



**Southern Asia Studies Programme**  
**UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institute of South Asian Regional**  
**Cooperation (UMISARC)**  
**Pondicherry University**



**Cordially invites you to a talk sponsored by Public Diplomacy Division  
of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India **under its**  
**Distinguished Lecture Series****

**on**

***South Asian Regionalism: Prospects and Challenges for  
SAARC***

**on October 18, 2011 (Tuesday)  
at 10:30 am to 12:30 pm**

**By**

**Ambassador Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, IFS (Retd.)**

**About the Talk:**

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was set up in 1985 to promote regional cooperation, peace and development in South Asia. It has had a chequered history during the past quarter century; though somewhat more tangible gains have been in evidence since 2004.

Factors hindering growth of regionalism are: subliminal suspicions borne out of political problems, fear about security in the wake of relaxation of controls and barriers; skepticism about commensurate returns from a full throttle push for regional integration; relative ease of bilateral economic cooperation; intermittent perception of SAARC as *sufferance*; and procedural delays.

Assessments favouring regional cooperation are : SAARC offers a handy platform for leaders of South Asia to meet frequently and develop a modicum of *inter se* comfort level; most border regions among South Asian neighbours can benefit in development if cross border economic markets were restored to pre-independence levels; tangible accrual of benefits of transport links, smooth borders, facility of cargo and passenger movements for trade as well as for overall economic development; globalization and internet/multi-media access do not go with isolation from neighbours; and while considerable gains come to smaller neighbours in many cases the overall benefits may be reaped by larger economies too if trade flows are synergized with investment and promote stakeholders.

Institutional framework needs reviewing after the lapse of 25 years as situation has evolved and best practice lessons are due from successful regional forums elsewhere. Strengthening SAARC machinery and improving its functioning will facilitate the positives and diminish the negatives on its balance sheet. South Asia must pay express attention to regional cooperation since to an exponentially rising population the tired dialectic of tension, conflict, and disputes is not sustainable in the long run nor can it provide stability.

### **About the Speaker:**

**Ambassador Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, IFS (Retd.),** got his Ph.D in High Energy Physics from IIT Bombay and honoured with Distinguished Alumnus Award by IIT, Bombay in 2007. He holds several administrative positions such as Kathmandu Secretary General of SAARC, 2008-2011 (rank of Ambassador by all SAARC members and Ministerial protocol status), Austria Ambassador & Perm. Representative To UN /IAEA in Vienna and Indian Governor on the IAEA Board 2004-2008, Vienna IAEA Secretariat, Senior Policy Diplomat 1994-2000, Algiers Counselor 1986-89, Kuwait/ Jeddah Third/Second Secretary 1976-77; Permanent Mission Geneva First Secretary (Disarmament) 1983-86.

Headquarters: Under Secretary (WANA) 1978-81, Deputation to IDSA 1981-82, Deputy Secretary (Northern Division) 1982-83, Director (UN & Disarmament) 1989-91, Joint Secretary (South & Disarmament) 1991-94, Joint Secretary (DISA) 2000-2003, Additional Secretary (DISA & International Organisations) 2003-04.

Ambassador Sharma participated as delegate in a very wide range of conferences under auspices of UN, IAEA, Asean Regional Forum, NAM/ G77, SAARC, IBSA, CICA and several NGO conferences during the career in multilateral organizations spanning 30 years. Of these, as Chairman: the UNCND in 2005, UNIDO General Conference Committee of the Whole 2005, G77 2005/6, ARF SOM 2001, and IBSA SOM 2004.

Ambassador Sharma contributed several research papers in national and international journals, such as in *Physical Review D*, and *Physical Review Letters*; *Times of India* on “Pakistan Nuclear Bomb”; *Strategic Analysis, Mainstream*, on “INF Negotiations, Uranium Trafficking, and Middle East”; Chapter in book on “Indo-US Relations in a Changing World” edited by Jasjit Singh 1992; Authored monographs published by UNIDIR on Verification of Prohibition of Production of Fissile Materials for Weapons, and on Verification of Non-Use of Nuclear Weapons in 1992; Co-authored Report of UN Panel on Verification 1990-91 and co-authored Report of UN Panel on Defensive Security Concepts in 1992; Article in *IAEA Bulletin*; Co-authored UN SG’s Report on Missiles 2001; Article in *Economic Times*, on “South Asian Economic Cooperation”; Articles in *Asian Age*, December 2010, on South Asian Regional Cooperation and on “Fukushima Disaster.”

**Venue: UMISARC Auditorium  
Silver Jubilee Campus  
Pondicherry University**

**Prof. N.K. Jha  
Director, UMISARC**