

PRESS RELEASE

SAARC is a powerful force in the global arena: Discussion in Asia Society, New York

New York, 30 November 2005:

'SAARC is a powerful force in the global arena', was the conclusion reached at a largely attended seminar at the prestigious Asia Society in New York recently, according to information received here.

The current Chairman of the Group of SAARC Ambassadors at the UN in New York, Dr. Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, delivered the introductory speech, summarizing the outcome of the recently held SAARC Summit in Dhaka.

While tracing the origin of SAARC, he said "it was the product of a simple concept, that the countries of the region would gain more by cooperation, than by confrontation". He added: "this also demonstrates that some of the great achievements in the annals of humanity flowed from the simplest of ideas".

The seminar was also addressed by the Ambassadors of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan. The audience which comprised academics, diplomats, journalists and businessmen asked a large number of questions which were replied to by the Ambassadors. These largely focused on the future of regional economic and political cooperation, including the creation of a Free Trade Area. The vast potentials of SAARC as a market featured prominently.

The Bangladesh Ambassador also stated that "the fact that other countries see value in SAARC was evidenced by the fact that in Dhaka, Afghanistan joined up, and China and Japan signed on as observers".

The Seminar concluded with a reception.

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