INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION (IDLO) SIGNED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH SAARCLAW

On 8th November 2011, IDLO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SAARCLAW. SAARCLAW is the legal apex body for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, and is an association of legal communities (judges, lawyers, academics, law professors and public officers) of the SAARC countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka).

The MoU was signed by the Secretary General of SAARCLAW, Mr. Hemant Batra, in the presence of Hon’ble Chief Justice Sonam Tobgye of Bhutan, President of SAARCLAW and key members of the SAARCLAW Executive Council, including SAARCLAW Vice President Hon. Justice Kalayan Shrestha of the Nepal Supreme Court and SAARCLAW Vice President Hon. Justice Umesh C. Banerjee (retd) of India. IDLO was represented by Ms. Naomi Burke-Shyne, Ms. Sara Nardicchia and Mr. Asela Kalugampitiya.

Under the MoU, IDLO and SAARCLAW agree to explore opportunities to work together to promote good governance and sustainable development through the improvement and maintenance of the legal and judicial systems in the South Asia region. This joint collaboration between IDLO and SAARCLAW will allow both organizations to pursue and complement their respective mandates in law and development. As Hemant Batra, Secretary General of SAARCLAW stated, “This Memorandum of Understanding will allow for closer cooperation on key issues in the fields of development and law in South Asia and allow us to advance our common objectives.”

The MoU envisages a more efficient exchange of information, expertise, and policy dialogues. This will include co-hosting training courses, policy dialogues and round tables to create a platform upon which different representatives of the law and justice sector and civil society can exchange ideas, best practices and lessons learned.

A real testament to the MoU, is that the signing ceremony coincided with the opening of the South Asia Round table Dialogue: Legal and Policy Barriers to the HIV Response. The two-day Round table event, organized in partnership with UNAIDS, UNDP and the World Bank, brings together 75 delegates from across South Asia including lawyers, law students, representatives of the judiciary, representatives of human rights institutions, parliamentarians and government agencies. The objectives of the Round table are to identify legal and policy barriers to HIV prevention, treatment and care services for people living with HIV, men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender persons, sex workers and people who inject drugs. Participants will identify and discuss strategies and initiatives to address these barriers and strengthen the rights-based response to HIV in their respective countries. The aim is to build an informed and engaged group of legal professionals and advocates committed to leading the legal response to HIV in their home countries. At the opening of the Round table, the Hon. Chief Justice of Bhutan and President of SAARCLAW, Sonam Tobgye stated ‘the Round table Dialogue symbolizes the universal and eternal message of hope and joy in life to the multitude of persons affected by HIV in the region.’

David Patterson, IDLO Health Law Program Manager confirmed, “The Round table organized today is a great example of how IDLO and SAARCLAW can collaborate to organize important events that will encourage law reform of unjust practices and laws which block effective responses to HIV and contribute to the vulnerability of key affected populations. This MoU is an important step for the promotion of rule of law and good governance in the South Asia region.”

Source: http://www.idlo.int/english/Media/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?idNews=3133
MESSAGE FROM THE PATRON-IN-CHIEF

Dear Readers,

On the onset, I want to wish everyone a wonderful year of the Dragon. Happy New Year! I hope that the New Year will bring lasting peace, common prosperity and harmony. As the world addresses the legal issues, SAARCLAW is slowly but definitely carving a niche in the region. It is a pleasure to inform all that the SAARCLAW had a fruitful year in 2011 with many activities concluded successfully.

With warmest regards,

Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye
President, SAARCLAW
Patron-in-Chief, SAARCLAW Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear Readers,

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you season's greetings and a prosperous year ahead!!

After the successful releasing of three issues last year, we are happy to bring the Fourth Issue of SAARCLAW Newsletter. In this Issue, we have highlighted our recent associations with various organizations for organizing national and international events of social importance. This Issue also has various interesting news updates about the SAARC countries, photos and Interesting Facts about SAARC Countries-INDIA.

I would like to thank all those who have worked towards the release of Fourth Issue including the members of the Editorial Board, Patron, Advisory Board, Expert Observers and Mr. Animesh Acharjee for their efforts in making this release possible.

Your views and opinion matter to us; send us your feedback on the contents of SLN at info@saarclaw.org

Best Regards,

Hemant K. Batra
Secretary General, SAARCLAW
Editor-in-Chief, SAARCLAW Newsletter
hbra@saarclaw.org
KHAP PANCHAYAT DECLARED ILLEGAL BY SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

Khap is a cluster of villages united by caste and geography. Boys and girls within a khap are considered siblings. The 10-15 men who constitute a Khap Panchyat seek to govern the khap formed by same clan or families from neighboring villages especially in matters relating to choice of partners in man-woman relationship and marriage. The infamous institution of Khap Panchyat are found in North Western India in parts of the states of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu where it is known by the name of Katta Panchyat. Khap panchyat imposes its influence through social boycotts, fines and in a number of cases has aided, been instrumental in or caused the death of individuals who refused to honor its clout or obey its dictates.

The Supreme Court of India has in recent time termed the Khap Panchayats as kangaroo courts and declared them illegal. The bench making the decision held “We have in recent years heard of ‘Khap Panchayats’ (known as katta Panchayats in Tamil Nadu) which often decree or encourage honor killings or other atrocities in an institutionalized way on boys and girls of different castes and religion, who wish to get married or have been married, or interfere with the personal lives of people. We are of the opinion that this is wholly illegal and has to be ruthlessly stamped out….there is nothing honorable in honor killing or other atrocities and, in fact, it is nothing but barbaric and shameful murder. Other atrocities in respect of personal lives of people committed by brutal, feudal minded persons deserve harsh punishment. Only in this way can we stamp out such acts of barbarism and feudal mentality. Moreover, these acts take the law into their own hands, and amount to kangaroo courts, which are wholly illegal.”

The State Government has now been directed to suspend the District Magistrate/Collector and Senior Superintendent of Police/Superintendent of Police of the district as well as other officials concerned and charge sheet them. The bench has also empowered the Government to proceed against such officials departmentally for as the bench said “If they failed to promptly apprehend the culprits and others involved and institute criminal proceedings against them, they will be deemed to be directly or indirectly accountable in this connection.”

The guidelines are in ways more than one an effective code on enforcement of gender equality and provides guarantee against sexual harassment in workplace. Both the public sector and the private sector are equally bound by the provisions of the guidelines. For example the rules and regulations of government and public sector bodies relating to conduct and discipline have to include rules prohibiting sexual harassment and provide for appropriate penalties in such rules against the offender while employers in the private sector are required to incorporate in the Standing Orders under the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 the prohibitions against sexual harassment mentioned in the guidelines. Every workplace should also have appropriate conditions for work, leisure, health, hygiene to ensure that there is no hostile working environment for women and no woman has reasonable grounds to believe that she is disadvantaged in connection with her employment. Where any conduct of sexual harassment amounts to specific offences under the Indian Penal Code or any other law the employer shall initiate appropriate action in accordance with the law, by making a complaint with the appropriate authority. Victims of sexual harassment should also have the option to seek transfer of the perpetrator or their own transfer.

The guidelines also provide procedure for filing complaints against sexual harassment. Every employer is required to organize a Complaints Committee which is to be headed by a woman and half members of which should be women. The Complaints Committee should also include an NGO or other organization- which is familiar with sexual harassment. Complaints procedure should be time bound and confidentiality of the complainant has to be maintained. Complainant or witnesses should not be victimized or discriminated against. The Committee is also required to should make an annual report to the concerned Government department and also inform of the action (if any) taken so far by them.

Perhaps the intention of the apex court is to make awareness about and vigilance against sexual harassment an integral part of work culture; for the guidelines go beyond provisions against sexual harassment in rules and regulations and organizations of complaints committee in workplace to provide for humane provisions such as assistance to affected employee in case of sexual harassment by outsiders or third parties, discussion at workers’ meetings, employer-employee
meetings and at other appropriate forums the subject of sexual harassment, propagation of the guidelines to create awareness about the rights of the female employees.

Vishaka Guidelines aim at both prevention and resolution of sexual harassment at workplace. This has also prompted the government to introduce a long-awaited bill prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace in 2007.

Sources: [http://www.un.org](http://www.un.org)  
[http://www.navhindtimes.in/ilive/balancing-scales-groundbreaking-legal-cases-have-changed-women-s-lives](http://www.navhindtimes.in/ilive/balancing-scales-groundbreaking-legal-cases-have-changed-women-s-lives)  

### NEW ALCOHOL CONTROL REGULATIONS FOR BHUTAN

Bhutan Narcotic Control Agency (BNCA) and the Ministry of Economic Affairs have issued the draft Alcohol Control Regulation (ACR). The regulation aims to reduce alcohol consumption through price control and distribution measures and encompasses production, distribution, offering, selling and marketing of alcoholic beverages.

A domestic alcohol manufacturer will be required to obtain a production licence while foreign manufacturers wishing to market their products in Bhutan will have to obtain an entry licence from BNCA or the Department of Trade (DoT) which will issue license only once in two years. Domestic importers with special rights of marketing from manufacturers will also be eligible for entry license.

At the distribution level, the regulation says that both foreign and domestic manufacturers will have to appoint wholesale dealers and distributors for their products. The dealers and distributors have been classified into varying categories with corresponding varying fee for obtaining license.

The retailers, according to the regulation, shall be governed by the Bhutan Retail Trade Regulations, 2006 and other laws in force.

The pricing of alcohol, according to the regulation, will be done based on four categories of alcoholic beverages, namely regular, deluxe, premium and extra premium. The indicative price range of the categories will be declared by the BNCA and the DoT.

The regulation also prohibits serving liquor to minors below the age of 18 years as also its sale inside schools, government offices, dratshangs and any other areas restricted by the government. Further, the ACR also forbid individuals possessing intoxicants that are unlawfully imported, transported, manufactured and collected for which duties have not been paid.


### NATIONAL COUNCIL OF BHUTAN ADOPTS NATIONAL FLAG BILL

The National Council of Bhutan has adopted the National Flag Bill of Bhutan 2012. National Flag Bill of Bhutan 2012 is the first ever legislation sponsored by a private member in the National Council. The Bill was proposed by MP Sonam Yangchen of Wangduephodrang with the rationale that such important symbol of a nation’s sovereignty requires a separate law. Drafted in consultation with several stakeholders, including people at the grassroots, the Bill was revised eight times and also posted online for feedback. The Bill was drafted based on the rules and regulations on the national flag passed by the 36th session of the previous National Assembly in June 1972.

The bill volumize itself to contain seven chapters and 60 sections and through the parlance of this bill it has been made mandatory for the main offices of the Local Government to hoist the national flag on a daily basis but kept it flexible for educational and training institutions. Apart from this, it was also decided that everyone has to wear the national dress wherever the national flag is flying. This, however, would not apply to educational and training institutes.

The need to mention the specifics of the yellow and orange colours of the flag in the Bill was deliberated at length. While some MPs expressed the need to have specific details of the colours mentioned in the Bill, others thought it was not practical. Deputy Chairperson MP Sonam Kinga (PhD) of Trashigang, who was chairing the session, eventually decided that the specifics will not be mentioned in the Bill but in the rules and regulations.

During the earlier discussion, the issue of using the national flag to drape the remains of a deceased was also discussed. The Bill states that except for serving officials of ministerial ranks and above and those specified otherwise by law, the national flag shall not be used to drape the remains of a deceased. As and when the national flag is used to drape the remains of a deceased, the flag shall not be lowered into the grave or burnt on the pyre.

MP Sangay Zam said this is foreign culture and it should not be practiced in the country considering the significance of the national flag.

It was however pointed out that such entitlement is present in the laws of the armed forces. Therefore, it was decided that the section will be kept as it is.

MP Sonam Yangchen said the initiative would help preserve the sanctity of the National Flag in accordance with Section 8.4 of the Constitution. She said that if there was an Act for the National Flag, it would be protected from being misused. She gave the example of the national flag being used on clothes, shoes and under garments for commercial purposes in other countries.

“Bhutan has no clear guidelines on the national flag,” she said. “With the Act, everything will be streamlined.”

THE ACID CONTROL AND ACID CRIME PREVENTION BILL PASSED BY PAKISTAN'S PARLIAMENT

Pakistan's Parliament has passed the Acid and Control and Acid Crime Prevention Bill. The bill aims at protecting women and children against acid attacks and calls for insertion of new sections 336A and 336B in Pakistan Penal Code, 1860. The bill also seeks to amend various acts and codes in relation to protection against acid crimes, and rehabilitation of and compensation for victims of acid crimes.

Section 336A criminalizes the act of voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous means or substances while Section 336B (1) sets out the punishment for such offences. The Bill also provides for the rehabilitation and compensation of victims of acid crimes. Under Section 336B (2), courts may direct an accused person to pay monetary relief to meet expenses incurred and losses suffered by the victim of an acid attack. Such monetary relief may include, but is not limited to, monies in respect of loss of earnings and medical expenses. Section 336B (4) allows courts to take measures to ensure compliance with orders for monetary relief.

The Bill also regulates the sale of poisons. A pharmaceutical chemist is authorized to manufacture, have in his possession, and to use, supply or sell at his pharmacy in the ordinary course of his retail business any preparation, admixture or extract containing any poison; while a medical practitioner or veterinary surgeon is authorized to have in his possession and to use, supply or sell in the lawful practice of his profession any poison; and any dentist is authorized to have in his possession and to use in the lawful practice of his profession any poison.

The bill proposes life imprisonment for acid throwers and a fine of Rs 1 million to be paid to the aggrieved.

The Bill also requires that the government constitute a monitoring board which would take initiatives for punitive actions to decrease the acid throwing offence besides raising public awareness and social mobilization over the issue.

Sources: http://www.equalrightstrust.org/newsstory060112/index.htm

NEW IDENTITY FOR TRANSGENDER CITIZENS OF PAKISTAN

Transgender citizens of Pakistan, a sexual minority, are celebrating to receive judicial protection and newfound civil rights. Last month, the eunuchs celebrated their most recent victory when they were allowed for the first time to register to vote identifying themselves as a third sex - transgender (known as eunuchs or “hijras”). In the past, state-issued ID cards listed individuals only as male or female.

On 1st February, in the august halls of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, a group of “hijras” - biological men who identify psychologically as women - gathered for the latest hearing on the enforcement of a constitutional-rights case brought in 2008 concerning "the humiliation of eunuchs."

The court’s general orders to the government are that, if qualified, a transgender person will be given preference for a civil service job. They also receive a form of affirmative action: a eunuch with a 10th grade education is accorded the same qualifications as a non-transgender person with a bachelor's degree, according to one attorney working on the case. The court has been monitoring the progress of the case through periodic hearings, about 20 so far.


LAW TO RUN ZILA PARISHAD BY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES SOON: BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has a four-tier local government structure where the Zila Parishad (district councils) stands lowest at the district level. At present Zila Parishad consists of an executive secretariat with no elected members, although as per local government commission’s recommendation in the year 1997 Zila Parishad is required to be an elected body. However, no election has so far been held. In this regard, Bangladesh's Local Government Rural Development Minister Syed Ashraful Islam has recently said that the government will enact and amend necessary laws during its tenure to ensure that elected representatives can run Zila Parshads across the country. “We don't want to run the zila parshads by the government-appointed administrators. It should be run by the elected representatives,” the minister said at the orientation programme for the newly-appointed administrators and chief executive officers of Zila Parishad at National Institute of Local Government auditorium.

Sources: http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/latest_news.php?nid=35257
http://www.unescap.org/huset/lgstudy/country/bangladesh/bangladesh.html

BANGLADESH CABINET APPROVES ANTI PORNOGRAPHY LAW

The Bangladesh government has approved its first-ever anti-porn law today that carries a maximum 10-year sentence for the production, preservation, marketing, carrying, distribution, sale and display of any form of porn. Called the Pornography Control Act-2011, the draft of the proposed anti-porn law was given the green light at a weekly cabinet meeting headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed and is believed to be the country's first law specifically targeting the spread of pornography.
The aim of the proposed law as stated in its introduction is “to prevent the decay of moral and social values as demonstration of pornography is responsible to many extents for social disturbances and criminal activities.”

Under the proposed law, porn is being defined as videos and photography featuring erotic poses, acting, gestures and half-naked dances. Books and magazines containing sexually stimulating content as well as sculptures and leaflets are also targeted.

According to reports, violators could be slapped with the maximum 10-year jail sentence for any porn involving children. Any other objectionable content would carry a 7-year jail term and $2,440 fine. Porn that’s distributed through websites or mobile devices would result in a maximum 5-year sentence and a $2,440 fine.

The proposed tough law against pornography seems to have come about after a string of sex tape scandals involving female celebrities. Victims alleged their videos were doctored or filmed in secret to tarnish their reputation. In many cases, the police failed to act against the culprits, saying existing laws did not enable them to prosecute those involved in production and distribution of such videos.

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**BANGLADESHI CABINET APPROVES ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING LAW**

The Bangladeshi cabinet approved a new Anti-Human Trafficking Law incorporating a provision for death penalty to a trafficker. The approval came at the regular cabinet meeting with Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Abul Kalam Azad, Bangladeshi PM’s press secretary, told reporters after the cabinet meeting that the Anti-Human Trafficking Law will help to prevent human trafficking, which is also an international concern. He said that a trafficker also can be awarded life imprisonment with a fine of 500,000 taka (6,329 U.S. dollars) under the new law.


**SRI LANKA DECLARES 2012 AS ‘TRILINGUAL YEAR’ TO UNIFY THE NATION**

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa has recently launched a tri-lingual initiative aimed at making sure that all in Sri Lanka learn the three main languages in use – Sinhalese, Tamil and English. The initiative was launched in the presence of former Indian President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

As part of the initiative, 2012 has been declared as the year for a Trilingual Sri Lanka, and a 10-year plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka was also launched.

Mr. Kalam welcomed the initiative and outlined the characteristics that a noble nation possessed. It was not merely economic or human development indicators that formed the measure of nobility, he said, and added that it was the quality of people that was important.

Sunimal Frenando, Advisor to the President of Sri Lanka and Coordinator of the Trilingual initiative, said that a socio-linguistic study conducted last year in Sri Lanka, showed that a majority of the Tamil wanted to learn Sinhalese, and that Sinhalese wanted to learn Tamil. The survey showed that native Sinhala and Tamil speakers had no desire to be isolated and maintain ethnic exclusivity in matters of business or employment, friendship or entertainment.

The Sri Lankan cabinet had last year approved the President’s proposal to implement a 10-year national action plan formulated as the basis for a National Programme to motivate the people to acquire language skills in all three major languages.

The government presenting the Trilingual Initiative to the cabinet last year observed that “one of the far-seeing initiatives that need to be taken to prevent the resurgence of terrorism which ravaged the country for over three decades is to encourage the people of Sri Lanka to communicate effectively in all three languages.”

[http://www.govlk.com/content/2012-declared-year-trilingual-sri-lanka](http://www.govlk.com/content/2012-declared-year-trilingual-sri-lanka)

**SAARCLAW EVENTS**

**KNOWLEDGE-SHARING WORKSHOP ON “SUB-REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS” SUCCESSFULLY ORGANIZED 8TH TO 10TH DECEMBER 2011**

In order to facilitate an exchange of knowledge about regional human rights bodies, and to envision a sub-regional human rights mechanism for SAARC countries, O.P. Jindal Global University in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and in support with SAARCLAW and Asian African Legal Consultative Organisation (AALCO) hosted an International Workshop from 8th to 10th December 2011.

In October 2009, the Heads of State and Government of the ten ASEAN member states adopted the Cha-Am Hua Hin Declaration, which launched the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). Lessons from ASEAN experience with its sub-regional human rights mechanism would be particularly valuable to South Asia. The workshop was aimed to launch a cooperative and consultative process among South Asian countries towards a common goal of eventually establishing a sub-regional human rights mechanism. It brought together scholars, human rights advocates, representatives of Governments, legislators, media, civil society organisations, and national human rights...
The final report will reflect these discussions and the feedback from the various meetings. The report will identify the laws impeding effective HIV and AIDS responses; examine the human rights implications of these laws; and examine the impact on HIV prevention programmes specifically with regard to marginalized groups of people.

**NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (NLU), DELHI IN COLLABORATION WITH SAARCLAW IS ORGANISING THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ACCESS TO LEGAL INFORMATION & RESEARCH IN DIGITAL AGE**

NLU Delhi in collaboration with SAARCLAW is organizing its first International Conference on Access to Legal Information & Research in Digital Age from 29th February to 02nd March 2012. The main objective of the conference is to discuss various issues concerning applications of Information and Communication Technology in Legal Research, IPR issues in publishing scholarly publications, various open access initiatives, free access to law movement, online legal databases and other co-related topics.

The high proliferation in the use of information technology has given birth to new information age also called as electronic age where information users depend on computer assisted legal research. A number of electronic databases have been designed by various commercial publishers worldwide for supporting legal research and scholarship. Apart from commercial databases, many open access initiatives have also taken place around the world for the support of law and legal scholarship by government, Ngo’s and individual efforts. For advancement of legal research it is critical for students, faculty members and surely the library professionals to equip themselves with efficient knowledge and training to handle digital information available around the world.

Since the mid-1990s the Internet’s World-Wide-Web has provided the necessary technical platform to enable free access to computerized legal information. Prior to the web there were many online legal information systems and numerous legal information products distributed on CD-ROM, but there was no significant provision of free access to legal information anywhere in the world. The ease of use of graphical browsers from around 1994, and the web’s use of hypertext as its principal access mechanism (at that time) meant that the web provided a simple and relatively consistent means by which legal information could be both provided and accessed as an attractive alternative to the proprietary, expensive and training-intensive search engines on which commercial online services largely relied.

This conference is the first of its kind of measure in South Asia to facilitate the creation of a single platform of Law Professors, Judges, Advocates, Law Students and Librarians to share views and expertise in aid of fruitful utilization of digital information and thus to bring forward the problems faced by law librarians in an increasingly electronic environment while dealing with licensing, use of databases, and reference linking, user education and preservation of digital formats in the changing realm of publications pattern.

**PROJECT: “SUPPORT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENABLING ENVIRONMENT BY SCANNING OF LAWS THAT IMPEDE EFFECTIVE HIV AND AIDS RESPONSES IN INDIA”**

UNAIDS Technical Support Facility for South Asia (TSF-SA) and South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation in Law (SAARCLAW) are working closely together on implementation of the UNDP funded project “Support to the Development of Enabling Environment by Scanning of Laws that Impede Effective HIV and AIDS Responses In India”.

This project is strongly strategically aligned with SAARCLAW’s mandate and current work. The members of SAARCLAW have consistently worked towards bringing together legal communities in the region for closer cooperation and developing law as a source and instrument of social change for development. In 2011 UNAIDS and SAARCLAW signed an MOU to strengthen advocacy around human rights and laws and policies based on the rights framework in the context of the HIV epidemic within the SAARC region.

The main components of the project are development of a comprehensive report and four regional meetings. The report will be a comprehensive appraisal and analysis of laws in India, which impede an effective HIV and AIDS response. The consultations will be held in Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai and Delhi and all key stakeholders in the four areas will be invited to the consultations. It is important that there be representation from local government functionaries, NGOs CBOS, PLHIV and people affected by HIV and AIDS. In addition participation from key populations at higher risk such as sex workers, transgender people, Hijras (enunch), men who have sex with men and drug users is required. During these consultations findings from the draft report will be shared, experiences and ideas will be recorded and recommendations discussed. The final report will reflect these discussions and the feedback from institutions from SAARC member countries to discuss the framework for a sub-regional human rights mechanism.

Key Note address of the event was delivered by Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Former UN Secretary-General and Former Minister of State for External Affairs, who while addressing the august gathering, elaborated the universality of human rights and reasonable limits on this concept based on local cultural and social requirements.

Speaking at the occasion, Professor C Raj Kumar, Vice Chancellor, OP Jindal Global University called for establishing a regional human rights institutional mechanism in South Asia. He said “establishment of a South Asian Human Rights Commission that will have a broad mandate to protect and promote human rights in all countries in South Asia will help in developing a shared understanding of human rights values within South Asia.

On behalf of Saarclaw, Justice U.C. Banerjee, Justice Kalyan Shreshtha, Mr. Rakesh Munjal and Ms. Pema Chodan participated in various thematic sessions of the Workshop.
Professor (Dr.) Ranbir Singh, Vice Chancellor, NLU, Delhi, is the Chief Patron and Professor (Dr.) Srikrishna Deva Rao, Professor of Law & Registrar, NLU, Delhi, Mr. Hemant K. Batra, Secretary General-SAARCLAW, Mr. Rakesh Munjal, Senior Advocate & Member Executive-SAARCLAW, Mr. Vinay Ahuja, Managing Director Mohan Law House are the Co-Patrons for the conference.

INTERESTING FACTS ON SAARC COUNTRIES

INDIA
The Constituent Assembly took almost three years (two years, eleven months and seventeen days to be precise) to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution for Independent India. During this period, it held eleven sessions covering a total of 165 days. Of these, 114 days were spent on the consideration of the Draft Constitution.

On 29 August, 1947, the Constituent Assembly set up a Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to prepare a Draft Constitution for India. While deliberating upon the draft Constitution, the Assembly moved, discussed and disposed of as many as 2,473 amendments out of a total of 7,635 tabled.

The Constitution of India was adopted on 26 November, 1949 and the honourable members appended their signatures to it on 24 January, 1950. In all, 284 members actually signed the Constitution. On that day when the Constitution was being signed, it was drizzling outside and it was interpreted as a sign of a good omen.

The Constitution of India came into force on 26 January, 1950. On that day, the Assembly ceased to exist, transforming itself into the Provisional Parliament of India until a new Parliament was constituted in 1952.

Source: http://parliamentofindia.nic.in/ls/debates/facts.htm