

Summit on Legal Education vis-a vis Social Development in the SAARC Region held during March 28-29 organized by the Indian Institute of Legal Studies.

REPORT

The Summit was conceived, planned and co-ordinated under the stewardship and leadership of Mr. Joyjit Choudhury, Chairman, Indian Institute of Legal Studies. The aim and objective of the Summit were to reform, innovate, reorient and to cause a paradigm shift in the methodologies in place towards creating legal professionals in each SAARC country to meet the unfolding challenges in economic and social development. Yet another intent was to sensitize the countries for initiating dialogue among them for establishment of a SAARC Law University which will provide teaching-learning and research infrastructure of international standard taking into account the need for harmonisation of curricula but with due importance to the imperatives of distinctiveness of the respective countries.

The Summit was structured into four Technical Sessions. The Speakers in these Sessions were Vice-Chancellors and senior Professors of Law Universities and allied Institutes of National Importance.

The Inaugural Session of the Summit held on March 28 at 2 pm was attended by the following dignitaries :

1. Hon'ble Mr. Justice S.K. Sripavan, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka

(President of the Session). His Lordship was so gracious as to accept the invitation despite other pressing engagements in a very busy schedule and travelled all the way from Colombo to ILS for attending the programme.

2. Hon'ble Mr. Justice Pinaki Ch.Ghose, Judge, Supreme Court of India (Chief Guest of the Session). We are extremely indebted to His Lordship for responding to the invitation with keen interest by keeping aside his other engagements and travelled from New Delhi to ILS just to participate in the event.

3. Hon'ble Mr. Justice Abdul Salam Azimi, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Afghanistan (Special Guest of Honour). In the face of severe odds, His Lordship was extremely benevolent to accept the invitation in appreciation of importance of the Theme of the Summit and travelled from a far away place like Kabul to ILS.

4. Hon'ble Mr. Justice Biswanath Somadder, Judge, Calcutta High Court (Special Guest of Honour).

5. Justice Mr. Justice Lungten Dubgyur, Judge, High Court of Bhutan (Special Guest of Honour).

6. Mr. G.S. Chandel, YSM, GOC, 33 Corps, Sukna (Special Guest of Honour).

7. Mr. T.B.Ghimire, Joint Attorney General, Govt. of Nepal (Special Guest of Honour).

8. Mr. Joyjit Choudhury, Chairman, Indian Institute of Legal Studies.

The inaugural session was presided by Mr. Justice S.K. Sripavan, Chief Justice of Sri Lanka. Mr. Justice Pinaki Ch.Ghose, Judge, Supreme Court of India graced the session as the Chief Guest .



(Mr. Joyjit Choudhury, Chairman, Indian Institute of Legal Studies presenting the Welcome Address.)

Mr. Joyjit Choudhury, Chairman, Indian Institute of Legal Studies, delivered the Welcome Address. While welcoming all the dignitaries for their kind and gracious presence in the Summit , Mr. Choudhury stressed on the needs to work towards intensive academic exchange among the institutions which are imparting legal education in SAARC countries in tertiary level with a view to ensure prosperity of the region. He emphasized that law being the fundamental building block of any modern and progressive society is the instrument for fostering regional co-operation and socio-economic growth. To this end, Mr. Choudhury requested the dignitaries on the dias and other delegates to consider the imperatives of setting up of a SAARC Law University and highlighted the importance of Siliguri as the appropriate location since Siliguri shares border with three SAARC countries, namely, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.



(Inaugural Session : Sitting from left : Mr. Justice Lungten Dubgyur, Mr. Joyjit Choudhury, Mr. Justice Biswanath Somadder, Mr. Justice Pinaki Ch.Ghosh, Mr. Justice S.K. Sripavan, Mr. Justice Abdul Salam Azimi and Mr. G.S. Chandel.).

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose, Judge, Supreme Court of India and the Chief Guest delivered the Keynote Address. Mr. Justice Ghose tracked the emergence of SAARC in a historical perspective and stated that SAARC is a regional organization for socio- economic development of eight South Asian countries, namely, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afganistan, Maldive,Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan. SAARC serves as a platform for these countries to work together in a spirit of friendship, trust and co-operation to accelerate economic and social development in this region. He emphasized that education in general and legal education in particular is the most essential instrument for socio-economic development and, therefore, it is extremely important to focus on strengthening legal education in the SAARC countries. Justice Ghose agreed with Mr. Choudhury, Chairman, Indian Institute of Legal Studies that a SAARC Law University has the potential to become a nodal centre for providing quality legal education and produce legal professionals with international benchmarks. Justice Ghose hoped that this Summit will be a launch pad for the SAARC Law University. He conveyed his best wishes to Mr. Choudhury for his efforts in mobilising legal experts of the SAARC countries, expressed hope that the Summit will be concluded successfully and its report will be sent to the Heads of Govts. of SAARC countries in due course.

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Abdul Salam Azimi , Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Afganistan had graced the occasion as Special Guest of Honour. In his address Mr. Justice Azimi narrated the difficult situation prevailing in Afganistan which a war-torn country also bleeding with terrorism unleashed on the Govt. and society by the Taliban. He described his personal efforts to set up the judiciary in various levels and streamline the judicial system in the war-ravaged country. His Lordship

stressed that Afganisthan really needs to learn from India and other SAARC countries and thereby be exposed to quality legal education for producing competent legal professionals towards creating the judicial framework of a creative modern society. He conveyed his best wishes on his own behalf and on behalf of his country to success of the Summit.



(Mr. Justice Abdul Salam Azimi delivers his Address).

Other dignitaries of the inaugural session, namely, Mr. Justice Biswanath Somadder, Judge, Calcutta High Court, Justice Mr. Justice Lungten Dubgyur, Judge, High Court of Bhutan, Mr. G.S. Chandel, YSM, GOC, 33 Corps, Sukna and Mr. T.B.Ghimire, Deputy Attorney General of Nepal addressed the audience.



(Inauguration of the Summit by Lighting of Lamp : from left : Justice S.K Sripavan, Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose and Mr. Joyjit Choudhury)

Hon'ble Justice S.K Sripavan, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Sri Lanka presented the Presidential Address. His Lordship enlightened the dignitaries in the audience about the role played by SAARC towards comprehensive socio-economic development not only in the respective countries but in South Asia as a whole. He mentioned that SAARC is a model of regional co-operation based on the principles of peaceful co-existence and mutually beneficial co-operation in trade, business, tourism, education and cultural exchanges. Justice Sripavan also referred to the procedures regulating the functioning of SAARC and in this context deliberated on the ways and means of setting up a Centre of Legal Education like SAARC Law University through processes of dialogue among the stakeholders.

The Summit unanimously adopted a Resolution that a SAARC Law University should be established at the earliest opportunity to which task the Indian Institute of Legal Studies will consider it an honour to extend all co-operation to achieve the objective. It was also resolved to request the competent authorities to include this issue in the Agenda of the upcoming SAARC Summit at Kathmandu, Nepal by the end of 2015.

