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Leadership in SAARC to make reality of proposed SAU stressed

Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a dialogue on Tuesday stressed the need for a governmental leadership in the region of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to make into reality the proposed South Asian University (SAU).

Held at city's CIRDAP auditorium, the dialogue was jointly organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS). CPD's Chairman Professor Rehman Sobhan chaired it.

Professor Gowher Rizvi presented the key note paper, "The Concept and an Outline Plan for a South Asian University".

The speakers observed that the drawbacks in having such an international university in the region are lying not with funding issues but with non-coexistence of harmony in the block's countries.

Fickhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Caretaker Government said that

each and every country of the SAARC block should be willing to reach a harmonised position to turn the dream into a reality.

Former education minister Dr. Osman Faruque echoed the same view and said that the funds would not be the big problems. There are many donors in the world for such venture. He also recommended for government generosity in the SAARC countries.

Academicians, including Professor Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University recommended the proposed university to be of graduate and Ph.D level. About its location they suggested a single campus which would be the centre of nucleus.

Professor Gowher in his key-note paper said that the success of any institution of higher education depends on two attributes: a clearly defined mission and a well-thought out academic programme. "In knowledge-based society of the 21st century, the proposal to create a new centre of excellence in the form of a South Asian University is self-evident," said the paper, adding, "Highlighting the success of institutions like Indian Institute of Management or Lahore University of Management Sciences in propelling their graduates as a globally sought after managers he said, if evidence were required, of the importance and necessity of building more first rate world class institutions."

"To create a world class institution of learning that will bring together the brightest and the most dedicated students from all countries of South Asia, both the women and men irrespective of their caste, creed or economic and social backgrounds should be imparted liberal and humane education to give them the analytical tools needed for the pursuit of a profession," he said in the paper.

On the location of the proposed SAU, he said that in determining the location, the choice is firmly de-linked from questions of politics, sentiments, expedience or short term convenience. "The choice must solely be determined by how best the objective of the university," he pointed out.

He concluded by saying that "the university must be non-political, non-profit and non-sectarian, financially self-sustaining, autonomous and it will work under the direction of an eminent board of trustees."