A renowned business leader of Maldives Mr. Ismail Asif took over SAARC CCI Presidency (Page 2)

SAARC CCI delegation Calls on to H.E. Secretary General SAARC (Page 3)

Mr. Macky Hashim, Former President, SAARC CCI, hosted a Lunche (Page 4)

SCWEC Holds its First Meeting in Islamabad. (Page 4)

Iftikhar Malik, Vice President, SAARC CCI (PAK) Inaugurates Maldives Photo Exhibition (Page 5)

Report on Economic integration and trade liberalization in South Asia (Page 8)

Report on Energy crisis... (Page 10)

Direct flight to Bhutan will draw ... (Page 13)

SAARC Snapshot (Page 14)
A renowned business leader of Maldives and the 1st Vice President of Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ismail Asif took over as the President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry for the term 2014-2015 during handover, takeover ceremony organised by Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry at Male, Maldives on Saturday, the 19th April 2014.

Hon’ble Ahmed Adeeb Abdul Ghafoor, Minister for Tourism (Maldives) who was chief guest of the ceremony witnessed and addressed the ceremony ensured fullest support to further strengthen SAARC CCI during the term of Maldives. At this occasion, outgoing and incoming Presidents of SAARC CCI presented their views and expressed determination to further deepen regional cooperation.

Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President of SAARC CCI (Pakistan) nominated for 4th consecutive term offered vote of thanks and felicitated the newly appointed President, Vice Presidents, Executive Committee and General Assembly Members while appreciating the services rendered by Vikramjit Singh Sahney.

After taking over, Ismail Asif stated that SAARC nations are required to adopt innovative strategies to promote intra-regional trade, which was not reflecting its true potential. “We need to realize that how SAARC is seen by rest of the World” said newly elected President of SAARC CCI and added that region needed a lot of groundwork to become centre of gravity in Asian century.

Earlier, Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, the outgoing President and a leading businessman from India while relinquishing his services presented brief report of the activities during his term 2012-13 in the joint session of the 59th and 60th Executive Committee and the 19th General Assembly Meetings. The Committee while greatly appreciating the performance of the outgoing President, approved term report and the annual audit of SAARC CCI along with endorsement of other important decisions taken in 57th, 58th and 59th Executive by General Assembly. The house also appreciated Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General of SAARC CCI for execution of decisions in constitutional framework and his hard work to successfully steer the functioning of the organisation.

The meeting and handover, takeover ceremony was attended by business leaders and representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SAARC CCI delegation from Pakistan was led by former President Tariq Sayeed while Zakria Usman, President FPCCI led 14- members delegation comprising Zubair Ahmed Malik, Immediate Past President FPCCI, Mian Shaukat Ahmed, Snr. Vice President FPCCI and Executive Committee Members i.e. Saifuddin Zoomkawala, Hameed Akhtar Chadda, Fazal Elahi, Shahzada Alam. and Luqman Yehya.

Begum Munawwara Hakum Ali, newly appointed Vice President SAARC CCI led Bangladeshi delegation. Mr. B.K. Bijoria, Mr. Vinod Juneja and Mr. Rakesh Muthra represented India. Dr. Debadi, Dg-FNCCI (Nepal), Tissa Jayaweera newly appointed Vice President and Mr. Kosala Wickramanayake, outgoing Vice President of SAARC CCI represented Sri Lanka while Maldives was represented by Mohammad Rasheed, Vice President, Ismail Noordin and Muhammad Atif.
SAARC CCI delegation Calls on to H.E. Secretary General SAARC

A seven member delegation of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SAARC CCI) comprising President Mr. Ismail Asif, Immediate Past president Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Former President Mr. Padma Jyoti from Nepal, Senior Vice President Mr. Suraj Vaidya, Vice President Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Secretary General Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Tabish called on H.E. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation on May 16, 2014 at SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, Nepal.

President SAARC CCI while presenting his action plan urged for enhanced cooperation in the areas of finance, health, education and tourism in addition to trade and demanded free movement of goods and people to improve cross border trade and investment. He also suggested utilizing influence of media to highlight successful areas under SAARC CCI for its contribution towards promotion of economic activities asked for prioritizing business ties with South Asian enterprises and assured all possible cooperation to SAARC CCI and proactively involve in policy-making process.

Ms. L. Savithri, Director (EFT) said that in some of areas like reduction of sensitive lists, reduction in trade tariffs, SAARC after implementation of SAFTA had performed better than other mechanism at regional and international level.

Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Immediate Past President made a brief presentation on activities undertaken during his term and appreciated the role of SAARC Secretariat in engaging SAARC CCI in policy-making process. He demanded for 500 SAARC Visa Exemption Stickers for businessmen from each member country at a parity of one year to promote economic cooperation.

Mr. Padma Jyoti, Former President SAARC CCI from Nepal asked for Private Sector representation at upcoming SAARC Summit, citing the audience with Ministers of Councils before Summit in 2002 wherein SAARC CCI made a presentation, urging for adoption of Public-Private-Partnership model to tap the economic potential of the region.

Mr. Suraj Vaidya, Senior Vice President SAARC CCI from Nepal requested for exchange of information about SAARC events so that the Private Sector could undertake activities, complementing efforts of the Public sector to deepen regional cooperation.

Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Pakistan informed that SAARC CCI Headquarters Building Project will be started soon and thanked the Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan for fiscal assistance. He expressed confidence that after completion of the project a well-equipped Secretariat would be instrumental to achieving economic objectives of SAARC.

H.E. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General, SAARC while appreciating the regional grouping and hoped that after rectification of agreement on Trade and Services by member countries, cross-border trade and investment will be increased manifold.

Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC CCI informed that organisation was now open for membership of National level chambers/ federations in addition to founder member organizations, which has broaden the scope of representation of the private sector. He presented set of reports and studies undertaken by SAARC CCI.

Mr. Subodh Kumar, Snr. Executive Programs, FNF, from New Delhi, Mr. Anup and Ms. Prabina Pandey, in-charge SARC Desk at FNCCI were also present at the occasion.

Photograph taken at the occasion of courtesy call of SAARC CCI delegation to H.E. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General, SAARC (in the middle) on May 14, 2014. Mr. Ismail Asif, President SAARC CCI, Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Immediate Past President, Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President(Pakistan),SAARC CCI, Mr. Subodh Kumar, Snr. Exe. Programs FNF(Regional Directorate, India), Mr. S.C. Sharma, official of SAARC Sectt.and Ms. Prabina Pandey, In-charge SAARC Desk (FNCCI) are seen on left while Mr. Suraj Vaidya, Snr. Vice President, Mr. Padma Jyoti, Former President, Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC, Mr. Anup from FNCCI, Ms. L. Savithri, Director (EFT) SAARC sect. and Ms. Laila, Member SCWEC from Maldives are on right hand side.
SAARC CCI Activities

Mr. Macky Hashim, Former President, SAARC CCI, hosted a Luncheon in honor of SAARC CCI delegates from Pakistan.

Mr. Macky Hashim, Former President SAARC CCI hosted a Luncheon of SAARC CCI delegates from Pakistan during their visit to Colombo, Sri Lanka on conclusion of SAARC CCI activities in Male, Maldives. The luncheon was attendant by Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, immediate past President, FPCCI and EC Member, Mr. Hameed Akhtar Chadda, Executive Committee Member, Mr. Kosala Wickramanayake, immediate Past Vice President, SAARC CCI (Sri Lanka) and Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Butt, Deputy Secretary General, SAARC CCI.

During the meeting, the member stressed to enhance the role of SAARC CCI to promote economic cooperation of the region. They also appreciated SAARC CCI secretariat for actively involved in promoting economic liberalization in the region through number of activities focused on awareness building on core issues.

SCWEC Holds its First Meeting in Islamabad:

Expanding opportunities for women entrepreneurs in all sectors in the SAARC region and beyond — As part of SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council’s (SCWEC) long-term commitment to increase economic opportunities for women of all SAARC countries and in order to enhance the quality, improve marketing techniques and ensure needs based approach, the first meeting of the council was held in Islamabad on May 8, 2014. Mrs. Shaista Pervaiz Malik, Member National Assembly who assumed the responsibility of Chairperson of SCWEC along with Ms. Hina Mansab Khan as Vice Chairperson SCWEC (Pakistan) during a ceremony held in Lahore during March 2014, presided over the first meeting.

SCWEC was established on March 29, 2001 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with the objective of developing and promoting women entrepreneurs in the South Asian region. The Council works towards facilitating co-operation and networking among the women entrepreneurs of the SAARC region. It is an effective platform for strengthening the intra-regional development of women entrepreneurship for economic development thus helping to exchange information on entrepreneurial skills and building trade links among the women of the SAARC region.
Matters pertaining to expanding opportunities, creating avenues for women and increasing awareness about the council were discussed during the meeting. Executive members of SCWEC including Mrs. Fareeda Eshte (Founder of Illusions), Mrs. Aasia (Chief Executive of Hameeda Begum Industrial Home), Mrs. Tasneem Zahir shah (Entrepreneur from Peshawar), Ms. Sajida Zulfiqar khan (MNA PTI and Owner of Furniture business in Peshawar), Mrs. Fitratth Ilyas Bilour (Entrepreneur from Peshawar and Chairperson Peshawar Women Chamber ), Ms. Ruhi (President Peshawar Women Chamber), Ms. Zubia Zubair (Employee in USaid), Ms. Sana Yahya (Volunteer worker for SCWEC and Managing Director KhuandKai Enterprises) along with other members attended the meeting.

These meetings will be held in all major cities of Pakistan and the next meeting is scheduled to be held in Peshawar, KPK. “We must take this council to new levels so that we form an example in the region and further improve the image of South Asia in the World. We have to work as a team and take along each member within Pakistan and the region in order to create a good and harmonious working environment,” stressed Mrs. Shaista Pervaiz Malik.

SCWEC is committed to the development of women entrepreneurship with tangible goals of increasing business opportunities, building markets, job creation as well as strategic networking and expanding woman run enterprises into mainstream businesses. It is a member based Council.

Iftikhar Malik, Vice President, SAARC CCI (PAK) Inaugurates Maldives Photo Exhibition at Kathmandu

Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President SAARC Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SAARC CCI) inaugurated Maldives Photo Exhibition at Kathmandu. The exhibition was organised by President SAARC CCI Mr. Ismail Asif who is also Vice President of Maldives National Chamber of commerce & Industry at National Art Council Baber Mahal at Kathmandu on May 14, 2014.

Two days exhibition showcased variety of photos of Maldives, featuring picturesque beaches and corals; trade and business of the island country, and the Maldivian culture. It incorporated a tropical feel to the photo exhibition especially as it extensively featured life around the Indian ocean-Arabian sea area, and would transport the viewers to a whole different world of endless water, sand and sun.” said President SAARC CCI while talking to local media at Kathmandu and added that it was an effort to introduce culture of Maldives while presenting the scenic beauty my country had to offer;”

Mr. Malik appreciated the idea of marketing a country with an artistic view and hoped the continuation of such exhibition in all South Asian countries to deepen socio-economic and cultural integration in the region. The Exhibition was also attended by Mr. Ajay Pradhan, Executive Member of SAARC Chamber’s Young Entrepreneurs Council (Nepal), Mr. Subodh Kumar, snr. Program Executive and Ms. Maria from Regional Directorate of FNF, New Delhi and a large number of local artists.

Happiness does not come from doing easy work but from the afterglow of satisfaction that comes after the achievement of a difficult task that demanded our best.

Theodore Isaac Rubin

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.

Colin Powell
Glimpses

Begum Munawwara Hakum Ali, newly appointed Vice President SAARC CCI (Bangladesh) presenting official crest to Hon’ble Ahmed Adeeb Abdul Ghafoor, Minister for Tourism (Maldives) in presence of Ismail Asif, newly elected President of SAARC CCI and Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President, SAARC CCI (Pakistan) and Mr. Azrakhsh Hafezi, representative of ACCI.

(L-R) Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Immediate Past President, SAARC CCI, Hon’ble Ahmed Adeeb Abdul Ghafoor, Minister for Tourism (Maldives) and Mr. Ismail Asif, President (elect) of SAARC CCI and Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President, SAARC CCI (Pakistan) during 61st Executive Committee Meeting of SAARC CCI.

(L-R) Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC CCI, Mr. Shafquat Haider, EC Member SAARC CCI (Bangladesh), Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, EC Members, SAARC CCI (Bangladesh).

(L-R) Mr. Vikramjit Singh Sahney, Immediate Past President, SAARC CCI, Mr. Shoukat Ahmed, EC Member, FPCCI, Hon’ble Ahmed Adeeb Abdul Ghafoor, Minister for Tourism (Maldives), Mr. Zakria Usman, President, FPCCI, Mr. Hameed Akhtar Chadda, EC Member SAARC CCI (Pakistan) and Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik, Immediate Past President, FPCCI and EC Member, SAARC CCI.
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Economic integration and trade liberalization in South Asia:

Thanks to its sustained economic growth over the last several decades, Asia has become the world’s most dynamic region. Maintaining this impressive growth rate, however, requires market integration to ensure the free flow of goods, services, and capital across borders (ADB 2013). Indeed, interplay of market forces and increased participation in trade have been decisive in the growth of emerging Asian economies. Until now, most of Asia’s final goods have been exported to Europe and the United States. Access to large markets allowed Asian countries to exploit their economies of scale on the one hand, and stimulate growth in their productive sectors on the other. With the rise of Asia, it is time for these countries to cooperate and become an integrated market of their own.

Enhancing South Asia market integration:

Like elsewhere in the world, market consolidation through trading arrangements is growing rapidly in Asia. In East Asia’s export-oriented industries, market-led de facto regionalization preceded formal de jure integration. South Asian economies, on the contrary, have been unable to gear up market integration either formally or informally, and the subregion has remained the least integrated, although its geography and comparative advantages hold the potential for a highly integrated trade, investment, and production space (Tewari 2008).

Skeptics have long been doubtful about the potential of a subregional economic grouping among South Asian nations due to the subregion’s sluggish economic activities prior to the 1970s and poor performance in international trade. Import-substituting policies, along with restrictive trade and industrial rules constrained these economies’ subregional and global trade expansion for a long time. In fact, economic integration under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) regime was not explicitly envisaged until as late as the 1990s.

Since the early 1990s, however, several attempts have been initiated to boost South Asian economic integration through a number of trade pacts at the bilateral, subregional, and plurilateral levels. As the umbrella organization in South Asia, SAARC has taken initiatives to enhance integration—the South Asian Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) and the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), and more recently the SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS), which was signed in 2010 (SAARC Secretariat 2004, 2010).

Little has been achieved under these instruments, and barring Afghanistan and Nepal, all the South Asian economies depend heavily on markets outside the region as their export destination. However, this does not mean that intra-subregional trade has declined. Indeed South Asia’s trade with both its subregional and external partners has increased significantly since 1990s, although trade growth with external partners has been faster.

Statistical evidence suggests that intra-subregional trade among SAFTA members is rising slowly and steadily. As indicated in Table 1, South Asia’s intra-subregional trade share increased from 2.7% in 1990 to 4.3% in 2011. Also, Figure 1 provides a comparative picture of intra-subregional trade shares for the member states of SAARC, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and ASEAN+3. It clearly shows that SAARC largely trails the other two in terms of subregional integration. For example, in 2011, SAARC’s intra-subregional trade was only 4.3%, whereas the corresponding figures for ASEAN and ASEAN+3 were 26% and 39%, respectively. SAARC’s share is still very low when compared with corresponding figures from other regions, but the positive trend is clear. As such, policymakers and business communities in South Asia have become increasingly interested in economic integration in South Asia and the potential benefits that may come along with it.

A recent Asian Development Bank Institute working paper (Moinuddin 2013) focuses on the promises that subregional economic integration in South Asia hold. The paper observes that the structure of economies in South Asian countries has changed since the 1970s, when agriculture was the predominant sector in South Asia in terms of share in GDP. Since then, the services sector has grown rapidly and at present accounts for more than half the region’s economy. The manufacturing sector has remained rather weak and has been predominated by the textiles and clothing industry. With industry and agriculture performing below par, South Asia’s services sector
is likely to become the harbinger of the region’s growth paradigm (Nabi et al. 2010).

**SAFTA’s potential in accelerating intraregional trade:**

Several quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted on SAPTA/SAFTA’s potential gains, but the findings have largely remained inconclusive. The critical empirical finding of Moinuddin (2013), which differs from some earlier works, is related to SAFTA’s potential for generating intra-subregional trade. The regression with country-pair panel data took into account the typical gravity variables as well as additional explanatory and dummy variables that were found to be relevant for intra-bloc trade among South Asian economies. This calls for an effective implementation of SAFTA’s trade liberalization program. Against this backdrop, there are reasons for optimism about SAFTA becoming a cohesive and profitable regional trading bloc. South Asian economies, which typically maintain high trade restrictions, will benefit from improved subregional and global integration by reducing trade barriers.

The recently signed SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services entered into force in late 2012, but it is yet to be fully implemented. To reap the benefits of economic integration, the subregion needs to promote liberalization in the services sector, a promising area for a rising South Asia. Additionally, an intra-SAARC investment agreement is likely to create an enabling environment for cooperation beyond mere trade to include investment and finance, among others (SACEPS 2002, Raihan 2012).

**Paving the way for South Asia’s global integration:**

By maintaining the primacy of economic integration, countries of the subregion can expect effective cooperation and integration in South Asia. At the end of the day, SAFTA’s success will be assessed in terms of its trade generating capacities. The potential is already there; it is now a matter of effective implementation of the trade deal. This will entail South Asian countries addressing not only economic factors such as trade facilitation and infrastructure development, but also some non-economic factors like creating political will and building confidence. For this, South Asian economies must conceptualize integration as an evolving process. Indeed, this is reflected in SAARC, which has an explicit intent to move in the direction of an economic union. The growth of the South Asian countries offers prospects and challenges for deeper integration with the global economy, and integration under SAFTA is the first step in that direction.
Tight cooperation needed among Saarc countries for long-term solutions

Bangladesh and its surrounding areas are thought to be rich in energy resources, which remain mainly untapped and unexplored.

Energy consumption in Bangladesh comprises 0.1% of the total world energy. Consumption of commercial energy makes up about half of the total energy consumption, sometimes less than other South Asian countries. The two most important energy-intensive sectors are transport and industries, accounting for around 50% and 43% respectively of the total commercial energy use in the country (EIA, 2001a).

Gas is currently the only indigenous non-renewable energy resource in the country that is produced and consumed in significant amount. Investments in the energy sector constitute a crucial part of a country’s infrastructure. As a developing country, demand of energy supplies increases more rapidly than income growth; therefore, economic growth could be affected adversely.

The gas and power sector accounted for most of the foreign investments that have taken place in Bangladesh during the recent years. Without appropriate investment in the energy sector, other sectors often suffer. The World Bank estimates that load shedding represents about 0.5% loss in GDP and $1bn loss in terms of industrial output per year. Especially, the garment sector of Bangladesh has experienced severe energy problems and therefore had to invest heavily in spare power aggregates. Power shortages can also have serious social consequences. Energy accounts for an important part of the government expenditure, even more than health and family planning. Consequently, donors have spent more than $1bn in the power sector. Most of the population in rural areas do not have access to commercial energy for lighting and cooking, and depend primarily on biomass. Thus, the main challenges before the country are how to provide electricity to domestic and industrial consumers, and broaden access to natural gas at households.

Regional energy market:

Bangladesh and its surrounding areas are thought to be rich in energy resources, which remain mainly untapped and unexplored. North-east India and Myanmar are well-endowed with gas and significant oil reserves. Neighbouring Nepal and Bhutan also enjoy a huge, largely untapped hydro-electricity potential. Economic and population growth has led to rapid increases in commercial energy consumption in South Asia, well above the rate of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

It has been observed that energy consumption in the region has increased by 60% since 2000 till date. South Asia’s commercial energy mix is as follows: coal (43%), petroleum (35%), natural gas (13%), hydroelectricity (8%) and nuclear (1%).

The commercial energy mix in Bangladesh is much depended on natural gas (78%) while India depends on coal (51%). Bangladesh has huge coal reserve in its northern part. However, due to lacking of finalising the coal policy, it can’t be developed yet. South Asian consumption of energy per capita is estimated at 443kgoe (kilograms of oil equivalent), with India having the highest at 479kgoe and Bangladesh the lowest at 197kgoe. Bangladeshi consumption and production of commercial energy is even lower compared to the low South Asian regional standards. Per capita electricity consumption in Bangladesh is a paltry 120kWh, compared to around 423 and 319kWh for India and Pakistan, and 600kWh for Bhutan. The low energy intensities reflect a widespread use of traditional biomass by the rural population and an underdeveloped industrial structure.

Regional cooperation:

Energy endowments include coal (mainly India, partly Bangladesh), gas (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and hydropower (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal). There are no technical or economic reasons to prevent the development of bilateral or regional agreements to utilise these resources more effectively and contribute towards the creation of a regional energy hub or an economic growth zone (Sobhan, 1999). Energy demands in Bangladesh and India is estimated to increase by 8.5% and 6.5% per year respectively according to the study by Pesaran et al (1998:167). The economic and technical advantages of a regional electricity and gas grid or pipeline are many. It ensures greater supply security and reliability, reduces the reserves needed for meeting peak demands, lower costs through economies of scale, increases diversification of primary sources of energy and contributes to overall efficiency.
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The formation of a Saarc committee (Technical Committee on Energy) is a small step in the right direction. The prospect of an inter-regional electricity grid has also been put on Saarc's agenda. In Asia, electricity trade occurs between a few interconnected countries: between Thailand and Laos, Indonesia and Singapore, Vietnam and Laos, and China and Hong Kong. It is under consideration between Thailand and Malaysia. An Asean electricity grid has also been discussed. Recently, Bangladesh has done a good job with India for interconnection of electricity. Bangladesh struck a bilateral agreement with India for enhancing power production. Under this agreement, Bangladesh will purchase 500MW electricity from India at the end of this year. Besides this, Bangladesh and India have undertaken a mega coal-based power plant at Rampal near the Sundarbans with the capacity of around 1,300MW.

Barriers for regional cooperation Saha (1998) has identified five types of interrelated barriers that hinder regional cooperation in energy: barriers related to policy, technical, institutional, commercial and financial issues. Among these, political barriers may prove to be the most intractable. Fundamentally, experts opined that there remains considerable distrust and sensitivities amongst the countries of the region, which must first be overcome.

Energy security and the role of Nepal and Bhutan

Nepal is primarily depended on hydroelectricity, in which, it has a huge potential, as indicated by an annual average flow of 225bn cubic metres. In terms of hydropower potential, Nepalese rivers have been graded into three categories, based on their origins. Those originated from the Himalayas have the highest potential. In category 3 are the seasonal rivers with the least potential. Category 1 and 2 rivers are thought to have a combined technical potential for generating 83,000MW, of which around half is economically feasible. Projected power demand of Nepal for 2005 was estimated 622MW.

A number of projects are under development and mainly aimed for export around 18,000MW. In the case of Bhutan, the technically-feasible hydroelectricity potential is around 21,000MW, of which only 334MW is now being generated. Steps have been taken to unbundle the electricity sector and plans are underway to commission large power plants. This will allow Bhutan to undertake additional exports to India. Power Grid Corporation of India awarded a contract to a Japanese firm to provide technical consulting services for the supply of electricity from Bhutan to New Delhi along a 1,116-mile-route.

Given the far closer proximity to Bangladeshi urban-industrial centres, exports to Bangladesh may be economically viable in the long run. India, Nepal and Bhutan are likely to be the most relevant for Bangladesh in its endeavour to chalk out a regional energy strategy. Nepal and Bhutan are endowed with considerable hydroelectricity potential and could compete with Bangladesh in the regional export market for power. On the other hand, India is looking to augment its sources of energy and is eyeing Bangladeshi gas along with possible pipeline gas from Iran (via Pakistan) and LNG from the UAE. As far as Bangladesh is concerned, India represents a potential market for power and gas.

So, from the commercial point of view, energy demand scenarios in India need to be carefully analysed by the Bangladeshi policymakers. Similarly, Bangladesh also needs to focus on potentially energy-rich Nepal and Bhutan to explore the possibilities for a regional approach to energy security. The energy resource base in Myanmar and Northeast India is also considerable; Bangladesh will need to keep these in mind while formulating its energy development strategy. A more enlightened approach may well be, to link up with the Myanmar gas pipeline, which goes all the way to Thailand, thus providing access to SE Asia. So, it is keen to build up a tight cooperation between the Saarc countries that can be very helpful to reduce the energy deviation in these countries.
After a two-year gap, travellers planning to visit Bhutan from Mumbai will now be able to fly direct to the Himalayan country. Drukair, the national carrier of Bhutan, on Thursday operated a new commercial service from the commercial capital to the city of Paro.

“This service will operate twice weekly,” a Drukair official said, and added that there is also a special discount on this sector. Hitherto, travellers had to take the flight to Bhutan from Delhi, Kolkata or Bagdogra.

The launch of the direct service from Mumbai was delayed repeatedly as Drukair could not give a definitive schedule of the operation, said sources at Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport (CSIA).

50-leaf-electric-cars-due-by-early June in Bhutan:
About one out of three of these will be secondhand vehicles mostly to be used as taxis. About 50 Nissan Leaf electric cars will arrive in the country by the second week of June, out of which about 20-30 percent of the cars are used or secondhand.

Bhutan is seeking to purchase internet bandwidth from Bangladesh.
Bhutan's ambassador to Bangladesh, H.E Pema Choden, made this request when she met with the Bangladeshi foreign affairs state minister, Shariar Alam. The Bangladeshi government in February this year decided to sell or “export” half the country’s bandwidth to any country in the region, given that it was hardly using any of it.

The Bangladesh Submarine Cable company maintains an undersea cable to a connection point to the internet in Europe. The SEA-NE-WE 4 (South East Asia-Middle East-Western Europe) cable has a bandwidth of 200Gbps (gigabits per second), but only 40Gbps is used by Bangladesh.

In response to ambassador Pema Choden’s request, Mr Alam said that necessary steps would be taken, according to Bangladeshi media. The move is a part of the government's effort to establish a third international link to the internet. The country currently has only two links to the internet, one through Gelephu and the other through Phuentsholing. But both converge in the Indian city of Siliguri, which means Bhutan lacks true redundancy or back up connectivity to the internet, according to experts in the IT industry.

Global Warming:
National Environment Commission (NEC) officials say, with negligible emissions Bhutan is not responsible for climate change, but it will, do its part to combat it, as would any responsible member of global community. The fragile mountainous landscape and least developed country status make the country more vulnerable to climate change.

“The impact of climate change would hit the rural poor the hardest,” senior environment officer with NEC, Sonam Lhaden Khandu said during a conference on rural livelihoods and climate change adaptation in the Himalayas, adding Bhutan is not responsible but it is vulnerable. Presenting adaptation to climate change in Bhutanese context to journalists and academicians in College of Natural Resources (CNR), Sonam Lhaden Khandu said some of the current vulnerabilities are glacial lake outburst floods, land degradation, landslides, erosion due to changes in weather patterns, high intensity rainfall, flashfloods, intense rainfall periods, cyclones, droughts, drying water sources due to temperature rise, and longer intervals between rains.
Pakistan is an ‘open field’ of opportunity for Investors:

Zubair Ahmed Malik of the Federation of Pakistan’s Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) can put potential investors in touch with the right local partners:

Through thick and thin, the FPCCI has served as the collective voice of the private sector since 1950, offering advice to the government in export promotion, and in encouraging foreign investment and stimulating greater economic activity.

FPCCI represents the Pakistani private sector. We definitely do appreciate the difficult economic conditions under which this government has taken over. The private sector is willing to help the government overcome these hardships, provided that there are some policies. We see light at the end of the tunnel. They will have all our support.

How does FPCCI and the state help foreign investors?

Pakistan has one of the best investment climates in this area. There is no limit on equity – you can have 100 per cent equity. Nor is there a limit on repatriation of capital in this country. Whatever you want, you can take it away. You do not need a local partner.

You can use the best infrastructure, minus energy. Otherwise, infrastructure is readily available here. We have specialised economic zones where one can come and invest in industry.

What are the main economic sectors that could attract more capital investment?

Energy is one. We have the third largest coal reserves in the world, but they are not being exploited. We would like companies to come in and invest in those coal reserves. They can generate energy as well.

We have one of the best copper mine reserves in Balochistan and we have the gold mine. We also have precious stones such as emeralds, topaz and other precious stones, as well as the best granite and marble in the world, but we do not have the equipment to mine it properly.

I think Pakistan is a very open field. Each and every area offers ample opportunities.

As it stands, remittances are the largest foreign exchange earner today. I say that migration is the wealth of a nation. Nearly one-third of NASA and Microsoft technicians come from the sub-continent, including India and Pakistan. Last year we had about $15 billion from remittances.

Where do you see the Pakistani private sector and the economy in general heading?

This government and the previous one gave us policies, which were very conducive to the development of the private sector in Pakistan. The question arises as to why the Pakistani economy has gone down. The dictatorship of the last nine years means that we are paying the price today. On face value, the economy was good, because the dollars were flowing in because of the war on terror. However, specific sectors were not developed over that period – such as energy. This is a basic requirement for the development of any industrial country.

As FPCCI President, Zubair Ahmed Malik keeps a finger on the pulse of Pakistan’s economy and is optimistic that the recent peaceful democratic transition will bring positive global attention back to his country, which could make greater and faster socio-economic strides with the help of the international investing community.

Note:
Mr. Zubair Ahmed Malik was interviewed when he was President of FPCCI in month of Jan, 2014, However published later-on in a special supplement by “UPPER Reach” distributed with “THE TIMES”.

“Simple, genuine goodness is the best capital to found the business of this life upon. It lasts when fame and money fail, and is the only riches we can take out of this world with us.”

Louisa May Alcott, Little Men

“There are roads which must not be followed, armies which must not be attacked, towns which must not be besieged, positions which must not be contested, commands of the sovereign which must not be obeyed.”

Sun Tzu, The Art of War
Established in December 1992, South Asian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SAARC CCI) serves as apex organization of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, mandated to promote economic cooperation in the region.

The year 2014 will be a landmark in the history of SAARC CCI, bringing in its fold the commencement of SAARC CCI Headquarters Building Project to further strengthen and up grad its permanent Headquarters at Islamabad- the capital city of Pakistan. The project is supported by all National Chambers of South Asia region and boasts of excellent contribution made by corporate houses from across South Asia particularly from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India and from other countries.

After accomplishment of pre-construction phase, this architectural masterpiece of the 21st century is ready for construction at its location Plot No. 26, Mauve Area, G-10/4, Islamabad. The project is well equipped of Energy efficient systems, spaces, security and safety features and have been well planned to execute the start of construction.

Mandated by SAARC CCI Building Trust, the leadership of FPCCI, Mr. Tariq Sayeed, founder and former President SAARC CCI and Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President of SAARC CCI, is making earnest endeavours to accomplish this task.

**Salient Features of the Building**

- The building will provide state of the art facilities, having central air-conditioning and heating system
- The structure will be basement+Ground+Mezzanine+1st Floor to 9th Floor for office use
- 9th Floor will have an auditorium with seating capacity of 256 participants and conference rooms
- It is located at a central and ideal place of Islamabad surrounded by many important government and on the way to future Islamabad airport
- The building will be RCC frame building.
- The size of the building is approximately 160ftx70ft, having covered area of about 1,60,000 sq. ft.
- The maximum grid/column spacing is 25ftx24ft. The loading on columns will be in the range of 2000-2400 Kips.
- The maximum height of the building is about 128 feet above natural ground level.
- World class parking facilities will be available.

This project offers tremendous opportunities for offices on rental for multinational, Banks, Insurance companies, corporate house and members of SAARC CCI to wish to establish their offices in this magnificent building.

SAARC CCI welcomes any offer regarding the completion of the project from any interested organization based mutual consent. The interested parties may contact Mr. Iftikhar Ali Malik, Vice President SAARC CCI or Mr. Iqbal Tabish, Secretary General, SAARC CCI at our official address and contact Numbers.