

Postponement of SAARC summit to halt progress of past SAARC declarations: President SCCI

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ISLAMABAD, Oct 3 (APP): The postponement of SAARC summit mayhold the progress back, on the implementation of important agreements promised under the past SAARC declarations, Suraj Vaidya, President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry said.

Speaking at the regional track 1.5 meeting titled “Trade and Transport Facilitation Audit in South Asia,” hosted by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu, Nepal, he said, private sector could play a pro active role in bringing the SAARC’s track I process back on track. He said all stakeholders should work with media to improve perceptions about SAARC.

The meeting deliberated upon findings on studies from the eight member South Asian countries.

Participating institutions in the meeting included Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD),

Bangladesh, Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS), India and SAWTEE from Nepal, said a statement received here on Monday.

The meeting was also attended by officials from ministries of commerce in the South Asia region, diplomats in Kathmandu, and business associations.

The private sector of Pakistan was represented by representatives from Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries.

Speaking at the occasion, Deputy Executive Director, SDPI, Dr Vaqar Ahmed said, any setback to trade in SAARC region could negatively impact livelihoods of a large number of people, in South Asia. He said an absence of a forum like SAARC, could negatively impact regional cooperation.

Dr Vaqar said, the region needed to move towards paperless processing of imports and exports for further growth in trade, transit and transport sector.

Zubair Ahmed Malik, Former President, Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, India needed to do more, if it wanted to promote intra regional trade in South Asia. He said, public private partnerships should be encouraged in regional projects, which lacked public financing.

“People to people contacts should be enhanced in South Asia, which will lead to a change in perception, across the borders,” he added.

Romi Gauchan Thakali, Commerce Minister for Nepal said, it is an important development that several countries in South Asia are moving towards ratification of trade facilitation agreement of WTO.

This has potential to increase intra regional trade, he said.

Research by South Asian institutions was conducted with the objective to contribute in enhancing economic integration in the region, by identifying trade and transport related bottlenecks. The regional study examined difficulties, obstacles and inefficiencies in the cross frontier movement of routine trade consignments with a focus on regulatory and transport procedures and supporting infrastructure.

The study also appraised the transit procedures and estimated the investment requirement for priority trade facilitation measures.