



SAARC Charter Day

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Why in News

In a message to the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** on its **36th Charter Day** anniversary, the Prime Minister said that SAARC can only be fully effective in the absence of “terror and violence”.

SAARC Charter Day is **observed annually on 8th December**. This day marks the **signing of the SAARC Charter in 1985** by the leaders of SAARC Countries at the **First SAARC Summit held in Dhaka (Bangladesh)**.

Key Points

- **India’s Stand:**

- The full potential of SAARC can only be realised in an atmosphere free of terror and violence.
 - This indicates that **India’s concerns over cross-border terrorism from Pakistan remain a primary obstacle** in India’s participation in the summit.
 - In their messages, both Pakistan and Nepal called for the SAARC summit to be held soon.
- India also called for SAARC countries to **“recommit to defeating the forces that support and nurture terrorism.”**
- India is also **committed to** an “integrated, connected, secure and prosperous South Asia”, and will support the economic, technological, cultural and social development of the region.
- Highlighting the importance of **greater collaboration**, India referred to the **example of the early coordination between SAARC countries for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic**.

An **emergency Covid-19 fund** was created with an initial contribution of USD 10 million from India.

- **Stalled SAARC Process:**
 - SAARC’s functioning and activities have virtually stalled **because of the strained relations between India and Pakistan.**
 - Besides **a virtual meeting in March** on the Covid-19 situation, SAARC **hasn’t had any significant engagements since India pulled out of the summit** that was to be held in Pakistan in 2016 in the aftermath of the Uri terror attack.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

- **Eight Member States:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- **Secretariat:** Kathmandu (Nepal).
- **Objective:** To promote the welfare of the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life, and to accelerate economic growth, among other things.
- **SAARC Summits:**
 - These are **usually held biennially** and **hosted by** member states in **alphabetical order.**
 - The **last SAARC Summit in 2014** was held in Kathmandu (Nepal), which was attended by India.



Way Forward

- SAARC Charter reflects the region’s “shared vision, collective resolve and mutual pursuit to promote peace, stability and prosperity in South Asia through eradication of poverty, accelerated economic growth and advancement in socio-cultural development”.
- There is a need for greater regional cooperation today than ever before. To collectively emerge from the pandemic, the situation underlines the importance of more concerted efforts, collaboration and cooperation among the member states of SAARC.

Source: TH