In pursuit of a ‘South Asian development model’

Selim Raihan

Remarkable growth experience and development of the East Asian countries (South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s led to the emergence of the discourse of ‘East Asian development model’. A similar development model during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s amongst the Southeast Asian countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam) is also observed. One important aspect of the East and Southeast Asian development models is that most of the countries in those regions witnessed a convergence of their economic and development policies, related to trade openness, foreign investment, macroeconomic management and social policies, in South Asia, which have led to the divergence in their development outcomes too. All these show the absence of any ‘South Asian development model’ yet. The pursuit of a ‘South Asian development model’ will, therefore, require countries of this region to get their domestic policies ‘right’.

The second and third pages present brief overviews of the different sessions of the conference. The conference started with the keynote speeches by Prof. Kunal Sen and Dr. K.A.S. Murshid, and launching of a book, which was followed by six breakout sessions on Economic Growth & Productivity, Investment & Capital Market, Strong Institution & Good Governance, Social Inclusion, Health & Nutrition and Gender Equality & Education. In addition, to the sessions on different contemporary issues, the pages also include the special session titled ‘Honoring Economists of Influence’, SANEM-IGC, SANEM-BIGD organized sessions, an inter disciplinary session titled “Honoring Economists of Influence”, SANEM-IGC, SANEM-BIGD. The fourth page provides short descriptions of special lectures by Dr. Martin Rama and Dr. Selim Raihan, and Dr. K.A.S. Murshid, and launching of a book, which was followed by six breakout sessions on Economic Growth & Productivity, Investment & Capital Market, Strong Institution & Good Governance, Social Inclusion, Health & Nutrition and Gender Equality & Education. In addition, to the sessions on different contemporary issues, the pages also include the special session titled ‘Honoring Economists of Influence’, SANEM-IGC, SANEM-BIGD.
Inaugural Session and Keynote Speeches

The inaugural session of the 3rd SANEM Annual Economists’ Conference (SANEC) 2018 was chaired by Dr. Binalal Husain, Honorary Chairman, SANEM and Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka. In his opening remarks, Dr. Selim Rahman, Executive Director, SANEM and Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, said the objective of the conference was to promote quality economic research and provide a platform to young as well as experienced researchers to exchange views. Dr. Rahman also stressed the need for rigorous research that enhances the quality of lives of people in the East Asian and Latin American countries. He said that South Asian countries lack the capacity to make big bang reforms successful. Dr. Rahman then highlighted the different sectors in which reforms need to be taken up to achieve developmental goals.

The first keynote address on “Leaving No One Behind in South Asia: What Can States Do?” was delivered by Professor Kunal Sen. Dr. Sen proffered that South Asian states are struggling to ensure effectiveness of their development spending and are performing poorly, particularly in the area of governance and efficiency and in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations. Professor Kunal Sen also highlighted the need for top-down reforms, as small reforms are not enough to achieve developmental goals. He emphasized the need for South Asian states to focus on governance and efficiency.

The second keynote address on “Gender Equality & Education” was delivered by Dr. Amran Ali, President of The University of Dhaka. Dr. Ali said that education is the key to development and that gender equality is essential for achieving this goal. He highlighted the need for South Asian states to focus on gender equality in education and to provide equal opportunities for girls and boys.

The next keynote address was delivered by Dr. Selim Rahman, Executive Director, SANEM and Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka. Dr. Rahman said that economic research is essential for achieving developmental goals and that it is the responsibility of economists to contribute to this goal. He highlighted the need for a multidisciplinary approach to economic research and emphasized the importance of collaboration among economists.

The third keynote address was delivered by Mr. Ishtak Rayhan, Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University. Mr. Rayhan said that capital market reforms are essential for achieving developmental goals in South Asia. He highlighted the need for reforms in the capital market to provide access to finance for small and medium enterprises.

The fourth keynote address was delivered by Dr. Mohammad Mainul Islam, Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka. Dr. Islam said that economic research is essential for achieving developmental goals and that it is the responsibility of economists to contribute to this goal. He highlighted the need for a multidisciplinary approach to economic research and emphasized the importance of collaboration among economists.
**Growth Out of the Blue: Nightlight and Economic Activity**

Dr. Martin Rama, Chief Economist, South Asia, The World Bank conducted a special lecture titled “Growth Out of the Blue: Nightlight and Economic Activity.” The lecture was dedicated to how nightlight and economic activities surrounding cities generate economic growth. Dr. Rama used the data of eight SAARC countries and showed that GDP levels and nightlight intensity are correlated and particularly stronger for poorer countries. Nightlight intensity shows weak relationship with GDP levels in countries where power infrastructure is limited. Dr. Rama claimed that nightlight intensity to GDP levels is strong in the manufacturing and service sector but weak for the agricultural sector. Moreover, relationship between GDP growth rates and nightlight intensity are stronger in South Asia than any other parts of the world. Dr. Rama asserted that nightlight can also be used to predict GDP. Dr. Rama related nightlight to some of the recent incidences in South Asia. For Nepal, trade disruption has greater impact on economic activities than earthquakes. The deadly attack on Kunduz had a much larger lasting impact on nightlight intensity.

**Human Development for Everyone**

Dr. Selim Jahan, Director, Human Development Report Office, UNDP delivered a speech on Human Development for Everyone. Globally there are impressive achievements in the context of human development but the progress has been accompanied by severe deprivations; some are lingering-like poverty, deepening-like inequalities and emerging-like climate change. Over the years, there has been systematic and systemic biases against specific groups, certain countries and regions and as a result they have been pushed further from the center of development debate—polices and outcomes. Human development surrounds around individual choice. However, the issue of collective choice is more important for marginalized people. Human development has to move from quantitative to qualitative wellbeing. Dr. Jahan discusses that disaggregated data will show the clear picture of reality and national averages should be unbundled. Without ensuring quality, human development will not be uniform. He recommended overall comprehensive policies, specific targeted policies, capacity of the institutions to analyze, implement and monitor the policies and finally reforms in the governance structure.

**SANEM-ESID Organized Session**

A South Asian Panel Discussion in Memory of Dr. Saman Kelegama

The SANEM-ESID organized panel discussion on “Institutions, Governance and Trade in the Context of Emerging Global and Regional Challenges” was dedicated to the memory of Dr. Saman Kelegama. Professors Rehan Sobhan, Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) graced the session as chief guest and Ambassador M Shahidul Islam, Secretary General, Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was present as the special guest. Dr. Selim Raihan, Executive Director, SANEM gave the trigger presentation and moderated the session. The panel of discussants exhibited some of the brilliant minds of South Asia: Professor Kunal Sen, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, United Kingdom; Dr. Dushmi Weerakoon, Executive Director, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka; Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka; Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan (through skype); Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal and Dr. Prabir De, Professor, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India. The session explored South Asia’s position in the global value chain, political security and relationships between countries and institutions, challenges towards an integrated market and the necessity of permanent dispute management bodies in the region. Ambassador M Shahidul Islam mentioned the need for an integrated capital and labor market, alongside remembering Dr. Kelegama for his contribution in Sri Lanka’s trade facilitation. Prof. Sobhan stated that appropriate structural symmetry between trading partners is crucial to creating successful value chain. He also stressed on the urgency of exporting services instead of exporting independent vulnerable people by creating large institutions.

**SANEM-MCCI Organized Session**

Reforms Need to Facilitate Private Sector Engagement for SDG Achievement

Dr. Anwara Begum, Senior Researcher, MCCI along with Dr. Bazlul Haque Khondker, Chairman, SANEM and Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka and Mr. Zubayer Hossen, Senior Research Associate, SANEM, made presentations during the session. The distinguished panelists for the session were Dr. Anwara Begum, Senior Research Fellows, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and Mr. Safiul Alam, Research Into Use Officer, DECCMA, Bangladesh. The session concluded with an open discussion.

**SANEM-DECCMA Organized Session**

Climate Change, Migration & Adaptation Challenges and Way Forward

SANEM-DECCMA organized session on “Climate Change, Migration and Adaptation Challenges and Way Forward for Bangladesh” was held in the afternoon of day 2 of 3rd SAEC. Dr. Mashfiqur Salehin, Professor, Institute of Water and Flood Management (IWFM), Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), and Co-PI, DECCMA Project Bangladesh chaired the session. Dr. Salehin along with Dr. Bazlul Haque Khondker, Chairman, SANEM and Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka and Mr. Zubayer Hossen, Senior Research Associate, SANEM, made presentations during the session. The distinguished panelists for the session were Mr. Anwar Begum, Senior Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and Mr. Safiul Alam, Research Into Use Officer, DECCMA, Bangladesh. The session concluded with an open discussion.

**SANEM**

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