic Integration.

Economic integration in South Asia has remained a non-starter even after 22 years of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.

The misplaced and exaggerated security concerns of India and Pakistan are a huge hurdle. The emphasis in these countries needs to shift from state security to human security.



WHY IS FREE TRADE NOT WORKING IN SOUTH ASIA?

Regional cooperation in South Asia was formally initiated with the establishment of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985.

The areas of regional cooperation under SAARC are but not limited, to agriculture, poverty alleviation, economic cooperation energy, human resource development and trade, the regional cooperation has extended and advanced specifically in the areas of economic cooperation and preferential trade.

The component of economic cooperation was added to the political arrangements of SAARC in December 1992, by endorsing the establishing of SAARC CCI. South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) signed in 1993, is the initiation point of economic cooperation in South Asia. The scope of SAPTA was limited, therefore SAPTA was expanded to SAFTA.

South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement (SAFTA), adopted in 2004, by the 12th SAARC Summit, held at Islamabad; has been a mile stone toward taking initiatives to improve the regional integration in South Asia and is believed to open the avenues of development via boosting economic growth, alleviating poverty and enhancing the quality of life through regional trade integration, development of supply chains and closer financial linkages. The recently signed SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS) entered into force in late 2012, but it is yet to be fully implemented

Moreover, there is a vision for establishment of Custom Union that would eventually pave the way forward to transform SAARC into an Economic Union. However, as a matter of fact, much has to be done in this context i.e. harmonization of standards and procedures of customs, fiscal and monetary policies, banking reforms, clearing union, common currency etc. to reach to the destination.

The aforementioned regional arrangement manifests that the South Asian governments have recognized to address the trade facilitation constraints, and ensure that trade incessantly support socio-economic growth, and benefit the poor. Nevertheless, the region remains the most highly protected region across the world and lags far behind in opening the vistas of foreign competition, trade facilitation, free movement of goods and services and attracting foreign direct investment.

The high protection levels reflected in tariff peaks, non-tariff measures and technical and non-technical barriers have made South Asia the most highly protected region in world. Serious behind-the-border constraints to private activity in infrastructure, economic governance, financial sector, labor and land markets, and trade logistics have impeded productivity growth and hurt export competitiveness resulting in socio-economic deprivation, high unemployment and multifaceted poverty across the region.

Despite robust economic growth by the South Asian countries in the last decade, the region accounts for merely 3 percent of the global GDP, nearly 40 percent of the inhabitants in the region live on less than \$1.25 per day. The regional exports are less than that of South Korea. 65% of the population of South Asian countries does not have access to adequate drinking water facilities, 35% of the global malnourished population resides in the region, and about a billion people across the region are without sanitation facilities. Daunting challenges like increasing inequalities, irregular urbanization, energy security, environmental degradation, climate change and food security are incessantly posing threats to the prosperity and development of the region.

Connectivity is the most import phenomenon of trade, and is vital for any regional mechanism, and connectivity is the impetus of economic growth process. Means of communications and transport were vital in connectivity and interaction in history, but technology has squeezed distances and destinations nowadays. However, due to political rifts and conflicts, strict visa regimes and lack of trust have always been impeding the people to people interaction, and flow of goods across the borders in the region.

Despite of geographical proximity, South Asia region is far lagging behind in transport and communication infrastructure. No single airline in the region, operates directs flights to the capitals of the all the member countries even most of the South Asian airlines do not have the code sharing facility.

The strict visa regime is not allowing to unleash the intra-regional trade and tourism potential. Private Sector contribution has been acknowledged as the Engine of Growth however, mobility of the engine has been hostage to the complex Visa Policy and procedures in South Asia.



Visa for South Asian citizens and businessmen in USA and UK is allowed for 5 years, 2 years, for EU and Schengen states, and three years between Bangladesh and India, 1-2 years between India and Pakistan. On arrival Visa is available on bilateral basis in Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka.

The sensitive lists in SAFTA, due to the inherent protectionist attitudes of the SAARC member countries are very wide, and have posed significant implication for the countries with limited export capacity. Such wide and extended sensitive lists have resulted in limited market access to each other. The restrictive trade regimes, have however given birth to a huge informal trade volume across the region. The informal trade, in the region is two times more than the formal trade. A persistent and gradual reduction of the item on the sensitive list may have raised the revenue channels, increased mutual market shares, reduced the trust deficit and would have curbed the illegal and insecure movement of goods across the borders.

The critical infrastructure that could support the incessant flow of trade and trigger economic and social activities needs improvement in South Asia and absence of adequate infrastructure has become one of major non-tariff barrier in the region. Power generation across the region has become sporadic, roads and highways are poorly constructed, though there is scope for intra-regional rail networks, but a regional rail network is has become an allegory. Even in some of the countries the border controls are in states of decay.





Therefore trading across the border in the region has become pricier, in terms of both time and cost.

The region is energy stressed as whole, the per-capita consumption of energy is below 80 kW/h; the SAARC countries are facing 20-40% shortfall of electricity production in peak demand season. Such energy deficiencies are hampering the industrial growth, fettering the gross domestic production and losses in supply chain mechanism; resulting in triggering inflation, unemployment and poverty; exacerbating the sorry status of quality of life across the region.

With energy endowments of Pakistan 158 TWh/year, Nepal 158 TWh/year and Bhutan 24,000 MWh/year the region has considerable untapped potential for power generation from the hydro sources. Bangladesh and Pakistan have 10.6 and 26.3 trillion cubic feet gas reserves respectively, that could be tapped and trade with in the region.

Despite these endowments, trade in energy remains low among South Asian countries due to serious barriers to develop a regional supply market like lack of the institutional and regulatory framework for regional planning, investment financing, investment protection, contract enforcement; and serious riparian rights and water-sharing issues prevent the exploitation of hydroelectricity potential in the region.

Even though the South Asian countries are agreed upon joining hand to work for the regional economic integration, however the private sector of the region feels absence of trust amidst them in the political sphere. Lack of will, distrust, absence of mutual trust and cynicism are the major factors that shape the choice and preferences, when it comes to the process of planning and implementation.

While the vision for South Asian regional integration is a noble idea which could uplift levels of economic development, addressing these three obstacles should become a policy priority. Otherwise, SAFTA's vision for

regional economic integration may not take off as planned.

The SAARC region has a considerable scope for intra-regional tourism. After the partition of British India and the movement of millions of people across the new border between India and Pakistan, hundreds of thousands of families were split. Opening the borders and removing constraints on travel would result in considerable travel just among families trying to reunite. In addition, religious sites in India would attract Muslims from Bangladesh and Pakistan; and holy sites in Pakistan would attract

members of the Sikh community. The region also could attract more tourists from outside of South Asia were geopolitical stability to be enhanced through regional economic integration.

As said by Montesquieu a French socio-political Philosopher, trade and commerce improve the manners and cure the destructive prejudices. To overcome these transnational challenges, the South Asian countries need cross border cooperation and collaboration. By enhancing the inter-regional trade, the South Asian economies will not only lead towards peace and rather will bring prosperity and development, for the most deprived, marginalized and poor communities across the world.

The viable and doable way of enhancing intra-regional trade is strengthening and extending the SAFTA. Effective implementation and extension of SAFTA rules will not only enhance the intra-regional trade, rather will accelerate the process of regional integration.

To overcome the shortcoming of SAFTA, the SAARC countries need to accelerate and strictly follow the schedules for tariff cuts, gradual reduction of the item in sensitive lists to broaden the scope and coverage of SAFTA. The SAARC nations may pay heed to improve the mobility of people by opening the visa regime within SAARC.

This may facilitate business development and employment opportunities, especially for low skilled workers. Financial markets within the region should be broadened in order to foster cross-border investment. Local banks therefore should be encouraged to open branches in neighboring countries to facilitate traders' involvement in intra-regional trade for secure and channelize financial transactions.

Imran Ali

Director Research & Development,
SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry



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DID YOU KNOW?



SAARC REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION: TOWARDS THE FUTURE BUSINESS HUB

South Asia is hot on the heels of East Asia to become the world's next middle-income region according to a World Bank report. To remain competitive, South Asia and its firms need to compete on a global scale. SAARC CCI is committed to create and promote business to business networks across the region. Imagine South Asia as the next export powerhouse. For this to materialize, governments and business communities, across the SAARC region, need to encourage private investment to unleash the potential of regional value chains and improve the business environment to proactively pursue investor's interests in the region.



INVEST SOUTH ASIA: HARNESSING THE POWER OF SAARC REGION

Intra-regional investment across SAARC is less than 1 percent of overall investments. Due to limited transport connectivity, onerous logistics and regulatory impediments, it costs more to trade within South Asia than between South Asia and the world's other regions. Enhanced intra-regional FDI will facilitate the formation of value chains. South Asian countries rank low in business environment rankings, affecting investment. The need of the hour is improving the investment climate for foreign investors, both general and South Asian investors.



WOMEN EMPOWERING SAARC

South Asian women own less than 10 percent of small and medium enterprises in the region. 80 percent of working women in the region are in vulnerable employment. Investing in women is a high yield investment as gender equality in access to education, healthcare, political and economic participation is key to the regions competitiveness and prosperity.



SAARC REGIONAL INTEGRATION: SEEKING A WIN WIN SITUATION FOR ALL

Imagine a South Asia, where people cross borders in large numbers to study in universities, for tourism or to use specialty hospitals. Economic integration in trade and investments is bound to bring about this change and create a conducive environment for investors across and beyond SAARC to invest in the region. SAARC CCI is committed to creating economic opportunities to address the key challenges of the region, creating opportunities for the youth, the regions greatest asset, and for poor/vulnerable groups.

In Conversation with

MS. AUM DAMCHAE DEM

Vice Chairperson SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council (SCWEC), Bhutan



It was a sincere pleasure to interview Ms. Aum Damchae Dem. SAARC CCI editorial team sat down with her to discuss her entrepreneurial journey, her successes, challenges and lessons along the way.

Please share a little about your business background.

Pioneered steel manufacturing was established in 2003 in Bhutan and it is marketed under the brand name Perfect Termax TMT. It is located at Pasakha Industrial Estate, 15 KM from Phuentsholing, Bhutan in latitude 26.83, longitude 89.45.

The industry encompasses a unique model of training and employing over 100 youths handholding during the process of gaining experience and confidence. The project has finally been gifted to the youth along with infrastructure free of cost.

- Pelden Enterprise (Ferro alloys manufacturing Industry)
- FDI partner to GIC (India) with GIC - Bhutan Re Limited
- Pelden Bhutan Holidays - Tour Company

Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs, NGO founded with the aim to empower women through entrepreneurship. (www.baowe.org)

What major challenges did you face along the way?

Being unschooled, having passed the secondary high school, and being a grassroot level startup, without financial strength nor professional expertise, the challenges faced on the road towards self-development and the creation of Pelden Enterprise Limited (www.peldenenterprise.com) were an uphill journey.

What inspired you to explore trade across borders?

The nature of the first venture, manufacturing steel ingots required downstream processing which was available in India.

What is your vision for South Asia region?

The potential of the SAARC region in all spheres, be it economical or cultural, has not been tapped or been given its due respect. In our hands lie immense opportunities that are not being explored or harnessed for various reasons best known to ourselves. We cannot neglect the fact that most of our wealth and resources have not been tapped, making us live in pitiable conditions, some of us are the poorest of the poor. It is for them and our future generations that we need to get our act together by putting aside our differences and working honestly and earnestly towards building a successful SAARC region.

How do you see the SAARC CCI platform for women entrepreneurs?

'Women hold up half the sky', is being spoken about in almost all the forums by well-meaning supporters and champions of women's rights. But without economic freedom, even the strongest of women will be hard pressed to make her mark in society. It is imperative therefore to identify a suitable method more in tune with and sensitive to women. Fine-tuned to her nascent expertise translating it to economic empowerment through digitization, bringing it closer to an environment conducive to her would be best suited for the majority of women who are homebound (farm bound).

What are the 3 key characteristics of a successful entrepreneur?

1. Courage
2. Resilience
3. Knowledge

What elements and environments are conducive to growing women entrepreneurs?

1. Family support
2. Exposure that does not overwhelm but is sensitive educates and empowers.
3. Access to finance along with basic financial literacy.
4. A permanent platform that is friendly, easily accessible and managed by women who are sensitive and compassionate towards clients.
5. Uncomplicated, simple networking marketing systems through digitization that will empower women entrepreneurs to work from the conducive environments of their homes without having to travel to far off strange markets leaving their children behind.
6. Data collection and participation of women in the mainstream markets available to women entrepreneurs in the international market through a dedicated platform accessible by members.
7. Adopting the method of 'Fountain Effect' developed by BAOWE, which is an aggregation process aimed at addressing supply chain.

What are the key steps for SAARC member states to take and consider for taking the SAARC region forward?

Keep aside personal differences and work towards the inclusive success of our region through mutual respect, honoring the dignity and uniqueness of our different cultures.



LIFE-BLOOD OF THE SAARC COUNTRIES

Agriculture plays a central role in South Asian Economies, lives, and livelihood. The agriculture in South Asia is rained, so there is a fundamental dependence on rains that come seasonally, too much rain, too little, too soon, too late- the types of variability expected to increase as global temperatures warm - will have significant impacts on the region because of this dependence. The agriculture production in the region is undertaken by smallholders, on very small landholdings, by women, with a significant dependence on fisheries for protein in several countries, and dependence on livestock for draft power, manure, milk, and food security, women play a significant role in agriculture, including in the production of high-value crops such as vegetables, home garden activities and in the raising of animals. Temperature is significant for a range of crop physiological processes, temperature increases will affect yields of most of the major staple crops in the region, including rice, wheat, maize and potatoes etc etc. Impacts on agriculture in South Asia will be severe. Food production in the region has historically been challenged by climate variability. The increasing variability and increased temperatures from climate change will make food security even more difficult to ensure in the coming decades. SAARC member states developed and implemented an agriculture research, extension and dissemination agenda in South Asia, focusing on agro ecological approaches.

Agriculture being the life-blood of the SAARC countries was given priority by the member countries. The main objective was sharing the information's mutually for the advancement of agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry and allied disciplines. Agricultural research and extension

has been focused to be the most important contributor to growth in the total factor productivity in South Asia. In Pakistan, both the Federal and Provincial Governments are involved in agricultural research. India, Bangladesh and other SAARC countries main planning and coordinating of the agricultural research is on rice, jute, sugarcane, forests, livestock and fisheries. A significant increase has been observed in the export earnings from the agricultural crops during the recent years in the SAARC countries. Rice is the most important food crop in the region. The yield per hectare of rice was the highest in Bangladesh followed by Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, Nepal and India. Wheat is the second most important cereal in the region and the staple diet of Pakistan and India. The wheat production in all the SAARC countries tremendously increased. During the last decade Cotton has been the major contributor to agricultural growth in South Asia. Cotton yield in Pakistan experienced the highest growth. Trends for Sugarcane show that the highest growth production was experienced by Nepal.

The production of Sugarcane in Pakistan, India and other SAARC countries were also satisfactory during these periods. The statistics clearly indicate the fact that increase of agricultural productivity is one of the keys to poverty alleviation in the SAARC countries.

The larger challenge of an increasing population and rising economic growth in putting tremendous pressure on both the agriculture sector and natural resources that are needed to meet the present and future demand for food and nutritional security. As part of this process, SAARC countries must include ways to enhance agricultural growth while ensuring environmental protection. Achieving

Table: Major Farming Systems in South Asia

Farming Systems	Principal Livelihoods	Prevalence of Poverty
Rice	Wetland rice (both seasons), vegetables, legumes, off-farm activities	Extensive
Coastal Artisanal Fishing	Fishing, coconuts, rice, legumes, live-stock	Moderate-extensive
Rice-Wheat	Irrigated rice, wheat, vegetables, live-stock, including dairy, off-farm activities	Moderate-extensive
Highland Mixed	Cereals, livestock, horticulture, seasonal migration	Moderate-extensive
Rain fed Mixed	Cereals, legumes, fodder crops, livestock, off-farm activities	Extensive (severity varies seasonally)
Dry Rain fed	Coarse cereals, irrigated cereals, legumes, off-farm activities	Moderate
Pastoral	Livestock, irrigated cropping, migration	Moderate-extensive (especially drought induced)
Sparse (Arid)	Livestock where seasonal moisture permits	Moderate-extensive (especially drought induced)
Sparse (Mountain)	Summer grazing of livestock	Moderate (especially in remote areas)
Tree Crop	Export or agro-industrial crops, cereals, wage labor	Moderate (manly of agricultural workers)
Urban Based	Horticulture, dairying, poultry, other activities	Moderate

Source: FAO data and expert knowledge. 1 Note: Prevalence of poverty refers to number in poverty, not depth of poverty, and is a relative assessment for this region.

this goal in South Asia is complicated by the region's numerous inherited challenges.

Despite improvement in national food security over the last three decades, benefits have not yet reached the entire population of the region and FAO estimates that above 254 million people are still under-nourished. For the purposes of this analysis, eleven broad farming systems have been identified in past in SAARC countries.

The region's population of about above 1650 million in 2015 and therefore, population growth is expected to slow to about 1 percent per annum to reach 1920 million by 2030. The proportion of the total population living in cities (Presently 28 to 30 percent) has increased markedly over the last four decades and is expected to continue to expand, reaching 53 percent in 2030. Furthermore, focusing on regional trade preferences could jeopardize the progress of more general trade liberalization in the regional its potential for promoting agriculture and food security.

Fresh produce can be expensive and regularly buying a variety of fruits and vegetables does not strain the budgets of many families in SAARC countries. Bhutan is a challenging environment in which to develop commercial agriculture, the country has limited area for agriculture. Located in South eastern part of Bangladesh, the economy is heavily dependent on agriculture, but farming is difficult because of the steep and rugged terrain. Major challenges and opportunities for agriculture sector investment and growth prevail. Climate change is already impacting Pakistan.



Farmers in northern Afghanistan were all but unaware of improved practices and technologies in horticulture, livestock and irrigation systems. The production and productivity were low, and maintaining consistent product quality was a challenge. In 2017 SAARC Agriculture Centre started/established need based programs such as (a) Conservation agricultural practices in SAARC member countries (b) Agricultural machinery in SAARC member countries.

Similarly in 2018 SAARC Agriculture Centre started/ established continuously need base programs such as (a) SAARC regional consultative meeting for exchange of rice based value chain development technologies (b) SAARC regional training on proven production technologies, value chain development and nutrition security of pulses (c) SAARC regional consultation on development of country specific Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) standards and harmonization of SAARC GAP for vegetables and fruits, and many other related programs continue in the year 2018.

Mahesh Raja Manglani
(Treasurer of Pakistan Pulses Importers Association)

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DISASTER RISK REDUCTION & FLOOD EARLY WARNINGS IN THE HINDU KUSH HIMALAYA

The Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) is prone to natural hazards, and climate change and its impacts exacerbate this susceptibility. Floods and flash floods pose significant threats in the HKH as they are often catastrophic to downstream communities. In Nepal, numerous rivers and tributaries flow from the mountains and hills down to the plains of India where they flow through flat areas that are prone to water logging and floods. For example, in the Shiwalik Hills of Nepal light rainfall can cause flash floods that result huge losses of lives and livelihoods.

Early warning systems provide enough time for the vulnerable communities to be prepared and act against the dangers of floods. Though early warning systems have been developed at the global, regional, and national levels, it is important to ensure that the most vulnerable communities receive those information on time to save lives and livelihoods.

To address this challenge, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is piloting a community-based flood early warning system in several areas of Nepal, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan. When the water level rises in a river, these systems enable upstream communities to inform vulnerable local communities downstream, giving them valuable extra time to prepare and respond. That extra time results in saved lives and property for many people.

Why a community-based flood early warning system?

Community-based flood early warning systems (or CBFEWS) enable local communities to utilize local resources and capacities to prepare and respond to flood risks. The system is installed along river tributaries that pose flooding risks to downstream communities. In the event of heavy rains or swollen rivers, the upstream community generates the flood information using a simple low-cost instrument and disseminates the real time early warning that relays needed information through mobile phone messaging to downstream local communities, providing them sufficient lead time for preparedness. Currently



Care taker of the instrument in Dihiri, India

there are two types of CBFEWS: wire-based (-USD 2,000), and telemetry based (-USD 4,000).

The effectiveness of CBFEWS is gaining recognition worldwide. In 2014, the Momentum for Change Lighthouse Activity Award honored ICIMOD and Sustainable Eco Engineering (the Kathmandu-based manufacturer) for their innovative use of information and communications technology.

Cross border local level information flow

The Ratu River is a transboundary river between Nepal and India, which originates in the Siwalik Hills and extends down into the Terai on the northern extension of the Indo-Gangetic Plain. ICIMOD installed a CBFEWS in two areas: Bardibas, Nepal and Bhitamora, India. This system would serve to inform approximately 100,000 people living downstream.

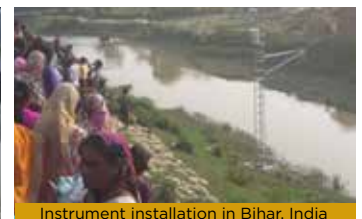
On the night of 12 August 2017, heavy rains triggered flood waters in the Ratu River, and launched the CBFEWS system into action. When the flood waters reached Shrikhandi, Bihar, the residents had been given eight hours to prepare for the inundation, saving untold lives and property in the wake of this disaster.

Sustainability matters!

Sustainability of CBFEWS relies on community ownership of the system and continued financial and technical support for operating the system. Taking this into consideration, the local government line agencies, local institutions, and community members have been involved in the preparation, installation, and monitoring of the system to ensure long-term sustainability. This work also includes establishing a network of key informants and their mobile numbers to serve as information hubs when CBFEWS are triggered. Long-term planning for CBFEWS will include its integration with annual district disaster management plans.



Flood situation in Ratu River, Bihar



Instrument installation in Bihar, India

BY DR. NEERA SHRESTHA PRADHAN
Water And Adaptation Specialist, International Centre For Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)
For further information, please contact at neera.pradhan@icimod.org

A TALK WITH

MRS. SHABNAM ZAFAR

Life Member, SAARC CCI & Successful Entrepreneur



Mrs. Shabnam Zafar is the Executive Director of Elegance International, a producer and exporter of dates and dry dates since 2007.

She is the first Lady President of Khairpur Chamber of Commerce & Industry. She was awarded Excellence Award of FPCCI by Honorable Mian Muhammad Shebaz Sharif, Chief Minister Punjab in 2016.

As an entrepreneur, Mrs. Zafar shares some salient business advice and success tips with the SAARC CCI editorial team.

How Did You Rise in the Industry You Are In?

Factors which motivated me to explore trade were harmonization and progressive integration of the region's capital markets, having 1.7 billion people with a variety of buyers, exporters, importers, products and business hubs across the region where I promoted and enhanced my business by leaps and bounds.

Being A Female, Did You Face Any Challenges Going Across Geographical Borders To Grow Your Business? Please Share Some Examples.

Certainly, as other entrepreneur I have encountered several challenges specifically during my travelling period. I have experienced travel restrictions in the form of slow Visa procedures to enter other countries and unnecessary government regulations and policies for foreigners.

How have SAARC CCI Training Programmes and Interactions Helped You In Understanding The Prevailing Trade Relations Between The SAARC Countries?

SAARC CCI is very important and convenient platform for female entrepreneurs like me, as interaction and exchange of views regarding prevailing business practices among people from SAARC member countries resolves complexities and gives a clear picture of marketplaces and business communities on a broader level.

How Important Is The SAARC Platform For Women Entrepreneurs?

Today we have entered into the era where women are participating actively in every sphere of life equally. SAARC platform is one of the greatest opportunities for female entrepreneurs to have her dreams come true by fully participating in trade activities across the world and SAARC member states.

What does It Takes To Be A Successful Entrepreneur?

1. Exposure to local, regional and international markets.
2. Know how of marketing strategies and where to invest.
3. Potentially capable to bear market risk.

What Are The 3 Key Challenges, Faced By Entrepreneurs; You Would Like Governments To Address?

1. Reduction of excessive taxes and duties.
2. Establishment of Free Trade and products processing zones with easy access to other countries through a reliable mode of conveyance.
3. The stability of government policies.

What Are The Key Steps For SAARC Member States To Consider Seriously For Taking The SAARC Region Forward?

The governments of the SAARC states should help to ensure smooth and stable economic growth, alleviate poverty, illiteracy and frustration, transfer capital for investment in the SAARC countries, and make the markets of all SAARC member states accessible for trading purposes.

Moreover, there is a dire need for mutual cooperation among the SAARC states and other nations which could give a competitive environment to all.

What Is your vision for the SAARC CCI Region?

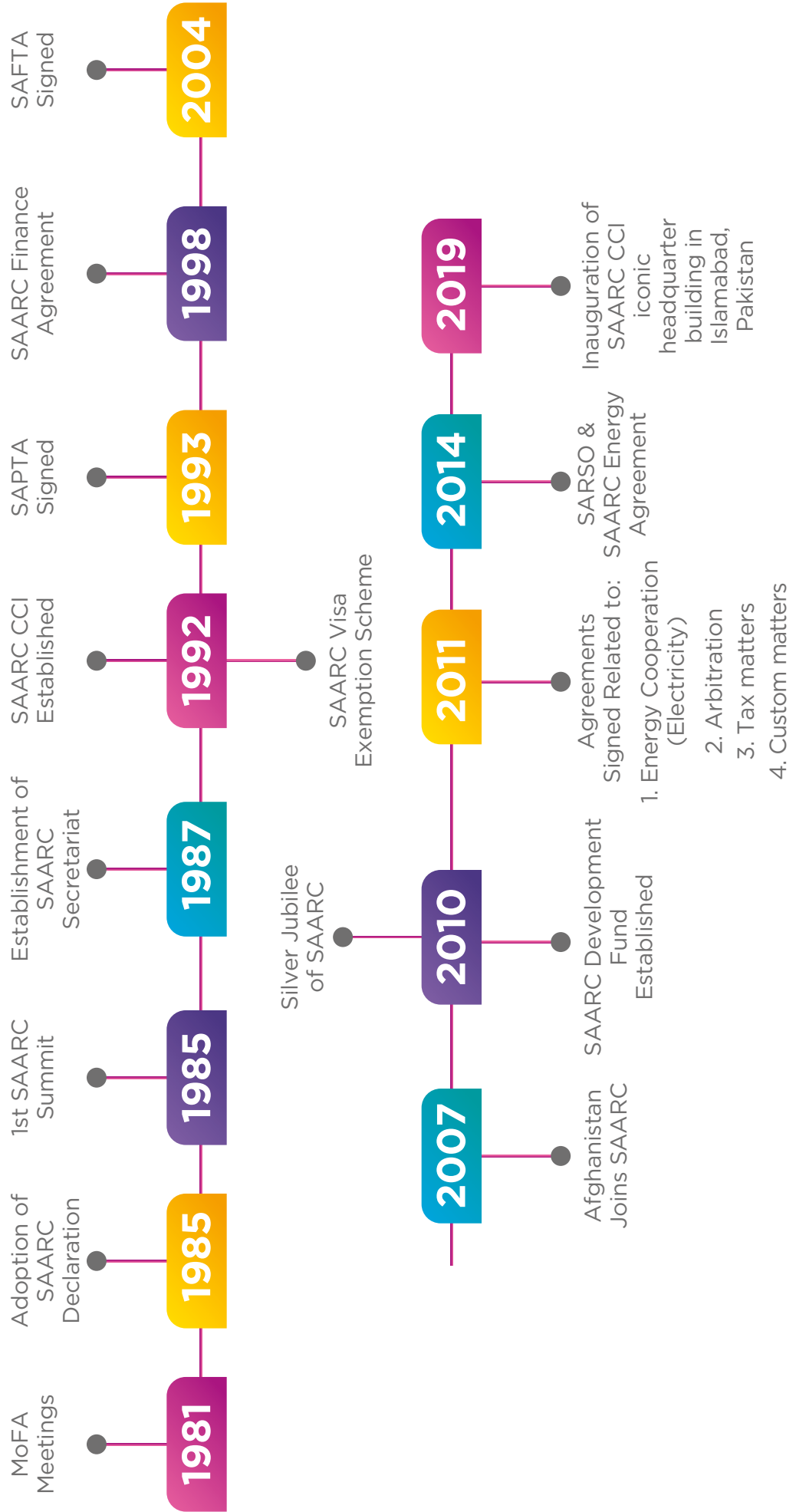
My vision for SAARC region is socio-economic stability, elimination of poverty and illiteracy, and region's prosperity through peace and cooperation.

Your Thoughts On Regional Cooperation ?

There are several driving forces which weaken regional integration. Circumstances and state of affairs vary from individual stakeholders.



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Milestones



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PRIVILEGES & BENEFITS OF SAARC CCI MEMBERSHIP

Access to Pertinent Trade Data and Information

Being a member of SAARC CCI, you will be updated with reliable and pertinent information on South Asian economies and dynamics of trade and investment. SAARC CCI ensures to keep its members informed on all seminars, programs, B2B meetings and Presidential delegations via online and offline platforms including emails, telephone calls, post and fax.

Visibility and Promoting your Brand

With a SAARC CCI membership, you can reach your potential audience through exclusive advertising and business-to-business publicity. As a member, you will be listed on the website directory and can avail sponsorship opportunities to leverage your business needs. SAARC CCI membership aims to satisfy the marketing needs of its members. To fulfill your marketing needs, the SAARC CCI magazines and our Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter serve as an excellent platform to showcase your brand to a broad target audience.

Networking within SAARC and Beyond

SAARC CCI membership provides unique opportunities to network and expand your reach via participating in Presidential Delegations, Conferences, Seminars, Business to Business (B2B) meetings, Trade Fairs, Investment Forums and many such initiatives.

Business Opportunities

The SAARC CCI's mission is to create business linkages and generate more business activity for the business community of SAARC region. As a SAARC CCI member, you can leverage the SAARC CCI network and create strategic business linkages to grow your business. Furthermore, the SAARC CCI platform promotes opportunities to identify new avenues of economic cooperation and grow existing businesses.

Visa Facilitation

SAARC CCI is committed towards providing value added services to its members while addressing their business needs. One of the primary goals of SAARC CCI is to provide SAARC CCI members with Visa Recommendation services which ensure effective visa facilitation. This service encompasses visa facilitation including visa application process and follow-up.

Women Empowering South Asia

SAARC CCI provides a unique platform to enable the women entrepreneurs of South Asian region to network amongst themselves and contribute to enhancing trade and investments across the region. SAARC region women entrepreneurs are welcome to join SAARC CCI as prestigious Life Members and are facilitated with rewarding incentives.

An Encouraging Platform for Young Entrepreneurs

SAARC CCI engages and encourages young entrepreneurs to become a member of SAARC Young Entrepreneurs Council (SYEF). SYEF is an organized platform for young business professionals to network and engage them with young entrepreneurs of South Asia, in order to contribute to regional cooperation in a dynamic manner.

SAARC Visa Exemption Stickers (SVES)

SAARC CCI provides an exclusive service of providing SAARC Visa Exemption Stickers (SVES) to its members subject to applicable rules. The SAARC Visa Exemption Stickers facilitate the members to travel in the region without the need to apply for bilateral visas (subject to policy governing SVES).

Promoting Policy Advocacy

SAARC CCI influences policy recommendations and development by identifying and addressing the core issues, challenges, opportunities and priorities that drives growth and prosperity in the region. Representing a broad range of business community of South Asia, SAARC CCI is uniquely positioned to advocate the interest of the business community and communicate with governments to influence policies. SAARC CCI initiatives include formulating evidence-based policy, building strategic relations with partners and taking initiatives that enable the government and private sector to effectively work together.



SAARC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

APEX BUSINESS ORGANIZATION OF SAARC

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