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Inaugural Address

By

Mahbubur Rahman
PIB — AMIC Seminar
on
Economic Perspectives of SAARC

Inaugural Address
by
MR. MAHBUBUR RAHMAN
Hon’ble Minister for Information,
Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh

19 — 24 November 1988
Dhaka, Bangladesh
Mr. Chairman
His Excellency, Mr. Abul Ahsan, Secretary General, SAARC
Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants
and Resource Persons,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim,
Assalamo Alaikum.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to be amongst you this morning. On behalf of the Government of Bangladesh and on my own behalf I welcome the distinguished participants drawn from communicators and experts in the field of mass communication of the SAARC Countries.

2. I express my heartfelt thanks to the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) Singapore which in collaboration with Press Institute of Bangladesh has organised this Seminar on “Economic Perspectives of SAARC”. I am glad to know that its activities are to develop closer understanding and cooperation among the peoples of South Asia through the representatives of mass media.

3. The SAARC has generated much enthusiasm among the countries of South Asia. The journalists and media practitioners act as a bridge between Governments and the people. They, therefore, can play a vital role in cementing the bond of cooperation among the SAARC countries by projecting their socio-economic developments in their true perspective.

4. Economic perspectives of SAARC have to be considered in the context of regional problems and developments. We the people of South Asia are, therefore, naturally influenced by these conditions. Today the nuclear power race and military build-up have caused great consternation among the peace-loving world community. Hence, the quest for peace and stability is the urge of our time. However, in the field of economic development, the scenario is gloomy since the developing countries are lagging behind in terms of technology, capital and management. How the developing countries could improve the standard of living of the people is the issue which is increasingly receiving attention in the international fora in the current decade.

5. Bangladesh as a least developed country is making all out efforts under the able and dynamic leadership of President Hussain Muhammad Ershad to lift itself out of the morass of under development following a policy of simultaneous development both in agriculture and industrial sector. In doing so, the government is contemplating to utilize its untapped resources and vast manpower. But nature frustrates our venture. We have been suffering perenially from floods and droughts. This year’s unprecedented flood came to us like a primitive deluge devastating everything in its way. But the people under the
inspiring leadership of our beloved President fought the sufferings with courage and fortitude. President Ershad wants to check permanently the recurrence of floods every year. He visited capitals of some SAARC countries and China and sought friendly help and cooperation to solve the problem. It is heartening to note that President’s untiring efforts did not go in vain. Favourable responses are coming forth not only from friendly neighbours, but also from outside including the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman, we in Bangladesh, therefore, are pursuing an external policy of peace, respect to the sovereignty of all nations and good neighbourliness and friendship. We as the members of the developing countries got to there to make joint efforts to develop our national economy and seek rightful position in the world economic system.

6. Bangladesh puts emphasis on fundamental goal of SAARC to promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and provide them with the opportunity to live in dignity and exploit fully their potentialities. We are quite aware of the formidable challenge of eradicating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment, we are trying our best to check unplanned expansion of families and prevent environmental degradation threatening South Asia today. We are convinced that the people and governments of South Asia could act in unison to meet these challenges.

So far the SAARC has achieved some progress in certain areas. More and more emphasis has to be placed on core areas like trade, industry and investment.

Though it is our endeavour to promote peace in this region sometimes internal disturbances, external threat and conflict are undermining our potentiality. If we really want a meaningful cooperation for our people, we must forge unity by narrowing down petty differences, misgivings and mistrust.

As media practitioners you can play a significant role in this regard. If we want to reach the 1 billion population of this region with the spirit enshrined in the SAARC Charter the communication media have to be channelised in an efficient and effective manner. Exchange of views among the scholars and journalists will definitely contribute to the identification of the possible ways of solution of the problems and develop understanding among the people. But the journalists without the development of their skill cannot serve the true purpose. Therefore, the seminar which will discuss the Economic Perspectives of SAARC will help the journalists to understand the needs of our time in this region.

I hope the seminar will be an eye-opener for cooperation among the media men of SAARC countries. I shall be happy to see more exchanges of SAARC Journalists, dissemination of information and ideas.

With this I declare the seminar open and wish it all the success.

Khuda Hafez
Bangladesh Zindabad.