



South Asian University

New Delhi



- The South Asian University is an ambitious and visionary idea holding great promise. It is perhaps the largest single regional project that SAARC nations have attempted. The objective is to collectively create an academic institution that none of the SAARC nations could have done individually – a **“world-class university”**.
- The idea was first proposed by the Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh at the 13th SAARC Summit in Dhaka in November 2005. In his words:

“Wherever an enabling environment and world class facilities are made available to our talented peoples, they excel. My suggestion to you is, why cannot we as seven member countries, pool our resources to create a center of excellence, in the form of a South Asian University...”

- In April 2007, the formal Agreement for Establishment of South Asian University was signed by all eight Foreign Ministers (by then, Afghanistan had joined SAARC as the eighth Member State).
- The broad objectives of the South Asian University are:
 - ✓ **To enhance learning in the South Asian community that promotes an understanding of each other’s perspectives and strengthens regional consciousness;**
 - ✓ **To provide liberal and humane education to the brightest and the most dedicated students of South Asia so that a new class of quality leadership is nurtured; and**
 - ✓ **To enhance capacity of the South Asian nations in science, technology and other areas of higher learning vital for improving their quality of life.**
- The scale of the project required intense efforts at conceptualizing the contours and structure of the University. These efforts - involving

academics, experts and governments of all 8 countries – went on for three years and were successfully concluded in 2010.

- The SAU began its academic operations in August 2010 with 50 students in 2 programmes – **M.A. (Development Economics)** and **Master of Computer Applications (MCA)**. Students from 6 SAARC nations enrolled in this first year, with the faculty and staff drawn from 4 SAARC nations.
- Exponential growth is planned from the academic year 2011-12, when 5 new programmes will be introduced – **M.Sc. (Biotechnology), M.Sc. (Computer Science), MA (Sociology), MA (International Relations) and LLM**. Intake of **PhD** students is also planned. The student strength is expected to reach 200-250. More programmes will be introduced from 2012-13 onwards.
- At the end of the first five years, the SAU will have 3000 students and 300 teachers, with 11 post-graduate Faculties (4 science and 7 non-science), a small Faculty of Undergraduate Studies, and an Institute of South Asian Studies which is expected to become a premier think-tank focusing on issues and challenges facing South Asia. Subsequently, Faculties of Engineering and Medicine will be added. The final strength of the University is planned at 7000 students and 700 teachers.
- **The SAU will largely focus on post-graduate teaching and research across a wide spectrum of disciplines. Creating a “South Asian regional consciousness” is a core objective that will be built into all programmes.**
- Students at SAU are to be drawn from all 8 SAARC nations, in proportion to their population, but with a minimum of 4% for each country and not more than 50% for the host India. The education is heavily subsidized to ensure easy access and affordability to all; **the tuition fee has been fixed at a modest \$440 per semester or \$880 per year.**
- Substantial **scholarships** are on offer, both from the University and the Government of India. **Work-earn programmes** also allow students to offset some of their cost of living.

- 10% of the students can be from non-SAARC countries; they will pay tuition fees on full-recovery basis (at present approx. \$ 8500 per annum).
- The teachers and higher administrative functionaries will largely be drawn from SAARC countries, though some of them could be from other parts of the world as well. To attract good talent, substantial tax-free salaries are being offered to teachers, considerably higher than national/South Asian norms.
- **The Main Campus of the SAU is coming up in New Delhi**, for which a 100-acre plot has already been acquired. The Campus will be a state-of-the-art facility costing almost \$ 250 million which will be borne entirely by India. Most of the operational cost of the University will be shared by the 8 SAARC Member States, at least for the first five years. Over time, the SAU is expected to become a self-sustaining university with extensive PPP models and linkages with industry.
- Other SAARC Member States will have the option of setting up **SAU Regional Campuses** in their own territories in due course of time.
- The atmosphere sought to be created at the SAU will be intellectually-intense. The expected long-term benefits arising from investment in this University include enhanced regional cooperation, better understanding of each other's points of view and a greater readiness to jointly tackle the plethora of common problems shared by the SAARC countries.

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