CHAPTER – V

THE ISLAMABAD SUMMIT

At the Kathmandu summit in November 1987, the SAARC leaders had decided that the next summit would be held in Colombo. However, at the meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers held in Kathmandu in August 1988, Sri Lanka had expressed its inability to host the fourth summit due to domestic unrest over the Tamil issue. The SAARC Council of Ministers appreciated the situation in Sri Lanka and welcomed Pakistan’s offer to host the fourth summit in December 1988. Accordingly, the fourth SAARC summit was held on 29-30 December 1988 in Islamabad.¹

The political climate in South Asia at the time of the fourth SAARC summit was very propitious unlike the previous summits. This new and changed situation had emerged especially because of the establishment of a democratically elected government in Pakistan and India’s sympathetic attitude towards it.² Relations between India and Nepal had improved as a result of a number of agreements concluded since the Nepalese King Birendra’s visit to New Delhi which in turn expanded the flow of goods and goodwill between Nepal and India. An Indo-Bangladesh task force had been trying hard to find out ways and means of protecting the people of Bangladesh from the annual devastation of floods by common action. President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of Maldives visited New Delhi to personally thank the government and people of India for the timely help provided by India to save his country from an invasion of hired mercenaries.³ In Sri Lanka, a new President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, came into power who enjoyed the people’s

¹. The Hindustan Times, 13 August 1988.
². On 16 November 1988, general elections were held in Pakistan. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) emerged from the general elections as the largest party and formed the government.
³. In November 1988, a group of about 400 mercenary Tamil guerrillas attempted a coup in Male to overthrow the government in Maldives headed by Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. Gayoom asked for help from different SAARC countries as well as from the U.S.A. and U.K. India was the first country to respond immediately to Gayoom’s distress call and sent military help to Maldives to combat the coup.
mandate to heal the island’s bleeding wounds. Nevertheless, the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Pakistan was the outstanding event of the year and as an inevitable outcome of this change in the political history of Pakistan, everyone expected that an important breakthrough would be achieved in Indo-Pakistan relations.

**Preparatory Course of the Islamabad Summit**

The SAARC has its own preparatory course. Initially, the Foreign Secretaries of the seven countries hold a meeting to draw up a draft agenda. Next, it is the turn of the Foreign Ministers to ponder over it in course of their meeting and after due deliberations, suggest an agreed table of topics to the leaders of SAARC. In case they fail to arrive at a unanimous decision on any particular issue, they refer it to the summit for discussion and decision. This well-established preparatory process, in case of Islamabad summit started immediately after Rajiv Gandhi’s return from China in 1988.

The first phase of preparation commenced with the holding of the meeting of the Programme Committee on 25 December 1988. The members of the Programme Committee approved the calendar of activities for the coming year and took into consideration eight new proposals for setting up regional institutions. Both India and Pakistan suggested four proposals each. Khaled Mahmood, who had chaired the two-day meeting of the Programme Committee, stated that the Committee had decided to postpone a proposal for setting up a SAARC arts gallery and a SAARC crafts gallery.

The Programme Committee had trimmed the calendar of activity by about fifty per cent to ensure selectivity and effective participation by the member-states of SAARC. The committee also suggested that in the field of SAVE, member countries should put greater emphasis on economic, technical and

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4. On 20 December 1988, Ranasinghe Premadasa of the ruling United National Party (UNP) was elected as the President of Sri Lanka for a six-year term after a tight contest with his main rival, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP).
social themes, such as agriculture and drug-trafficking. With this, the decks were cleared for the second stage of the fourth SAARC summit which began with the holding of the Standing Committee meeting of the seven Foreign Secretaries.

The seven SAARC Foreign Secretaries started their two-day meeting on 26 December 1988 to make their suggestions for the declaration which would be ultimately adopted at the summit meeting. The entire proceedings of the SAARC Foreign Secretaries meeting had witnessed a wide gap between the perception of India and that of some of the smaller countries in the region. During the deliberations of the meeting, sharp divergence of opinion between India and Bangladesh arose on Dhaka's proposal to internationalise flood control measures and set up multi-sectoral investment institutions. Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, Mohammad Mohsin, stated that the suggestion made by India for initiating a study on the causes and consequences of natural disasters was not sufficient and more practical forms of collective regional approaches were necessary. India strongly opposed the idea of establishing a multi-sectoral investment facility as mooted by Bangladesh. However, the idea received support from Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan. Despite this, the Foreign Secretaries assessed the magnitude and impact of natural calamities in the region in 1988. They also called for an expeditious regional action plan on natural disasters and protection and preservation of environment in view of the devastating floods in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, severe damages arising out of earthquakes in Nepal and India and the rising sea-level around Maldives.

The Foreign Secretaries during the course of their meeting had worked sincerely on ways to promote people-to-people contact in the region through

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7. Ibid.
8. In view of India's large size, vast population and relatively rich natural resources, the smaller countries of SAARC always opposed any move by India without judging the pros and cons of it. This is mainly because the smaller neighbours always apprehended India's hegemonistic designs in any proposal offered by it.
greater communication facilities and easier travel on concessional rates.\textsuperscript{10} Foreign Secretaries of the SAARC countries had unanimously approved a perspective SAARC-2000 regional plan which intended to provide for basic necessities of human life but rejected more or less half-a-dozen proposals for regional centres because of their non-viability and financial constraints. Endorsing the suggestion of SAARC planners for the perspective plan, India’s Foreign Secretary, K. P. S. Menon, realised that it could provide a useful benchmark for progress and as a guide for more ambitious long-term actions.\textsuperscript{11} Bangladesh Foreign Secretary, Mohammad Mohsin, stated that the planners had opened up crucial new avenues for advancing regional cooperation within a medium and long-term perspective framework. Bhutan had asked for using greater discretion in selecting regional activities to make them more beneficial.

K.P.S. Menon, in his statement referred to the sensitive trade and jointventure proposals. Appreciating the progress made by the SAARC secretaries to strengthen cooperation in the region, Menon had announced a Rs. 20 million financial help from India to the SAARC programme of activities for the period 1989-90.\textsuperscript{12} Taking note of the fact that the SAVE had operated without being interrupted for over a year, the Foreign Secretary declared that the special SAARC quiz programme produced by India would be in the air next February.\textsuperscript{13} A Working Group had been set up by the Standing Committee to go into the details of the draft of the Islamabad declaration.

At the Foreign Ministers’ meeting, the then India’s External Affairs Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao, urged the SAARC countries to initiate a bolder and more ambitious phase of cooperation.\textsuperscript{14} Addressing the sixth session of the

\textsuperscript{10} That tourism played a crucial role in the fulfilment of the goals prescribed by the SAARC Charter was duly recognised by the Foreign Secretaries’ meeting in Islamabad. Several restrictions, inconveniences and high transport rates had acted as impediments in the free movement of people from one SAARC country to the other.


\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Patriot}, 27 December 1988.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{The Telegraph}, 28 December 1988.
SAARC Council of Ministers, he said what was needed now was “to emerge from the twilight of hesitation into the confident dawn of full-fledged regional cooperation”. He had stated that the time during the holding of the fourth summit was very suitable to undertake measures which could directly enhance productive activities, expand exchange of goods and services and solve common problems through research and field activity. He had also called upon the member-countries to try to remove apprehensions that exist among themselves through specific measures. Because apprehensions often have blocked the pace of progress. During the course of the meeting, Rao told the seven member-countries to consider the possibility of a modest beginning towards cooperation in the areas of trade, industry, money and finance.\(^\text{15}\)

The SAARC Council of Foreign Ministers’ meeting had been presided over by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shahabzada Yaqub Khan.\(^\text{16}\) Rao and Yaqub Khan discussed for thirty-five minutes and resolved to work for a real breakthrough. To India’s chagrin, the Pakistani Foreign Minister decided to regionalise the nuclear issue by arguing that the member countries of SAARC should start the process of disarmament among themselves before asking the superpowers to do so. He also stated that such a move would enable the countries in South Asia to channelise their energies and scarce resources for economic development.\(^\text{17}\) In his opening statement as chairman of the sixth session of the Council of Ministers, Yaqub Khan said, “We need to take bold initiatives not only to keep our countries and our region free of the scourge of nuclear weapons but also work towards mutually agreed reductions in conventional arms”.\(^\text{18}\) India had strongly opposed Pakistan’s attempt to include a proposal of a South Asian treaty to declare the region free of nuclear weapons in the SAARC draft declaration. India argued that the nuclear issue was a global problem and that it could not be solved at the regional or bilateral level.\(^\text{19}\) Initially, the nuclear issue proved so contentious that the SAARC

\(^{15}\) Ibid.  
\(^{16}\) The Times of India, 28 December 1988.  
\(^{17}\) The Telegraph, 28 December 1988.  
\(^{18}\) The Hindu, 28 December 1988.  
\(^{19}\) The Telegraph, 29 December 1988.
Foreign Ministers failed to adopt any declaration in this regard. However, after due negotiations, the Foreign Ministers finally managed to approve the draft declaration.

On the economic scenario, Yaqub Khan had commented that as a consequence of the North-South dialogue getting deadlocked, the economic condition of all the developing countries, including the seven SAARC members, deteriorated further. Their economic lot, according to the Pakistani Foreign Minister, could be improved if only the developing countries through their joint endeavours could acquire the necessary economic strength to negotiate with the north from a position of relative equality.\textsuperscript{20} He had expressed satisfaction over the fact that the convention on suppression of terrorism and the South Asian food security reserve agreement had come into force.\textsuperscript{21}

In this context, the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, A. C. S. Hameed, had informed his SAARC counterparts how the Sri Lankan Parliament had unanimously passed a bill to give effect to the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism. Hameed also mentioned in his speech the fact that his country whole-heartedly supported the SAARC initiatives in various fields.

The Maldivian Foreign Minister, Fathull Jameel had expressed his anxiety over the vulnerable security situation in the small island nation. He had also urged the sixth session of the SAARC Council of Ministers to take a fresh approach "on the question of security of small states with islands scattered over vast distances".\textsuperscript{22} He told his counterparts that mercenaries had tried to overthrow the legitimate Maldivian Government and install a puppet regime. He conveyed his thanks to the Government of India for bringing about a decisive end to the serious situation. He also expressed concern at the threat to Maldives and other low-lying countries by the consequences of global warming and the consequent rise in the sea-level. To overcome this danger, he suggested effective action programme within a specified time schedule so as

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 28 December 1988.
\textsuperscript{21} The Telegraph, 28 December 1988.
\textsuperscript{22} Indian Express, 28 December 1988.
to protect and preserve the environment in the SAARC region. With due consideration for the Maldivian appeal, a decision was taken at the Foreign Ministers' meeting to initiate a study on the causes and consequences of natural disasters and the preservation and protection of the environment.

Bhutanese Foreign Minister urged the SAARC members to pay greater attention to trade, industry, energy and finance, which had enormous potential for bringing about material benefits to the people of the region. He also approved a proposal to declare 1990 as the 'SAARC Year for the Girl Child'.

Thus, the Foreign Ministers' meeting, presided over by the Pakistani Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan, helped in preparing the base for the SAARC summit, besides approving the calendar of SAARC activities for 1989 and the Standing Committee report prepared by the seven Foreign Secretaries.

Since the grounds had been prepared by the Foreign Ministers' meeting, the Islamabad summit began as per the schedule, i.e., from 29 December 1988. It began with renewed air of expectancy not only for building bridges of understanding between the two largest nations of South Asia but also for consolidating stability, peace and progress in the entire region. The installation of a democratic government in Pakistan paved the way for the beginning of a new chapter in Indo-Pak relations. Great importance had been attached to the first-ever meeting between the Prime Ministers, Rajiv Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto. Rajiv Gandhi was given a very warm and cordial reception by his Pakistani counterpart and the two had their first informal meeting in the evening of 29 December 1988. On that very day, Benazir Bhutto had inaugurated the three-day summit at the State Bank of Pakistan building. She was elected as the chairperson of SAARC. During their scheduled three-rounds of bilateral talks, the Prime Ministers of the two countries thrashed out the problems affecting cordial relations between the two

23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
neighbours and decided to make a new start. Apart from signing three agreements on the closing day of the summit – on not striking each other's nuclear installations, on avoiding double taxation and on cultural exchanges – the two Prime Ministers had set in motion a process for improving relations in every sphere.\textsuperscript{27}

The seven SAARC leaders converted their informal retreat at Daman-e-Koh into a working retreat and approved the Islamabad declaration providing for an action-oriented programme for the region. They considered the Islamabad declaration in details. The declaration was finally adopted at the end of a three-day summit of leaders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Aided by their Foreign Ministers, the SAARC leaders also approved the text of a joint statement to be issued by Benazir Bhutto.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{Islamabad Declaration}

The Islamabad declaration of the Heads of State or Government of the member countries of the SAARC was issued on 31 December 1988. The Heads of State or Government expressed their happiness at the progress achieved by the association since the Kathmandu summit in November 1987.

Once again they reiterated their commitment to the SAARC Charter and renewed their determination to cooperate in promoting the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to fulfil other cherished goals such as eradication of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, unemployment and environmental degradation.\textsuperscript{29}

Like the previous declarations, at Islamabad too, the leaders had not overlooked the fact that the SAARC countries were linked by age-old social, cultural and historical ties and they had substantial human and natural resources in their possession. They had recognised that these offered a sound

\textsuperscript{27. The Telegraph, 31 December 1988.}
\textsuperscript{28. The Hindustan Times, 31 December 1988.}
\textsuperscript{29. For the full text of the Islamabad Declaration, see \textit{Islamabad Summit: Declaration and Joint Press Release}, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, 1989, pp. 1-11.}
basis as well as immense opportunities for regional cooperation. They therefore expressed their determination to make the maximum use of their resources for the benefit of their people by working jointly to pursue their shared objectives. They were certain that by acting together they could realise the full potential for the regional progress.\textsuperscript{30}

The decision taken by the SAARC Council of Ministers that any country in the region adhering to the objectives and principles of the SAARC Charter may be admitted as a member of the association was endorsed by the SAARC leaders.\textsuperscript{31}

The seven heads expressed satisfaction at the progress so far made in the implementation of the SAARC Integrated Programme of Action. They stressed the need for closer cooperation in the activities launched under the banner of IPA, and welcomed the setting up of the SAARC Agricultural Information Centre (SAIC) as well as the measures being taken for the establishment of other regional institutions.

The Summiteers lauded the smooth functioning of the SAVE programme which had turned out to be a useful medium for promoting a South Asian consciousness amongst the peoples of the region. They also expressed satisfaction over the successful launching of the Youth Volunteers Programme and the SAARC Chairs, Fellowships and Scholarships Scheme.

The leaders expressed satisfaction that the South Asian Food Security Reserve had become operational on 12 August 1988.\textsuperscript{32} The reserve was intended to serve as a cushion against food shortage and was a tangible manifestation of the spirit of cooperation in the region.

The Heads of State or Government welcomed the coming into force of the SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism on 22 August 1988 which

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, p. 1.  
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, p. 2.  
\textsuperscript{32} See Islamabad Declaration, December 1988, \textit{South Asia Journal}, vol. 2 no. 4, 1989, p. 443
reflected the sincere desire on the part of the member-states to enter into meaningful cooperation to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the South Asian region. They also emphasised the importance of the adoption of enabling measures at the national level that would be necessary in order to fully implement the provisions of the Convention.

The leaders expressed profound concern over the alarming rise and the harmful effects of drug abuse, particularly among the youth, and drug trafficking. They recognised the need for urgent and effective measures to eradicate this evil and decided to declare the year 1989 as the “SAARC Year for Combating Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking”. They also decided to launch a concerted movement to significantly augment SAARC efforts to eliminate drug abuse and drug trafficking.

The SAARC leaders present at Islamabad summit expressed their grief and profound sympathy at the loss of valuable lives and extensive damage to property suffered during the period by Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan as a result of unprecedented floods, cyclones and earthquakes. While referring to this, they recalled their earlier decision at Kathmandu in November 1987 to intensify regional cooperation in order to strengthen the disaster-management capabilities and took into account the recommendations of the SAARC Group of Experts in its study on the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment that met in Kathmandu in July 1988. The leaders also urged that the study should be completed in the shortest period of time so that it could provide a basis for the member countries to draw up an action plan for meaningful cooperation amongst the member states. They had decided that a joint study should be undertaken on the “Greenhouse Effect” and its impact on the region.

The Heads of State or Government expressed their satisfaction with the work of the Group of Experts which held their meeting in Islamabad and succeeded

33. The Times of India, 31 December 1988.
34. The Hindu, 30 December 1988.
on taking decisions over the modalities for studies to be carried out for cooperation in the fields of trade, manufactures and services. They stressed the urgency for the completion of studies within the agreed time schedule.\textsuperscript{36}

Following the proceedings of the earlier summits, the Heads of State or Government at Islamabad too reviewed the progress on the situation of children in SAARC countries. They reiterated their commitment made in the Bangalore declaration to accord the highest priority to the needs of children in national development planning and stressed that the concept of Human Resource Development should lay particular emphasis on the welfare and well-being of children, especially in the literacy and health spheres. They had specially urged for the conclusion and adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children in 1989. They decided to declare 1990 as the “SAARC Year of the Girl Child”.\textsuperscript{37}

The leaders noted with satisfaction the effectiveness of the SAARC Secretariat and its role in coordinating SAARC activities. They also noted that a Headquarters Agreement had been signed between the Secretariat and the Government of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{38}

The Heads of State or Government justified the decision to involve regional NGOs (non-governmental organisations) or professional bodies in SAARC activities. They also underlined the fact that the participation of the NGOs in regional cooperation activities would lead to the promotion of people-to-people contact, which had been emphasised by the association time and again.

The leaders stressed the need for closer and more frequent contacts among the peoples of SAARC. In order to realise this end, they had decided that the Supreme Court Judges and the Members of the National Parliaments of each member state would be entitled to a Special SAARC Travel Document which

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.5.
\textsuperscript{37} See South Asia Journal, n.32, p.446.
\textsuperscript{38} For details on this point, see Headquarters Agreement Between His Majesty's Government of Nepal And the Secretariat of the South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, 1998, pp 1-13.
would exempt them from obtaining visas. Furthermore, they directed the Council of Ministers to examine what other categories of persons should be given this facility and to submit their recommendations.\textsuperscript{39}

Moreover, they had satisfactorily taken into consideration the mandate issued by the Council of Ministers at its fifth session to the Secretary-General on the question of contacting organisations with similar aims and purposes.

At Islamabad too, the Heads of State or Government expressed their willingness to realise the objectives of SAARC. In this context, they emphasised the need to progressively carry out SAARC activities within a broad framework of a long-term perspective and to synchronise their efforts to ensure maximum benefits to the inhabitants of South Asia.\textsuperscript{40} They were very much aware of the fact that all the South Asian countries were confronted with identical problems in areas such as food, clothing, shelter, education, primary health care, population planning and environmental protection. To solve these problems, they recommended that the member states should identify areas of primary interest in their national perspective plans or prepare such plans and consolidate them into a regional plan to be known as “SAARC 2000 – A Basic Needs Perspective,” with specific targets to be met by the end of the century.\textsuperscript{41}

They recognised that Human Resource Development is one of the means of realising these objectives. In this connection, they welcomed the offer made by the Government of Pakistan to set up a Centre for Human Resource Development\textsuperscript{42} and directed the Secretary-General to set up a Group of Experts from member countries to examine the proposal on the basis of a paper to be prepared by the Government of Pakistan and to submit its recommendations to the Standing Committee.

At the fourth summit too, the leaders reaffirmed their abiding commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter. The Heads of State

\textsuperscript{40} Islamabad Summit : Declaration and Joint Press Release, n.29, pp 6.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., pp.6-7
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p.7
or Government also reiterated their deep commitment to the principles and objectives of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As a result of the relaxation of global tensions through extensive Super-power dialogue on a broad range of international issues, the Summiteers heaved a sigh of relief and welcomed the progress towards the resolution of long-standing disputes and conflicts. The leaders welcomed the efforts made by the UN Conference on Disarmament and Development. Because they were of the view that the rise in defence expenditure was a major constraint on world development. They also believed that if disarmament was accepted by all the countries, the resources saved through disarmament measures could be used by the developing countries for development purposes.

They appreciated the agreement reached between the two Superpowers on Intermediate Nuclear Force and hoped that this could be treated as a precursor to future accords to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals drastically and to prevent an arms race in outer space.

The phenomenon of structural disequilibrium from which the global economy had suffered for a long period was noted with deep concern by the Heads of State or Government. Independent nature of the economies of the developed and developing countries had been emphasised by the SAARC leaders at the Islamabad summit, they called for the resumption of North-South dialogue with a view to restructuring the global economic order and to set up the New

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43. The Intermediate Range Nuclear Force Treaty (INF treaty) was signed on 8 December 1987. It contains a stringent and comprehensive scheme of verification. It incorporates a schedule for reductions, procedures for removing the nuclear warheads and destroying the missiles, an analysis of rights and responsibilities of the host and inspecting nations. As a result of the conclusion of the INF treaty, the Soviets also agreed to a comprehensive exchange of data. Moreover, the treaty also provides for a specific number of on-site inspections of declared sites in the territory of the United States, the Soviet Union and their allies. The instruments of ratification of the INF treaty were exchanged between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev at a summit meeting held in Moscow from 29-May to 2 June 1988. The Soviets signed the INF treaty primarily because they were determined to prevent the United States from deploying any INF missiles in Europe. As per the provisions of the treaty, the Soviets were forced to destroy hundreds of existing ballistic missiles. On the other hand, the treaty assured the Soviets of the removal of all U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe. For details, see Arun Kumar Banerjee (ed.), *Arms Race, Disarmament and Security: Some Perspectives*, K. P. Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, 1991, pp. 36-37.
International Economic Order (NIEO) based on justice and equity. To realise this end, they also called for concerted actions by the developed and developing countries.

The leaders reiterated the need for preserving and liberalising the multi-lateral trading system. The Heads of State or Government offered their unconditional support for the initiation of a comprehensive process for the preparation of an International Development Strategy for the Fourth U. N. Development Decade as well as the proposal of the Group of 77 for convening a special session of the General Assembly in 1990 to revive growth and development in the developing countries.

The leaders at Islamabad once again emphasised the need for a rise in resource flows and special measures in favour of the least developed countries. They extended their full support for the convening of a high level United Nations Conference on the least developed countries in 1990 to review progress and formulate national and international policies and measures for accelerating the development process in the least developed countries during the 1990s.

They expressed their profound gratitude for the excellent arrangements made for the summit meeting at Islamabad and for the cordial and generous hospitality extended to them by the Government and the people of Pakistan.

**Achievements of the Fourth SAARC Summit**

The successful conclusion of the fourth SAARC summit meeting is considered as a landmark event in the process of development of the SAARC. This success could be attributed to the fact that the summit was held in a favourable political setting that witnessed the installation of democratic order in Pakistan after a long time. The restoration of a new government under the leadership of Benazir Bhutto had raised hopes throughout the length and breadth of the sub-continent about the dawn of a new era of alliance and cooperation between the

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44. See *South Asia Journal*, n.32, p.448.
two principal South Asian neighbours, India and Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto had sent positive messages to India and had also taken the initiative of inviting the Indian Prime Minister to extend his stay in Islamabad for talks on bilateral issues. Following this, Rajiv Gandhi visited Islamabad on the occasion of the fourth SAARC summit. It should be mentioned here that Rajiv Gandhi was the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Pakistan in more than 30 years. It was indeed a very welcome development.

The meeting of the two Prime Ministers was not merely formal. During the course of their three-rounds of bilateral talks, the entire gamut of Indo-Pakistani relations had been discussed by them. Both the Prime Ministers attached great importance to their bilateral meetings. It could be noticed here that the prevailing peaceful environment in the region had made it easier for both Benazir and Rajiv to sign three agreements on behalf of their countries on the final day of the summit. The signing of three bilateral agreements was of great significance as they were concluded after a gap of sixteen years when Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi signed the Shimla Agreement in 1972. The three agreements relate to non-attack of nuclear installations, cultural exchanges and avoidance of double taxation.

The Islamabad declaration, adopted at the end of the three-day summit, spared no pains to transform the fledgling SAARC from a forum of debate into a forum of action. It carries special importance since no other SAARC declarations had proposed an economic plan embracing all the member

49. The signing of the Shimla Pact by the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi and Pakistan’s President Zulfiquar Ali Bhutto at Shimla on 2 July 1972 is regarded as the beginning of the culmination of vicious circle of misunderstandings and suspicious of the 25-year long hostility between the two neighbouring countries. It marked a ‘new beginning’ in the relations between India and Pakistan. The main attributes of the Shimla pact are: (a) an undertaking by Pakistan that it would not upset the status quo by use of force; (b) all Indo-Pakistani disputes were to be resolved on a bilateral basis; (c) disengagement of troops on either side of the international frontier between India and Pakistan.
51. Ibid., 1 January 1989.
countries which account for a fifth of the global population.

Since terrorism was raising its ugly head throughout the sub-continent and adversely affected the process of development and cordial relations among the states, it was given due weightage by the leaders. In the declaration, the leaders waged an all-out war against terrorism in all its forms and the evil of narcotics which posed a serious threat to political and social stability of the region. Decisions of SAARC leaders to base their cooperation on a permanent and long-term basis had also imparted a certain amount of maturity to the association.

Apart from this some important decisions were taken at this summit. They are as follows:

1) Incorporation of education among the agreed areas of cooperation.

2) Declaring the year 1989 as SAARC Year for combating Drug Abuse and Drug-Trafficking in order to focus attention on drug-related problems facing the region.

3) Declaration of the year 1990 as “SAARC Year of the Girl Child” during which specific programmes and activities would be launched to enhance public consciousness of the problems of the girl child.

4) Adoption of the basic needs perspective plan – “SAARC 2000” – with specific targets to be met by the close of the century in the areas of core interest such as clothing, shelter, education, primary health care, population planning and environmental protection.

5) Mandate to the Secretary – General to organise an Experts Group meeting of member states to examine the proposal for the setting up of a Centre for

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6) The Secretary-General had been directed to convene a special meeting of the Group of Coordinators to identify any specific areas of trade, manufactures and services where cooperative activities were to be undertaken at the earliest.

7) Another gain from the summit was the creation of a Special SAARC Travel Document which enabled the Supreme Court Judges and Members of Parliament of the seven SAARC nations to travel freely in the SAARC member-states, dispensing them of the need to procure visas. That education carries crucial importance in any cooperative venture and that it should be incorporated among the agreed areas of cooperation was duly realised by the SAARC leaders. They gave vent to their willingness by incorporating education in the areas of cooperation, thus enabling the region to improve its literacy rate and education system. With this end in view, they also advocated for setting up a Technical Committee with Bangladesh at its head, to coordinate matters in the sphere of education. The fact that South Asia had become a victim of drug-abuse and drug trafficking had not been overlooked by the SAARC leaders. They recommended various measures to remove the evil of narcotics. In accordance with a decision of the Council of Ministers of SAARC countries, 8 December, 1989 had been observed as a “Day against Drug Abuse”.

The leaders of SAARC have taken the most remarkable and welcome step of declaring 1990 as the “SAARC Year of the Girl Child”. Throughout South Asia, the female child is neglected. In fact, South Asia has a shameful record in child development and protection, and the case is more pathetic for the girl child. Of all the countries of the globe, South Asia has the lowest female life expectancy ratios. Female child is married off at a very low age in order to

relieve the parents of feeding an ‘unwanted mouth’ and to provide in-laws with an extra pair of hands. Since the needs of women and children are not given due consideration in most national development policy formulations, the girl child is always found to be lacking in proper development. In all SAARC countries, a female child gets the lowest priority and remains trapped by illogical and out-dated values. By declaring 1990 as the “SAARC Year of the Girl Child” the leaders finally offered the girls a glimmer of hope.

One of the most remarkable achievements of the fourth summit had been the emphasis put upon the need for urgent measures to protect the environment. At the time of the holding of Islamabad summit, environmental concern had reached an unprecedented pitch all over the world. This is so because in the South Asian region, the causes of deterioration in the environment were more prominent such as deforestation, air and water pollution etc. These could not be checked without close cooperation amongst states. The working of European Economic Community (EEC) demonstrated how successful regional cooperation could be in undertaking effective measures for protecting the environment. The experience of the European Community engendered a ray of hope in the minds of the leaders that SAARC could also act as a highly convenient forum for such cooperation amongst countries in the South Asian arena. While taking into consideration the challenge of environmental degradation facing the SAARC countries, the South Asian leaders at Islamabad decided to identify measures and programmes that “would supplement national, bilateral, regional and global efforts” to deal with these problems, and to undertake a joint study on the “Greenhouse Effect and its impact on the region”. The leaders also highlighted the fact that by agreeing to overcome the environmental challenges jointly, the member-states of SAARC would be able to work together for a common cause and upgrade their level of

mutual cooperation.

The leaders had taken a decisive step by jointly reiterating that the countries belonging to South Asia stand together for the reduction of tensions and the promotion of development. Moreover, Benazir Bhutto’s stand against terrorism in general and her pledge to work under the larger framework of the 1972 Shimla Accord created new hopes in India for improving bilateral relations. And the historic breakthrough achieved by Pakistan and India at the Islamabad summit in their bilateral relations underlined the possibilities for promoting bilateral understanding. As a matter of fact, given worsening relations between India and Pakistan over the years, a meeting between the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers might not have been possible without SAARC. This had been, perhaps, one of the most positive outcomes of the Islamabad summit. The importance of these confidence-building exchanges among the SAARC leaders can hardly be exaggerated.

Problems faced by the Islamabad Summit

Like the previous summits, the Islamabad summit too had experienced some differences in the perception of the SAARC leaders. It had been noticed that the euphoria generated at the first SAARC summit in Dhaka in 1985 was missing in Bangalore in 1986 where a number of bilateral matters overshadowed the deliberations. The 1987 Kathmandu summit also had failed to welcome the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of that year because of the Pakistani objections. The then Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammad Khan Junejo’s reference to ASEAN as a perfect model for regional cooperation and his obsession with the Afghan issue, were considered as an attempt to abridge India’s dominating role in the region. With the installation of a democratic government in Pakistan, hopes had been raised throughout the region that the fourth SAARC summit would be somewhat different from the earlier summits. However, the trend of the proceedings revealed the similar undercurrent that could be noticed in all the SAARC summits, that is, the difference between the

perception of India and Pakistan and that of some of the smaller countries in
the region. The smaller neighbours of India had always tried to highlight
issues that India viewed essentially of a bilateral character.

Although the sudden breakdown of military dictatorship in Pakistan had
brought about some radical shifts in the country’s foreign policy creating a
new situation there, the old irritants in Indo-Pakistan relations persisted as
before. In fact, Pakistan’s nuclear ambitions, acquisition of American arms,
its sheltering and training of terrorists in Punjab, its insistence on raising the
Kashmir issue at various world forums, its undue interest in the affairs of the
Indian Muslims and its refusal to remove discriminations against India in the
area of bilateral trade -- shattered all hopes for normalising the relations
between the two countries.

Following tensions in the Indo-Pak border area, the Indo-Pak border had to be
sealed from Kathua to Chhamb and the line of actual control from Kali Dhar
to Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir to check the movement of terrorists. In
1988, Pakistan again renewed its demand for AWACS and this made the Indian
side suspicious about Pakistan’s intentions.

Further, India repeatedly alleged that Pakistan was in various ways aiding and
abetting terrorists in Punjab. This issue had been thoroughly discussed at the
home-secretary level meeting between the two countries. Both had agreed to
launch joint patrolling operations as an interim measure to strengthen the
cooperation between the border forces of the two countries and arms and
ammunitions across the border. The joint patrolling had not been so effective
in ending illegal traffic. Pakistan went on abetting Sikh terrorism but tried to
escape the blame through a smoke-screen of joint patrolling of the border and

60. The Times of India, 14 February 1988.

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such other moves.\textsuperscript{63} Thus, it is seen that the Pakistani support to Punjab terrorism along with other negative actions, including its clandestine nuclear weapons programme had thwarted the normalisation process between the two countries.\textsuperscript{64}

Rajiv Gandhi’s decision to rush troops to the Maldives to safeguard the political stability of the island nation was viewed by Pakistan as a ploy to establish Indian hegemony there.\textsuperscript{65} As a result, the Pakistani Prime Minister did not join hands with Gayoom when he lauded India for its timely help.

Although the Afghan issue was not on the agenda of the SAARC meeting at Islamabad, yet the views expressed by Pakistan on this issue remained as before. With the Soviet troops still remaining in Afghanistan, it could hardly be expected that the new Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto would drop her country’s opposition to the admission of the Kabul regime to SAARC.\textsuperscript{66}

Despite the verbal assurance made by the Indian Prime Minister that India was very conscious of its responsibilities and role in the region and would not take any step that would jeopardise the interests of its neighbours, Pakistan could not give up its belief that its markets would be swamped by Indian manufactures.\textsuperscript{67} It was due to this notion that Pakistan was not willing to develop its bilateral trade and commercial ties with India.

Differences of opinion between India and some other member countries of the SAARC had delayed the finalisation of the draft summit declaration at Islamabad. The differences were so serious that a departure from the SAARC tradition could be noticed – the draft which is usually appended to the report of the Council of Ministers had been made a separate document at Islamabad.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{63} The Hindustan Times, 18 May 1988.
\textsuperscript{64} The Statesman, 7 July 1988.
\textsuperscript{65} The Times of India, 26 December 1988.
\textsuperscript{66} The Hindustan Times, 13 December 1988.
\textsuperscript{67} The Statesman, 30 December 1988.
\textsuperscript{68} The Hindu, 29 December 1988.
The most contentious area was the declaration’s customary section on disarmament issues. While Pakistan had been apparently insisting on an incorporation of its concept of regional disarmament, India was trying to tone down the Pakistani emphasis on the ground that what was being drafted was not a document on disarmament issues but a document relating to SAARC.

The second issue on which Indian and Pakistani leaders had differed was the concept of SAARC-2000. While India had agreed with the objective underlying the SAARC-2000 concept – it could not agree with the idea of merely adding up national plans. However, at the end of the deliberations, it became evident that India’s concept had lost out and what had emerged was a plan as formulated by Pakistan with an emphasis on human resources and development rather than on economic linkages which India believed were the sole viable integrating structures in any endeavour to forge regional cooperation.

Thirdly, the nuclear issue had stalled the adoption of the draft Islamabad declaration by the SAARC Foreign Ministers at Islamabad.69 During the negotiations in the drafting committee, India had vehemently opposed inclusion in the draft declaration of the idea of a South Asian pact to keep the region free of nuclear weapons. India had argued that the nuclear issue was a global problem and could not be solved regionally or bilaterally.

Divergence of opinions between Bangladesh and India could be seen at the Islamabad summit. The two countries differed primarily because of the revival of suggestion by Bangladesh for a multi-sectoral investment facility.70 The idea was strongly opposed by India. After prolonged discussions, the idea of the multi-sectoral investment facility, which Bangladesh had tried to revive, was apparently buried.

Conclusion

The SAARC entered the fourth year of its existence as its seven Heads of State or Government assembled together on a common platform for the fourth time. It was indeed an eventful year for the SAARC, marked by unexpected events in the political scenario, natural calamities and the decision of the seven member countries to pool their resources for the economic prosperity of the region. In 1988 the SAARC leadership passed on to Pakistan as Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto took over the reins from King Birendra of Nepal on the inaugural day of the summit. The year was also marked by the coming into force of the regional convention on the suppression of terrorism and the SAARC food security reserve.

Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives witnessed some unforeseen political developments as Bangladesh, Nepal and parts of India reeled under natural calamities during 1988 with earthquakes, floods and cyclones leaving thousands dead and homeless. A significant instance of cooperation between two SAARC countries was India's help to Maldives to quell a coup attempt by the mercenaries.

Throughout the year, a number of seminars and workshops had been organised which dealt with the problems peculiar to the region. At a regional workshop in Kathmandu on rural drinking water on 1 April 1988, the seven member countries agreed to pool their expertise to provide safe drinking water to eighty percent of the region’s rural population.

The SAARC leaders also decided to set up a centre for research in history and culture in Dhaka in view of the similar historical and cultural background of the countries of the region. The University Grants Commission (UGC) also instituted a chair in applied economics which would be made available to an outstanding scholar from any SAARC country.

A distinguishing feature of the summit was the relaxed relationship between India and Pakistan. As a result of the conducive political atmosphere prevailing during the fourth summit, the leaders of India and Pakistan received
an excellent opportunity to review their bilateral relationship. They were able
to sign three accords, including one prohibiting attack on each other’s nuclear
installations. The other two agreements were on the areas of cultural
cooperation and the avoidance of double taxation on income derived from
international air transport. These agreements, which were signed immediately
after the conclusion of the fourth SAARC summit, were indicative of the fact
that the leaders of the two neighbouring countries were willing to mend their
fences for ushering in a climate of goodwill and confidence and better bilateral
relations. Such generation of confidence – building measures between the two
South Asian arch-rivals enabled both India and Pakistan to sign agreement on
very important matters vital to both which would not have been possible in the
past. Indeed it cannot be denied that the fourth summit turned a new leaf in
Indo-Pakistan relations. 71

A historic breakthrough was achieved by the summit hosted by Pakistan at
Islamabad in achieving an unanimous decision on several pressing issues of
the region. The decision of the SAARC leaders to adopt the “SAARC-2000
basic needs perspective”72 underlined the concern of the regional body
towards delivering the benefits of cooperation to the common man of the
region.

In order to remove ignorance and prejudices from the minds of South Asian
people, the SAARC leaders decided to extend SAARC cooperation to the area
of education under the coordination of Bangladesh and expressed their
common determination to fight the common menace of drug-trafficking and
abuse through regional cooperation. By recommending the idea of holding
South Asian festivals from time to time in the seven SAARC countries, they
wanted to promote cultural links and people-to-people contact at various
levels.

71. The Times of India, 29 December 1988.
72. Ross Masood Hussain, n.53., p.3.
Unlike the previous SAARC summits, at Islamabad summit the leaders of the two most important member states of SAARC had a rare opportunity to give an entirely fresh look at their relationship and to find out ways and means to ease tension.\textsuperscript{73} SAARC leaders who attended the fourth summit expected the Pakistani leadership to shed its attitude of suspicion and insecurity against India.

Political and psychological barriers had kept the region tragically cleaved and divided. Till the Islamabad summit in 1988, no determined attempt had been made to pull those barriers down. That both the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers had been offered the opportunity to hold a bilateral meeting goes to the credit of the summit itself.

Thus, by going through all these, it can be argued that the summit should be aptly described as a summit for review, re-evaluation, reinforcement or consolidation of SAARC activities.\textsuperscript{74} Nevertheless, the four major hurdles to cordial and peaceful relations between the two neighbours viz., the chronic problem of Kashmir; Pakistan’s nuclear obsession; the mad race for acquiring sophisticated armaments and the Pakistani involvement in Punjab, could not be removed. Despite all the commendable steps taken by the SAARC leaders at the Islamabad summit, they could not succeed in removing suspicion and create faith among all the members of SAARC, which was the crying need of the hour.

\textsuperscript{73} The Hindustan Times, 30 December 1988.
\textsuperscript{74} Bishwa Pradhan, \textit{SAARC and its Future}, n.11, p.62.