President's Message

The spirit of SAARC is partnership amongst the equals that celebrates unity in diversity.

The SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) is playing a vital role in promoting economic cooperation among SAARC nations to make it the fastest growing regional bloc in the world. Since its inception, SCCI has contributed in substantial and substantive terms to deepen regional economic cooperation amongst the South Asian nations. The cooperation between SCCI and its global partners including Commonwealth Business Council, Euro Chambers and International Chamber of Commerce is increasing.

With globalization at a fast pace, it is imperative that we now work towards creating a dynamic South Asia by harnessing the comparative advantage and utilizing a vast pool of our human capacity. South Asia needs to evolve an integrated framework for intra-regional cooperation in strategic areas such as energy, water, food, infrastructure, connectivity, environmental protection, and the financial sector to face the emerging challenges. We must invest in our human capital to provide appropriate education and skills and healthcare. By doing so, we can increase efficiencies, leverage our competitiveness as well as our comparative advantages and create more value.

The initialization of the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) which started its first phase of implementation in July 2006 is a crucial step towards South Asian regional integration. SAFTA holds huge potential for growth and it is seen as a pathway to manifold expansion of trade and investment in the region. Although SAFTA is a positive step to enhance economic cooperation among the South Asian countries, the quantum and momentum of economic integration has been threatened due to political sensitivities in the region. Even though there has been a marked improvement in the political atmospheres during the last two years, a lot more needs to be done to create mutually beneficial economic ties between the member states.

Globalization and trade liberalization have ushered in new opportunities as well as challenges for SMEs. SMEs play a key role in transition and developing countries. Therefore, SME development needs to be seen as an integral element of overall economic and industrial development - and not as a subject matter in its own right. Presently, only a small part of the SME sector is able to identify and exploit these opportunities and deal with the challenges. The majority of SMEs in developing and transition countries, however, have been less able or unable to exploit the benefits of globalization. A major objective of work to promote the development of the SME sector is therefore to change the balance between these two groups of SMEs and to equip SMEs to better meet the challenges of globalization and to benefit from its opportunities.

Besides SMEs, the importance of Federations and Chambers in promoting economic growth, development and trade is crucial. Over the years, Chambers and Federations have been playing a proactive role in catalyzing trade, investment, technology transfer processes and economic development. Moreover, they have also been providing policy inputs at some level to the public sector. However, Chambers and Federations must ensure that trade development strategies contribute to overall economic development, particularly poverty reduction as well as build more awareness among the general public of the role of trade as an engine of growth. Additionally, along with policy inputs, Chambers of Commerce needs to facilitate new partnerships with the public sector and development organizations to create stronger links between the public and private sector.

Mr. Bap Kinga
Vice-President, SCCI
SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) in collaboration with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry of Sri Lanka (FCCISL) has organized a Seminar on “Economic Freedom in South Asia: A springboard for socio-economic development” on 16th October, 2008 in Cinnamon Hotel, Colombo-Sri Lanka. The seminar brought together academic experts, business professionals, members of SAARCCCI from all SAARC countries to share views and participate in the open discussions with the other participants.

The seminar was aimed at encouraging individual and institutional liberty in the economic sphere, leading to both Human Development and Economic growth through enhanced economic cooperation amongst the member states of the SAARC. Economic Freedom and development are directly linked and help reduce poverty under a free economic order, which is much needed for the region of South Asia - one of the regions at lower ebb of the economic freedom index.

The Seminar's inaugural session has been addressed by the Hon’ble Prof. G. L. Peiris, Minister of International Trade and Export Development of the Government of Sri Lanka, during his address, as a proponent of Economic Freedom, Hon'ble Minister stressed that the degree of Market Freedom not only correlates positively with economic growth, per capita income and human development index but also with the absolute and relative levels of income of the poorest groups in a country. Economic Freedom will enable the South Asian region to yield maximum benefits out of SAFTA, which provides a tangible roadmap for economic development of the region.

The speakers of the Seminar mainly involved Mr. Sherab Tenzin, Joint Director, Department of Trade, Bhutan, Mr. Subodhi Kumar, Executive Programs, Dr. Fridrich Naumann Foundation, India, Dr. Srimale Aqeyrathe, Senior Lecturer, Economic Affairs, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, Mr. Indrajith Fernando, President, Confederation of SAARC Apex Bodies in Sri Lanka, Ms. Huma Fakhar, Managing Partner-MAP Services Group, Lahore, Pakistan, Prof. Rohan Samarajiva, Executive Director, LIRNE ASIA and Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, President, South Asia Watch on Trade Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal.

The other respected participants of the occasion were Mr. Kosaia Wickramanayaka, President FCCISL, Mr. A Kumar Mallimaratui, Vice President FCCISL, Mr. Samantha Abeywickrama Secretary General, FCCISL, Mr. Tissa Jayaweera, EC member SAARCCCI and Chairman, International Chamber of Commerce and Deshabandu Macky Hashim, Past President of SAARCCCI and Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General SAARCCCI.

SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) in collaboration with Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has jointly organized a “Seminar on Trade Facilitation in South Asia” on 19th Oct, 2008 at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The seminar brought together academic experts, business professionals, members of SAARCCCI from all SAARC countries to share views and participate in the open discussions with the other participants.

The Seminar’s inaugural session was addressed by the chief guest Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, Hon’ble Advisor, Ministry of Commerce & Education, Govt. of Bangladesh during his address he said that ‘there’s a general resonance in the SAARC that countries within the region will have tremendous political clout if a political framework is put in place. The business leaders should come up with a strategic vision to reap the benefits of economic cooperation in the South Asian region, given the maturity of the SAARC as a regional body.

He emphasized, ‘the implementation of SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Area) constituted the “first critical block” in regional economic cooperation. There are still hopes that an array of trade-facilitation measures taken by the SAARC would ultimately lead to a South Asian Economic Union in a planned manner. Such measures include harmonization of customs procedures, setting up of a Regional Standards body and the proposed regional multimodal transport system’.

He further added, that the Growth in Inter and Intra regional trade will ultimately enable the South Asian region to yield maximum benefits out of SAFTA, which provides a tangible roadmap for economic development of the region. The speakers of the Seminar mainly included Syed Manzur Elaahi.
SCCI activities

Former Advisor to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh, Syed Saifuddin Hossain, Sr. Research Associate, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh, Ms. Huma Fakhar, Managing Partner-MAP Services Group, Pakistan, Dr. Sachin Chaturvedi, Fellow, Research and Information System for Developing Countries, India, Mr. Mahabubur Rahman, President, ICC Bangladesh & Past President, FBCCI, Mr. Kumar Malimmaratchi, Managing Director, Associate Hotels Lanka Ltd, Sri Lanka and Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, President, SouthAsia Watch on Trade Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), NEPAL.

Mir Nasir Hossain, Sr. Vice President SCCI & Immediate past President, FBCCI, Mr. Annisul Huq, President FBCCI and Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General SAARC CCI. Also addressed the inaugural session.

Regional Activities

Seminar on “Opportunities for Industrial & Infrastructure Development” was held on 18th October 2008 at 10.00 at Westin Hotel, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The seminar was organized by SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneur Council (SCWEC). During inaugural session, chief guest, Justice Habibur Rahman Khan suggested simplification of the visa system between the south Asian regions to ease transfer of goods and enhance trade. The main border to exporting goods to the neighboring countries and increasing regional trade is a difficult visa system of the member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). He also insisted on the implementation of the treaties the SAARC countries have already signed. Justice Khan stressed increasing economic cooperation between different regional chambers and organizing fairs that could open new doors for the entrepreneurs. Mr. Mir Nasir Hossain, vice president of SCWEC, said the south Asian Women entrepreneurs need to organize exchange regional visits. The government of these countries should patron different exchange programme which could increase the export of new products said adding that it would be grow the economy further more.

The seminar also emphasized expanding the arena of women entrepreneur ship to IP based businesses and developing the infrastructure for such an industry. VL Indira Dutt, chairperson of SCWEC, president, Kamaluddin Ahmad executive chairman of the Board of Investment, and Nasteen Awal Mintoo, the former chairperson of SCWEC, were also presented at the seminar.

Ms VL Indira Dutt, chairperson of SCWEC presenting shield to chief guest Justice Habibur Rahman Khan on seminar “Opportunities for Industrial & Infrastructure Development” 18th October 2008, Dhaka.

FICCI-ADB WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN SOUTH ASIAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION at COLOMBO, OCTOBER 16-17, 2008. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry organized Workshop on the Role of Private Sector in South Asian Economic Integration in collaboration with Asian Development Bank at Colombo on October 16-17, 2008. This meeting was attended by Mr. Muhammad Labal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Ms. Amita Sarkar, Snr. Director FICCI, Mr. Ganesh Wignaraja, Principal Economist - Office of Regional Economic Integration and representatives of the National Chambers/ Federations of the region.

Renowned economists and representatives of the South Asian Business community including former President SCCI, Mr. Mackey Hashim, Mr. Kosia Vikramaeky, President FCCISL and representatives of Asian Development Bank while addressing the sessions identified many areas, where Asian Development Bank could help promote greater economic cooperation in the region. As consequent of the workshop, SCCI, FICCI and ADB will formulate a strategy in the areas of capacity build of regional chambers, carrying out study identifying non-tariff barriers, easing Visa regime in South Asia, trade facilitation. SCCI will forward a detailed proposal to achieve the objectives envisaged in the Workshop.
Mr. Faiq Jawed is a leading and versatile businessman of Faisalabad and belong to a distinguished Chinioti Business Community. Mr. Faiq Jawed is a Commerce Graduate from Government Municipal Degree College, Faisalabad. He is well known and reputed Industrialist, Entrepreneur, Manufacturer cum Exporter, Agriculturist and Social Worker. He has remarkable experience in the field of industrial management, marketing, industrial production and agricultural products. J.K. Group is prospering under his dynamic leadership by virtue of his family background and having proven reputation as setting up and successfully running variety of industrial concerns.

He has been awarded Gold Medal by Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce Industry (FPCCI) as Businessman of the Year for the Year 2000-01 for investment, earning foreign exchange, increasing exports of country, paying higher Income Tax / Wealth Tax / Other Taxes and providing employment.

He has been awarded various Export Trophies by Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) on higher exports of his companies regularly for many years. Also awarded Export Trophy during 2006-07 on higher exports of his Companies by Pakistan Textile Exporters Association, Faisalabad Pakistan.

He is Vice Chairman of J.K. Group of Companies, which is a leading Industrial Group of Faisalabad Pakistan and mainly perform in Textile Sector as Spinners of all type of yarn and and Manufacturer / Exporters of all sorts of Fabrics.

**FUTURE OUTLOOK AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

Despite worldwide financial turmoil and hardships, he is optimistic that world economy will absorbs all shocks and move around. This will definitely help our economy to improve and flourish. He plans to expand and carry out BMR in the existing Spinning Units and looking forward to invest into Power Projects and Weaving Units. He is also planning to relocate its Spinning Unit in Pakistan, which has already been installed in Kingdom of Bahrain.

**KEY POSITIONS**

- In addition to his responsibilities as Vice Chairman of J.K. Group, he is a founder Sponsors Director of J.K. Sons (Pvt) Limited, an Export House, exporting and earning Foreign Exchange for the Country.
- Chief Executive of J.K. Fibre Mills Limited, a Spinning Unit comprising of 45,912 Spindles.
- Director of J.K. Spinning Mills Limited, having 26,928 Spindles.
- Nominee Chief Executive of J.K. Tech (Pvt) Limited, a Grid Station installed for transmitting supply of WAPDA to spinning units of Group.
- Chief Executive of Fine Fabrics (Pvt) Limited (An Export House).
- Director of J.K. Agriculture Farms (Pvt) Limited.
- Executive Member of Chinioti Community, Faisalabad.
- Life Member of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- He has been elected Director of Saudi Pak Commercial Bank Limited for three years from October, 2001 to October, 2004 and appointed Member of Audit and Credit Committees of the Board.
- Executive Member of Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA) since 1990.
- He has been elected Senior Vice Chairman of All Pakistan Cloth Exporters Association for the year 1999-00.
- He has been also Elected Chairman of Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA) for the year 2005.
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Ms. Huma Faiz, Managing Partner-MAP Services Group, Lahore, Pakistan, Prof. Rohan Samanvaya, Executive Director, LIRNE ASIA and Mr. Indrajith Fernando, President, Confederation of SAARC Apex Bodies in Sri Lanka, at the closing session of the Seminar on Economic Freedom in South Asia held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 16, 2008.

Hon. Prof. G. L. Peiris, Minister of International Trade and Export Development of the Government of Sri Lanka, Mr. Kosala Wickramanayake, President FCCISL, Mr. Tissa Jayaweera, Vice President FCCISL, and Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General SAARC CCI at the launch lighting ceremony of Seminar on Economic Freedom in South Asia: A springboard for socio-economic development held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 16, 2008.

Deshabandu, Macky Hashim, Past President of SAARC CCI, Sri Lanka, Mr. Sheeraz Tahir, Joint Director, Department of Trade, Bhutan, Mr. Subodh Kumar, Executive Programmes, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, India and Dr. Siromal Abeyratne, Senior Lecturer, Economic Affairs, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka at the working session of the Seminar on Economic Freedom in South Asia held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 16, 2008.

Mr. Subodh Kumar, Executive Programmes, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, India making a presentation at the inaugural session of Seminar on Economic Freedom in South Asia: A springboard for socio-economic development held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 16, 2008.
Special Guest, Mr. Feroz Ahmed, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of Bangladesh, addressing inaugural session of Seminar Trade Facilitation in South Asia on 19th October 2008, Dhaka.

Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary-General, SCCI addressing inaugural session of Seminar Trade Facilitation in South Asia on 19th October 2008, Dhaka.

Mr. Ansarul Haq, President, FBCCI, addressing inaugural session of Seminar Trade Facilitation in South Asia on 19th October 2008, Dhaka.

From left to right: Mr. Kamran Tanvir Rahman, Director, FBCCI; Syed Manzar-ul-Haque, Former Advisor to the caretaker Government of Bangladesh; Mr. Alhajul Islami, FCA, Director, FBCCI; Commodore R.U. Ahmed, MBE; Mr. Aminul Haque, President, FBCCI; Mr. Abul Ahsan Chowdhury, Vice-President, FBCCI; Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary-General, SCCI; Mr. Shahabuddin Mohammad, Secretary General, FBCCI; Mr. Md. Muzibur Rahman, Deputy Secretary, FBCCI; at dinner hosted by Mr. Nasir Hossain, Vice President SCCI. FBCCI on 19th Oct.
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## Upcoming Events

### Bangladesh

**Edim Expo**
- **Start Date:** 20 Nov
- **End Date:** 23 Nov
- **Venue:** Bashundhara Expo Center, Chittagong, Bangladesh

**Bangladesh International Yarn Fabric & Textile Expo - 2008(BIFTE)**
- **Start Date:** 28 Nov
- **End Date:** 30 Nov
- **Venue:** Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre

**Knit+Tex Bangladesh - 2008**
- **Start Date:** 28 Nov
- **End Date:** 30 Nov
- **Venue:** Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, Dhaka

### India

**India International Agri Expo**
- **Start Date:** 31 Oct
- **End Date:** 02 Nov
- **Venue:** Town Hall Cochin, Cochin, Kerala

**Education Worldwide India-Delhi**
- **Start Date:** 01 Nov
- **End Date:** 02 Nov
- **Venue:** Pragati Maidan, New Delhi,
- [http://www.biztradeshows.com/trade-events/eduworldindia_delhi.html](http://www.biztradeshows.com/trade-events/eduworldindia_delhi.html)

**India International Travel Exhibition (IITE-Pune)**
- **Start Date:** 01 Nov
- **End Date:** 03 Nov
- **Venue:** TBA, Pune, Maharashtra

**Oil & Gas India-Mumbai**
- **Start Date:** 06 Nov
- **End Date:** 08 Nov
- **Venue:** TBA Mumbai, Maharashtra

### Nepal

**Security Expo 2008**
- **Start Date:** 20 Nov
- **End Date:** 23 Nov
- **Venue:** Direction Exhibition & Convention Center, Kathmandu

### Pakistan

**Stationary & Educational Material Expo 2008**
- **Start Date:** 20 Nov
- **End Date:** 23 Nov
- **Venue:** Direction Exhibition & Convention Center, Nepal

**Asian Student Fair-Karachi**
- **Start Date:** 08 Nov
- **End Date:** 09 Nov
- **Venue:** Karachi Expo Center, Karachi, Sindh

**International Education Exhibition Pakistan**
- **Start Date:** 08 Nov
- **End Date:** 09 Nov
- **Venue:** Karachi Expo Center, University Road

### Sri Lanka

**Apparel Industry Suppliers Exhibition**
- **Start Date:** 06 Nov
- **End Date:** 08 Nov
- **Venue:** Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), Colombo
- [http://www.biztradeshows.com/trade-events/apparel-industry-suppliers.html](http://www.biztradeshows.com/trade-events/apparel-industry-suppliers.html)

**FASE**
- **Start Date:** 20 Nov
- **End Date:** 22 Nov
- **Venue:** Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, Colombo
- [http://www.biztradeshows.com/trade-events/fase.html](http://www.biztradeshows.com/trade-events/fase.html)
In the Commonwealth study (2008) the telecoms sector commonly emerges as the service sub-sector that experiences the most gains and also contributes significantly to the rest of the economy, indicative of its importance in output and its key role as a producer service input to a wide range of tradable services. The liberalization gains include increased telecom density and traffic volumes, improved profitability and returns on assets, greater efficiency, increased investment, adoption of new technologies, service convergence, and consumer gains due to improved quality, increased access, and reduction in calling rates. Innovation and technological change have also played an important role in shaping these gains. However, there are also challenges that have been common across countries undertaking liberalization of this sector. These challenges pertain to rapid technological developments and the emergence of new segments and opportunities, the presence of multiple operators within the sector, continued government intervention in regulatory decision making, resistance of incumbents to entry of new players, conflicts of interest between regulators and incumbents, and difficulties faced by regulators in balancing commercial objectives and social obligations such as universal service provision. The country studies seem to indicate that the content and process of liberalization and regulatory reform are equally important. Where institutional and regulatory frameworks have been introduced to support the liberalization process, with well-defined functions and objectives, the experience has been more favorable. Where the process has been marked by lack of transparency, absence of independent regulatory oversight, absence of incentives to promote operational efficiency, failure to promote competition in key segments and to define responsibilities across multiple agents who may be involved in regulation, lack of prior planning and clear objectives, and failure to garner domestic stakeholder support, gains have been limited and liberalization has been subject to much debate and criticism. For instance, it has been seen that privatization may not necessarily result in greater competition and could actually formalize the creation of private monopolies if an important prerequisite to effective competition, i.e., non discriminatory access to the telecommunications network is absent. The country experiences underscore the importance of the regulatory set up and its explicit independence from the government, the regulator's ability to balance commercial and social interests as well as the interests of incumbents and new players, and the need to instill confidence among consumers and investors. Another important point that emerges in the telecoms services sector is the impetus that can be provided to the domestic liberalization and regulatory reform process by pre-commitments and adoption of regulatory principles under the WTO.

Of the 1.1 billion mobile subscribers in Asia by March 2007, 245 million of these were to be found in South Asia. The growth of the mobile telephony and data markets across South Asia has been dominated by the strong activity in the more heavily populated countries of the sub-region - India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. There was also surprisingly strong activity in the mobile sector in the strife-torn market of Afghanistan, as a competitive market ensured 100% annual subscriber growth. In fact, all eight countries in South Asia have been experiencing booming mobile markets.
In Afghanistan 2003, the second GSM mobile service in the country was launched, while another two mobile licenses were issued in September 2005. Expansion has continued at around 100% annual growth rate and by early 2007, there were an estimated 2.2 million mobile subscribers. New operator Areeba also had about 250,000 subscribers by early 2007.

Bangladesh ranks among the most densely populated countries on the globe, but its fixed-line tele-density remains the lowest in South Asia. With tele-density at less than 1%, only a relatively small proportion of the population has had access to any telecom facility. Almost 99% of homes lack a telephone and there is a four year waiting list for a fixed-line service. The situation is worse in the rural villages, with more than 90% of Bangladesh's telephone services located in urban areas. This has set the scene for a massive expansion of the country's mobile market. There have been a number of consecutive years of strong growth (138% in 2005, 90% in 2006), and growth was continuing at 100%+ coming into 2007. Mobile penetration was still only 16% (20 million mobile subscribers) by March 2007.

Bhutan has proceeded to invest relatively heavily - to the tune of around US$27 million in telecommunications infrastructure between 1996 and 2002 to provide the country with a modern fixed line network. In late 2003, the country's first mobile service was launched by Bhutan Telecom (b-mobile) and by early 2007 was claiming 64,000 subscribers, giving a mobile penetration of about 3% (ITU reports a higher figure).

India continues to be one of the fastest growing major telecom markets in the world, with Mobile growth being central to the expansion of the sector. The mobile sector has grown from around 10 million subscribers in 2002 to more than 150 million (including both GSM and CDMA services) by early 2007. The growth has been on the back of a mix of higher subscriber volumes, lower tariffs and falling handset prices. Despite the already substantial mobile subscriber base, this represented only around 14% of India's one billion plus population. The telecom regulator, the TRAI, says that the rate of market expansion would increase with further regulatory and structural reform.

In Maldives as well, operating the fixed-line network, Dhiraagu, the country's incumbent telco, has also been operating an extensive mobile service. Dhiraagu's monopoly status was officially set to run out in 2008; but, in 2004, a second mobile licence was issued by the government. The new operator, Wataniya Telecom, launched its service in the second half of 2005. By March 2006, it had signed up 64,000 subscribers. In the meantime, Dhiraagu had also increased its subscriber base to 164,000, having managed to grow by 23% over the previous 12 months. With the increased competition, the overall market had reached an striking 73% penetration by March 2007.

Nepal has been moving steadily towards a more liberalized telecom market. This included the incumbent telco losing its monopoly status in the market. By April 2006, over 170 operators had been authorized to provide a wide range of telecom services, including two for basic telephony and two for the all-important mobile telephone service.

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**Calendar of events**

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<td>1-India - Pakistan Economy Relation</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>12 November</td>
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<td>2-Seminar on Energy &quot;Prospects &amp; Challenges in South Asia&quot;</td>
<td>Karachi</td>
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<td>3-Roundtable On SAFTA</td>
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<td>4-Seminar on Tourism Potential Potential in South Asia</td>
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<td>5-Institutional Building Strategy workshop for SCCI Desk</td>
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Mobile services are provided in the country by two operators - Nepal Telecom and newcomer Spice Nepal. With Spice providing some serious competition to the incumbent, the total mobile subscriber base had reached 600,000 by March 2006 (penetration 2%), after the market had expanded by 100% in 2005. This rate of expansion continued and by March 2007, there were 1.2 million mobile subscribers in the country.

After a period in which the country slowly transitioned from one dominated by a regulated state-owned monopoly to a comparatively deregulated competitive structure, Pakistan's telecom sector had finally begun moving and looked set for an era of phenomenal growth. Pakistan's mobile sector, which had started to grow strongly over the last few years, has been continuing its rapid expansion. After growing by almost 170% in 2005 and 123% in 2006, the mobile subscriber base had reached over 48 million (30% penetration) by early 2007. The government's reform plans were being progressively implemented and this is certainly starting to have some impact on the market. The country's four mobile operators have been joined by two new operators - Warid Telecom and Telenor Pakistan - following a decision by the government to issue two additional mobile licences. Both these new operators became very active in the market. By end-2006, after less than two years operation, Telenor had 6.6 million subscribers and Warid Telecom was claiming 7.6 million.

Sri Lanka has been demonstrating considerable determination in its efforts to develop the country despite its ongoing political problems. With a modern progressive telecommunications sector high on the list, the sector looked to be well positioned for vigorous growth. The country's mobile sector expanded by almost 60% in 2006 and by March 2007 mobile penetration was 30%.

According to Juniper Research, South Asia will be the driving force behind the growth of Mobile WiMax, or the 802.16e standard. WiMAX (a telecommunications technology aimed at providing wireless data over long distances in a variety of ways, from point-to-point links to full mobile cellular type access), Pakistan, being among the first countries in the world to roll-out a functional WiMax service, is experiencing tremendous growth in demand after Wateen Telecom's launch of its WiMax service and roll-out plans announced by Mobilink. India's state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited is rolling out a WiMax network for broadband access in response to government requirement that 20 million broadband lines be in service by 2010. Given the pent-up demand for the Internet access and the ubiquity of mobile phones, WiMax roll-out will likely spur the largest adoption of mobile Internet in South Asia first.