



VIDSAARC,2017 INVITATION



Respected Head of the Institutions,

We are delighted to invite the students of your school in the age group of 14-18 years to participate in the Inaugural Edition of VIDSAARC -2017,a noble initiative mentored by the **Vidya Devi Jindal School, Hisar, Haryana.**

Unlike the “Model United Nations” which includes a wide range of world issues for discussion with very little impact on the people of South Asia, VIDSAARC will provide a platform for discussion on the contemporary regional issues which deeply affect the lives of the people of the region. It is a kind of learning event that gives young people from across South Asia a unique opportunity to learn and resolve the most vexed issues which are major hurdles in the way of political stability, peace and progress in the South Asian region.

Participants will attend the simulated form of SAARC Summit in which they will role play as diplomats representing their countries ,investigating regional issues, debate, deliberate consult and then find solutions to these issues.

The Conference is rescheduled from **30 November to 1,December,2017** ,at Vidya Devi Jindal School, Hisar, Haryana . The Theme of the Conference is **`South Asia : Way forward'**

If your school is interested to participate in this conference, please send your confirmation latest by **12 November, 2017**. Each participating school can send a delegation comprising 6-8 delegates. The participation fee for each delegate will be Rs. 3000/ for local schools and Rs.8000/ for outstation teams which would include food and refreshment, stay, conference kit and local transport during the conference.

Once you confirm your school's participation, all other details including the topics for discussion in the Summit and allotment of countries will be sent to you.

We would be truly honoured to have students from your school participate in this inaugural edition of VIDSAARC-2017.

Warm Regards,

Shalini Mehrotra
Principal

VIDSAARC

BACKGROUND GUIDE

VIDSAARC-2017



VIDSAARC

About SAARC:

1. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the regional intergovernmental organisation and geopolitical union of nations in South Asia founded in 1985. Its seven founding members were Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh while Afghanistan joined the organisation in 2007. **Observer states include USA, Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, Myanmar, Mauritius, Iran and European Union.** Meetings of head of states are usually held on annual basis. SAARC comprises 3% of the world's area, 21% of the world's population and 3.8% (US\$ 2.9 trillion) of the global economy, as of 2015.

Objectives of SAARC:

2. The main objectives of the SAARC as defined in its charter are:
 - I. Promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and improve their quality of life;
 - II. Accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region by providing all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and realise their full potential;
 - III. Promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia;
 - IV. Contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems;
 - V. Promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields;
 - VI. Strengthen co-operation with other;
 - VII. Strengthen co-operation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interest;
 - VIII. Cooperate with international and regional organisation with similar aims and purposes.
3. It is important to note that the main idea behind SAARC formation was the promotion of a common vision for using region's potential and interdependence to counter threats.

Achievements/Role of SAARC:

4. The progress and development of SAARC during the recent years can be looked at under the following heads:

Substantial Increase in Cooperation.

Since the formation of SAARC in 1985, the level of cooperation among the member countries has increased substantially. Over the years, realising the importance of regional cooperation and development, SAARC members created a sense of accelerating regional economic development and advocated revival of the organisation by moving from just the issuance of declarations to practical implementation of the plans and policies to turn this weak region into a potentially

developed one. This recognition has led towards increasing the pace of cooperation among the member countries. This cooperation can be witnessed in the establishment and initiation of various programs and forums for mutual benefits:

- **South Asian University, New Delhi**
- **SAARC International College, Bangladesh**
- **Agreement on Judicial cooperation on Counter-Terrorism**
- **Establishment of Food Bank**
- **South Asian Satellite.**

Economic and Trade Discussions:

5. For the success of SAARC, economic and trade cooperation is very important and in fact the first thing to be focused on for the development of South Asia. Many years of discussions have at least established the bases of cooperation in this particular area. During the 1990s, SAARC discussed the Preferential Trading Area (SAPTA) among the member countries which was materialised in the shape of Free Trade Agreement which is now known as South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). According to this agreement, the tariff reduction plan was chalked out and since 2006, this reduction had been carried out in two phases i.e Pakistan and India pledged to put tariffs on all the goods down to twenty percent within two years and all other countries to thirty percent within three years. While in the second phase, Pakistan and India decided to put the tariffs on goods down to 0-5 percent within five years and other members of the organisation within seven years. Though the initiatives taken to trade freely in the region has encountered a lot of problem but still we cannot ignore that the member countries are proceeding ahead with their plans to improve the regional growth and cooperation.

Increase in External Support/Cooperation with Observers:

6. It is worth mentioning that being an underdeveloped/developing region, SAARC countries cannot develop each and every aspect of their socio economic issues in isolation . They need support and assistance in terms of capital, education and technology from the more developed regions and individual countries. One of the positive points in the recent years has been the interest of the other developed countries in SAARC who are forthcoming to provide help in social and economic fields. The member countries have reached the conclusion during the recent years that they would welcome any assistance from the observer countries .Observer Countries, despite their role being limited due to lack of consensus among SAARC members ,USA, Japan, China, South Korea, Iran and, EU are willing to provide

support e.g. Japan has clearly offered help in social infrastructure development and disaster management.

SAARC has also been in the process of making agreements and MOUs with other regional and international organisations like United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), Asia Pacific Telecommunity (APT), United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF). This external support gives a boost to the aims and objective of SAARC to:

- Ø Establishment of Development Funds
- Ø Telemedicine Network
- Ø SAARC Writers and Literature Foundation
- Ø South Asia Foundation

Constraining Factors /Hurdles in the Development of SAARC:

7. There are some serious constraints which are, no doubt, not allowing South Asian cooperation to develop. Some of these hurdles can be described as:

Inter-state Disputes in South Asia

8. One of the major hurdles in the way of cooperation among the SAARC members is the mistrust, mutual security perceptions and hostility. All the members of this organisation feel, in one way or another, threatened with regard to their political, economic and territorial stability from the neighbouring countries. They are still entrapped in the historical conflicts of colonial rule and the disputed environment. i.e. loss of property, lives, identities and communal violence. There are always high risks that any time the efforts for cooperation can suffer due to communal and terrorist threats.

Fear of Indian Domination

9. Apparently another cause of SAARC failure is the purported fear of India's hegemonic role in the region. Indian desire to participate in the decision making process of the region as a leader has caused concerns among the neighbouring countries particularly Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Unstable Financial Positions

10. The weak financial position of the member countries has also created an uncertain future for this organisation. This weak financial position is reflected in the trade imbalances among the member countries. The SAARC members independently, are financially and

economically not very comparable at the global level . Most of the member countries export similar products and in that too, India plays a major role. This situation encourages the least developed countries to go for aid demands/arrangements and extra-regional trade which is not favourable for the regional economic interaction. The member countries of SAARC are not complementing each other but they are competing with each other. Mutual trade is very low. The lower level of intra-region trade in South Asia has made the objective of this organisation a failure.

Ingrained contradictions: SAARC Charter

11. The charter of SAARC itself has some self-imposed anomalies as its charter has the provision of not discussing the contentious and bilateral disputes. On the one hand, it asks for increased cooperation and exchanges and on the other hand, avoids negotiations on bilateral disputes. The charter also requires that all the decisions will be taken unanimously which becomes quite difficult. This clearly shows an unstable inter-state relationship towards equal participation in policy making for the people of South Asia. It can be said that the charter itself denies the true purpose of the organisation. In such kind of conditions, it cannot be said to be developed on sound basis.

Lack of People to People Contacts

12. The contact of the people within the Association is much below expected levels despite so many commonalities .They themselves are oblivious of the purpose and objectives of this association condemning it to periphery .In such a scenario it is utopian to expect them to join together to help their own states to solve their problems.

Lack of Strong Infrastructure

13. There is a need for facilitating increased interaction among the citizens of South Asia by further improving road, rail and air travel facilities. There are, for example, no easy air links between the major cities of South Asia. One has to go to Bangkok to reach Colombo from Dhaka. Similarly, Pakistanis need to go to Dubai or Bangkok to reach Kathmandu. All of these practical obstacles diminish the chances of potential for people-to- people interaction in South Asia. An increase in joint-venture initiatives in the service and educational sectors is the need of the time. Today, Bangladeshi and Nepali students and patients flock to Indian educational and medical institutions. This, no doubt, helps to bridge the cultural gap. However, it is simultaneously contributing to trade imbalance in the service sector. Further, joint-venture initiatives in these sectors can be yet another form of people-to-people cooperation.

Recommendations to make SAARC a better forum

14. South Asian region can be stabilised and cemented if policy initiatives both at the government and non- government levels are taken by South Asian leaders with

commitment and mutual trust. Some of these initiatives and policy actions can be suggested as below:

(a). In the Political Field

i. Role of India.

India should play her role as a mentor and as a care taker with semblance of equality in partnering in various fields with purported low profile . Most of the disputes in South Asia are Indo-centric, so India should adopt a change of stance to get the confidence of its smaller neighbours.

ii. Formation of Conflict Conciliation Groups.

The CCGs can be formed for resolving the bilateral disputes when all parties to a particular dispute agree to seek SAARC help either to investigate the problem or conduct a fact finding study. The people to people contact groups may also be promoted to find solutions for various seemingly localised issues having greater ramifications.

iii. Unified approach to international relations.

The SAARC Charter must provide for discussions on the international issues among the leaders of the member countries specially those relating to issues of international peace and security, trade, environment and technology transfers etc. Currently, the existing structure does not allow for such discussions with the summit statements being made and written by bureaucrats well before the summit meeting. Such a move does not allow for these leaders to exchange on international matters which affect the region as a whole. Take the example of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations in Geneva. India and Pakistan, notwithstanding their own mistrust over nuclear matters had similar concerns about the proposed CTBT. Rather than working together, the two countries consciously fought shy of each other in Geneva, diluting collective strength that could have helped them.

(b) Resolution of Bilateral Disputes.

SAARC, being a promising organisation having the potential to link the resourceful economies of South Asia, must include in its provisions to resolve the bilateral disputes peacefully and the provision of taking all the decisions unanimously without touching bilateral issues . The principles of respect for territorial sovereignty, political independence and non-interference should not be overlooked.

Economic Initiatives

i. Monitoring of Policy Changes.

In the face of speedy trade liberalization, there is a need for the monitoring of policy changes such as the introduction of tariffs, or price controls at the regional level for greater coordination and a more effective response to the challenges of globalisation.

ii. **Establishment of South Asian Identity.**

Establishing an identity of South Asian region in terms of quality, brand names, standards, investment regimes, and other areas where a common approach would be the benefit of all the member states.

iii. **Cooperation at Smaller Sub-Regional Levels.**

Cooperation at smaller sub-regional levels such as West Bengal-Bangladesh, Bangladesh-India-Nepal to develop sub-regional growth conditions.

New Initiatives: BIMSTEC:

15. Despite the best efforts made by the member countries of SAARC, the body has largely remained ineffective because of growing conflict between the potentially two most powerful members India and Pakistan. It is essentially necessary on the part of the political leadership to resolve vexed issues for the successful working of a regional organisation. Unfortunately, SAARC as a forum has failed to resolve the issues affecting bilateral and multilateral relations among the South Asian countries.

To break the ice some member countries decided to look beyond South Asia to establish better economic and cultural ties with South East Asian nations . This initiative came in the form of Bangkok Declaration in 1997 and to the establishment of Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIST-EC).It was later renamed as Bay of Bengal Initiative for multi sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) with the inclusion of Myanmar,Nepal and Bhutan.

16. The founding objectives of the sub-regional initiative were

- a) Creating an enabling environment for rapid economic development of the sub-region, encouraging the spirit of equality and partnership,
- b) Promoting active collaboration and mutual assistance in the areas of common interests of the member countries,
- c) Accelerating support for each other in the fields of education, science and technology, etc.

17. For India, the establishment of BIMSTEC, and BBIN was yet another opportunity, besides the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to engage with South East Asia, at least partially. The scope for direct connectivity with South East Asia via North east India and Myanmar, counter-terrorism and anti-insurgency cooperation with Myanmar and other members, potential access to alternative energy resources in Myanmar as well as economic opportunities available in the ASEAN region had evoked sufficient interest in New Delhi to join BIMSTEC.

18. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his message on the 20th anniversary of the establishment of BIMSTEC, described the sub-regional grouping as “a natural platform” to fulfil India’s “key foreign policy priorities of ‘**Neighborhood First**’ and ‘**Act East**’. Earlier in October 2016, India had hosted the BIMSTEC members at Goa during the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) Outreach Summit. It was viewed as a pragmatic step on India’s part, demonstrating its potential to play the role of a regional leader, an aspiration which was instrumental in transforming its ‘Look East’ into ‘Act East’ policy. The BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit is believed to have given BIMSTEC its due importance by inviting its members to participate in a larger platform comprising five major emerging economies of the world.
19. The **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN)** Initiative is a sub regional architecture of countries in **Eastern South Asia**, a sub region of **South Asia**. It meets through official representation of member states to formulate, implement and review quadrilateral agreements across areas such as water resources management, connectivity of power, transport, and infrastructure.

VIDSAARC

20. VIDSAARC is a novel platform for the young debaters to explore their potential as the delegate of a particular country of South Asian/South East Asian region as well as of those countries of the world who want to have a closer ties with this region in this age of globalisation . VIDSAARC provides a platform for discussion on the contemporary regional issues which deeply affect the lives of the people of the region. It is a kind of learning event that gives young people from across the country a unique opportunity to learn and resolve the most vexed issues which are major hurdles in the way of political stability, peace and progress in the region. Participants will express their views on the themes during the VIDSAARC Conference, investigating regional issues and suggesting solutions to these issues.



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VIDSAARC 2017

The following sessions shall be conducted during the VIDSAARC Summit,2017:

SNO.	SESSION	AGENDA
1	Day-I: Session-I	Presentation by the experts on key aspects of SAARC and BIMSTEC
2	Day-1:Session –II	Presentation by the experts followed by feedback session.
3	Day-2:Session-I	Discussion by the participating teams on the following themes:- a) South Asian Cyber Security Environment: Challenges and Scope. b) Impact of foreign players on peace and political stability in South Asia. c) Terrorism:A threat to peace and stability in South Asia/South East Asia.
4	Day-2:Session-II	Feedback and Felicitation ceremony.

Conduct

1. The size of delegation from each school will be 6-8. Each school will be allotted a country. The delegates may be from Classes IX to XII.
2. On the Day-I each participating team will attend the presentations made by the experts on various aspects of South and South East Asia which would be followed by a feedback session in which the delegates can interact with the panel.
3. For raising valuable points during the feedback session delegates will be awarded with Promising Diplomat Awards.
4. On Day-II the participating teams will discuss the themes given out as per the modalities given below:
 - All the three themes will be discussed simultaneously at different venues in working groups. Each team is expected to divide its delegates into three groups for each of the themes mentioned above.
 - Two nominated delegates per school will present the nominated country's perspective.

- The discussion would be held under the supervision of experts who would also moderate the discussion and sum it up at the end.
- The discussion will be moderated by a moderator in a working group.

5. During the course of the VIDSAARC the following awards will be given:

- The Best Delegate and, the Outstanding Delegate from each working group.
- The Promising Delegate, the Second most Promising Delegate and the Most Enterprising Delegate from the audience on the first day.
- Overall Best Delegation and the Second Best Delegation based on the school's performance on both the days.

The decision of the authorities will be final and binding.

7. Participating schools are requested to register their school latest by **12th November, 2017**, enabling allotment of countries to the schools.

8. All Participating students shall receive :

- A) Conference Kits
- B) Background guides for research
- C) Placards
- D) Certificate of Participation
- E) Certificate of Excellence for Award Winners

9. The registration fee per delegate is **Rs 8000/** for *outstation teams* and **Rs 3000/** for *local schools*. This includes accommodation ,breakfast ,lunch, dinner, conference kit and local transport during the conference.

10. Dress code: Formal dress of South Asian Region.

Mode of Payment:

Payment is to be made in the form of DD/cheque/NEFT/Online payment in favor of “Vidya Devi Jindal School Hisar” payable at Hisar,Haryana. Our Bank details are as follow:

1. Oriental Bank of Commerce,
2. Account no. 52445010000010
3. Branch: VDJS
4. IFSC CODE: ORBC 0105244
5. City: Hisar, Haryana

Contact us at:

- a) info@vdjs.edu.in
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- c) Contact number: 08950114210

The logo for VIDSAARC features a stylized yellow tree with intricate white patterns in its canopy, set against a white background. Below the tree, the word "VIDSAARC" is written in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font.

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