



## SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (SAARC)

“SAARC is a people-centric organization. As enshrined in the SAARC Charter, our cardinal objective is to promote welfare of the peoples of our region.”

Amjad Hussain B. Sial,  
Secretary General of SAARC

## Secretary General's Activities

### Secretary General pays introductory visits to SAARC Countries

Soon after assuming the charge as the Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Ambassador Sial paid introductory visits to the Member States. It has been customary for the Secretary General to pay introductory visits to SAARC capitals on assuming the office.

Ambassador Sial visited Afghanistan on 26-29 March, the Maldives on 2-5 April, Bhutan on 26-27 April, Pakistan on 22-24 May, and Sri Lanka on 29-30 May.

Prior to his visits to the Member States, Ambassador Sial paid courtesy calls on the Rt. Hon. Bidya Devi Bhandari, President of Nepal and the Rt. Hon. Nanda Bahadur Pun, Vice President of Nepal. Later on, he called on the present Prime Minister of Nepal,

the Rt. Hon. Sher Bahadur Deuba. He also called on Hon. Krishna Bahadur Mahara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal. He had called on H. E. Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi, Foreign Secretary of Nepal on the day he assumed office on 1 March.



While in Kabul, the Secretary General called on H. E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President; H. E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive; and H. E. Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.



During his visit to the Maldives, the Secretary General called on H. E. Mr. Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, President; H. E. Dr. Mohamed Asim, Minister for Foreign Affairs; and H. E. Dr. Ali

### Ambassador Sial assumes charge as Secretary General

Ambassador Amjad Hussain B. Sial of Pakistan assumed charge as the Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) from 01 March 2017.



Amjad Hussain B. Sial

A career diplomat from the Foreign Service of Pakistan. He joined the Foreign Service in 1983. Ambassador Sial served as Special Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, prior to his present assignment.

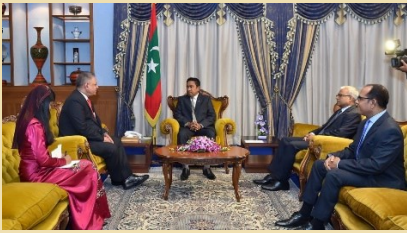
During his diplomatic career spanning over three decades, besides serving at the Headquarter in Islamabad, Ambassador Sial served at Pakistan Missions in Vienna (1987-1990); Harare (1994-1996); and New York (1996-2000). He was Ambassador/Alternate Permanent Representative at the Pakistan Permanent Mission to the UN, New York from 2009 to 2011. He was Ambassador of Pakistan to the Republic of Tajikistan from 2011 to 2014.

Born on 20 June 1956, Ambassador Sial holds a MSc Degree in Defense and Strategic Studies.

Ambassador Sial is the thirteenth Secretary General of SAARC. He earlier served as Director at the SAARC Secretariat from 2003 to 2006.

Secretaries General of SAARC are appointed by the SAARC Council of Ministers upon nomination by a Member State in alphabetical order. They are appointed for a non-renewable term of three years.

Naseer Mohamed, Foreign Secretary.



While on a visit to Bhutan, the Secretary General had an audience with His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the King of Bhutan. He called on H. E. Mr. Damche Dorji, Foreign Minister and H. E. Mr. Sonam Tshong, Foreign Secretary. He was briefed by the Chief Executive Officer of the SAARC Development Fund at its Secretariat in Thimpu. He also called on H. E. Mr. Chenkyab Dorji, Chairman of the Privy Council of Bhutan and former Secretary General of SAARC.



During his introductory visit to Pakistan, the Secretary General called on H. E. Mr. Mamnoon Hussain, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on 23 May. On 24 May, he called on H. E. Mr. Sartaj Aziz, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs. While in Islamabad, he also paid a visit to the SAARC Energy Centre.



While in Sri Lanka, the Secretary General paid a courtesy call on H. E. Mr. Maithripala Sirisena, the President of Sri Lanka. He also called on H. E. Mr. Esala Weerakoon, Foreign Secretary; and Hon. Ravi

Karunanayake, Minister of Foreign Affairs. He also visited the SAARC Cultural Centre in Colombo.



During his calls on the dignitaries in SAARC capitals, the Secretary General apprised them of the ongoing activities of SAARC, with particular reference to measures aimed at enhancing regional integration, connectivity, economic cooperation as well as initiatives taken to promote people-to-people contacts. He also informed the leaders about the measures being taken to enhance efficacy of the SAARC Secretariat.

The dignitaries reaffirmed their commitment to the SAARC process, while emphasizing upon the need to make the Association results-based and more effective to deliver dividends of regional cooperation to the peoples in the region.

### Secretary General's Visit to SAARC Development Fund Secretariat

H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General of SAARC, visited the SAARC Development Fund Secretariat on April 25th 2017.



### Regional Parliamentarians' Conference on Combating Human Trafficking

H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, accompanied by Ms. Fathimath Najwa, Director (Social Affairs) at the

SAARC Secretariat attended the Regional Parliamentarians' Conference on Combating Human Trafficking, 21-22 March 2017, Bangkok, Thailand.

The Conference was co-organized by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and the South Asia Initiative to End Violence against Children (SAIEVAC), an Apex Body of SAARC. The Conference brought together parliamentarians of the



SAARC, ASEAN and the Pacific regions to a common platform and had the participation of different stakeholders in the region and provided opportunities for a rich discourse and sharing of experiences on the issue of human trafficking.

### South Asia Parliamentarians Platform for Children

H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, attended the South Asia Parliamentarians Platform for Children on 2-3 March 2017, Kathmandu. The Theme of the Conference was "Making SDGs work for children in South Asia".

The Secretary General stressed five important points for consideration while working to achieve the SDGs. These are: among competing objectives policies must be prioritized for resources and investment for children; issues affecting children must not be addressed in isolation and all efforts should be well-coordinated across sectors; partnerships must be sought in order to create opportunities for win-win situations; out-of-the-box solutions should be explored to mobilize resources and investment to make policies targeted at the most vulnerable and marginalized; an actionable plan be prepared for our vision, to ensure that the vision does not remain merely a dream.



### Secretary General of SAARC Visited the Construction Site of SAARC Cultural Centre

Secretary General of SAARC H. E. Amjad Hussain B. Sial visited the construction site of SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) in Matara, Sri Lanka on 15 July 2017.

The Government of Sri Lanka initiated to construct a permanent premise for the SCC in Nawimana, Matara, Sri Lanka. The proposed complex is being constructed on 17-acre land and consists of an auditorium, a well-endowed library, seminar and lecture halls, and modest but comfortable accommodation and hostel facilities.



The construction activities are done under supervision of the Engineering regiment of Sri Lanka Army. This is fully funded by the Government of Sri Lanka and approx. Expenditure was 10 million US dollars.

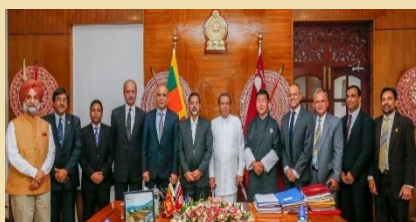
### Eleventh Informal Meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers

The Eleventh Informal Meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers was held in Yokohama, Japan, on 5 May 2017 on the side-lines of the 50th Annual Meeting of ADB on 4-7 May 2017. The Ministers reviewed progress on various financial and economic areas of cooperation including the establishment of South Asian Economic Union (SAEU).

### Eighth Meeting of SAARC Ministers of Interior/Home preceded by the Meeting of SAARC Secretaries of Interior/Home

The Eighth meeting of the SAARC Ministers of Interior/Home preceded by Eighth Meeting of SAARC Secretaries of Interior/Home was held on 12 and 13 July 2017 in Colombo with participation of all Member States of SAARC.

The Inaugural Session of the Eighth Meeting of the SAARC Ministers of Interior/Home was held in the gracious presence of Hon. Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe.



Apart from terrorism, other key issues were discussed during these meetings, including illegal trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and small arms and how to make coordinated and concerted efforts to combat such menace.

### Sixth Meeting of SAARC Ministers of Health and preceding Meeting of Senior Officials/Secretaries of Health

The Sixth Meeting of SAARC Ministers of Health and preceding Meeting of Senior Officials/Secretaries of Health was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 27 to 29 July 2017. The Meeting adopted the Colombo Declaration "Calling for accelerated progress on key Regional Health Issues". The Meeting welcomed the suggestion by H.E. the Secretary General of SAARC about establishment of South Asian Medical University. The Meeting also welcomed the offer of Sri Lanka to host the University.



### SAARC-UNICEF Regional Conference on Scaling-up Care for Children with Severe Wasting in South Asia

SAARC-UNICEF Regional Conference on Scaling-up Care for Children with Severe Wasting in South Asia was held in Kathmandu on 16-18 May 2017. The outcome of the meeting was 10 key messages/recommendations which were placed for approval by the Sixth Meeting of SAARC Ministers of Health preceded by the Senior Officials Meeting.

### SAARC-ADB Third Special Meeting on Regional Economic Integration Study

SAARC-ADB Third Special Meeting on Regional Economic Integration Study (Phase-II) was held on 12-13 April in Islamabad. The meeting was attended by all Member States including representatives of SAARC Secretariat and Asian Development Bank. The delegations briefed the meeting on transport connectivity in their respective country and with neighbouring member countries.



Director (ETS) and Director (ETF) represented the Secretary General in the Meeting.

### Eighth Meeting of SAARC Immigration Authorities

The Eighth Meeting of SAARC Immigration Authorities was held in Colombo on 11 July 2017. The meeting was attended by all Member States and considered matters related

to streamlining the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme, inclusion of new categories for issue of SAARC Visa Exemption Sticker and enhancement of number of visas and validity for the businessmen.



A joint inaugural session of both the meetings was graced by H.E. Lyonpo Yeshey Dorji, Minister of Agriculture and Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan. During the meeting, SAARC CVOs reviewed the ongoing collaborations and project activities as well as discussed various priority issues related to livestock sector of the region including sharing of information on diseases and management, epidemiology, laboratory matters, controlling priority diseases like foot and mouth disease (FMD), peste des petits ruminants (PPR), and avian influenza (AI).

### Validation of SAARC-IFAD-SAWTEE Study on Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture

A Final Validation Workshop on Strengthening the Role of SAARC in the Sustainable Intensification of Agriculture in South Asia was held in Kathmandu on 23-24 March 2017.

### SAARC Internship Programme

The SAARC Secretariat offers internships at the SAARC Secretariat to under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate students from South Asia and researchers of any nationality working in South Asian research institutes based within the region. The overall objective of the SIP is to promote awareness about the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in and beyond South Asia. Under this programme, interested students or researchers are accepted as internees at the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu for a period of two weeks to six months, depending on the need and nature of the projected research work. During the period March to July 2017, ten students successfully completed their internship programme at the Secretariat.

### Eleventh Meeting of the Committee of Heads of University Grants Commissions and Equivalent Bodies

The Eleventh Meeting of the Committee of Heads of University Grants Commissions and Equivalent Bodies was held in Bandos Island, the Maldives, on 02-03 April 2017 with the participation of Heads of University Grants Commissions and Equivalent Bodies of all Member States of SAARC.

During the Meeting, matters relating to mutual recognition of professional degrees, quality assurance and accreditation mechanism, SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships Scheme were discussed.

### SAARC Agricultural Trade Forum

SAARC Agricultural Trade Forum was organized at the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), Dhaka from 22-23 May 2017.



The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provided all-out support to conduct the Trade Forum which was attended by members of SAARC Technical Committee on Agriculture & Rural Development, SAFTA Committee of Experts focal points, representatives from various trade and economics think-tanks in the SAARC region, representatives from development partner institutions and experts from the SAC.

### List of Activities conducted by SAARC Specialized Bodies and Regional Centres

#### SAARC Development Bank

1. Brainstorming Workshop to finalize the draft strategic plan of SDF 2020, MSME Programme and E & I Policy on February 9, 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
2. The 27th Meeting of SAARC Development Fund Board of Directors was held on 18-19 July 2017 at SDF Secretariat, Thimphu, Bhutan.

### Sixth CVOs Meeting and Third GF-TADs (SAARC) Meeting

The Sixth Meeting of SAARC Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) Forum was held back to back with the 3rd meeting of the GF-TADs (SAARC) in Thimphu from 9-11 May 2017.



### **South Asian University**

1. The South Asian University Foundation Day Celebrations, 7 March 2017.
2. Borders and Border Studies Conference, 6-7 March 2017 in New Delhi.
3. South Asian Biotechnology Conference in Kathmandu, 16-18 March 2017.
4. Buddhist Cultural Pluralism Conference in Bhutan, 17-18 March 2017.
5. Asia-wide SAU Entrance Test Held on 9 April 2017.
6. International Feminist Journal of Politics Conference, 9-11 April, New Delhi .
7. Seminar on Media Freedom, 25 April 2017.
8. Joint International Conference on Computational Modelling and Simulation, 17-19 May 2017, Colombo.
9. Joint International Conference on Advances in Computational Mathematics (University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, 27-28, May 2017).
10. South Asian University conducted its second convocation on 12 June 2017, 185 students were awarded their degrees.

### **SOUTH ASIAN REGIONAL STANDARDS ORGANIZATION (SARSO)**

1. The Fifth Meeting of the Governing Board (GB) of South Asian Regional Standards Organization (SARSO), on 28 February –01 March 2017 in Dhaka.
2. Promotional activities of SARSO Standardization Activities 28-29 March 2017, Kabul, Afghanistan.

### **SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC)**

1. Commemoration of World TB Day, 22-24 March 2017.

2. SAARC Regional Meeting of Programme Managers and Cross Border issues on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes, 29-31 May, 2017 in Thimphu.

3. SAARC Regional Training on Operational Research on TB and HIV/AIDS in Jaipur India from 12- 16 June 2017.

4. SAARC Regional Training on TB for Microbiologist on Culture & DST, GeneXpert/NAAT and its Maintenance in New Delhi, India from 10 to 14 July 2017.

### **SAARC Cultural Centre**

1. International Women's Day Celebrations, 8th March 2017, Colombo.

2. SAARC Exhibition of Paintings, 3-9 July 2017, Colombo .

### **SAARC Energy Centre**

1. Celebration of World Environment Day, 05 June 2017.

2. SAARC Regional Expert Consultation Meeting on Water, Energy and Food Nexus, 3-6 July 2017, Bhutan.

### **SAARC Disaster Management Centre (Interim Unit)**

1. SAARC Disaster Management Centre (Interim Unit) organized a training programme on Application of Space Technology in Monitoring & Managing Risks at Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management, Gandhinagar, on May 24-26, 2017.

2. Training Programme on Short Range Regional Early Warning System, 21- 23 June 2017 .

**SAARC Secretariat participated in the following events:**

- Joint ESCAP-OSJD Meeting on Strengthening Railway Transport Connectivity in Southwest Asia on 15-16 March 2017 in New Delhi organized by the UNESCAP.

- Connecting South Asia and Tourism Roundtable Session on 25 July 2017 in Thimphu, Bhutan, organized by SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

- Asia Pacific Regional Seminar on Sub

-Regional Cooperation for Achieving SDG4-Education 2030 on 29-31 May 2017 in Bangkok organized by the UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok).

- "Inter-Regional Experts Forum on Skills and Migration in the South Asia-Middle East Corridor" held in New Delhi on 25-26 July 2017, jointly organized by ILO and the Government of India.

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