

South Asian Youth Summit kicks off in the capital

The 2- day Summit focuses on Democracy, Open Borders & Peace

New Delhi, Delhi, November 25, 2008 /[India PRwire](#)/ -- Youth representatives (18 - 30yrs) from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives have gathered in the capital to deliberate on various political, economic and development issues confronting their region as part of the 2-day **South Asia Youth Summit'2008 (SAYS'08)** . The Summit which is being organised by Liberal Youth South Asia (LYSA) and Centre for Public Policy Research with the support of Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNF), has brought together nearly 100 youth representatives from the fields of Media, Politics, Arts, Law and Business from across South Asia to create a space for a liberal dialogue on common public policy issues faced by South Asian countries and to list out five immediate policy issues that need to be tackled.

The Summit was inaugurated today by Dr. M.S Gill, Hon'ble Minister of Sports & Youth affairs and Mr. Navin Jindal, Member of Parliament. Some of the key issues that are being taken up during the 2-day Summit include: Governance, Human Rights & Democracy in South Asia; Market economy & South Asian free trade zone; Peace & conflict resolution: Role of Youth, Education, health and poverty elimination; Promoting youth participation in South Asian Politics. Over the next 2 days, the delegates would be exposed to a variety of simulations, discussions and debates leading to the Summit Declaration and Plan of Action for the next one year.

The inauguration was followed by the release of LYSA's publication- "**Our Common Future: South Asia**", a cache of responses to several problems raging the region, and keys to tackle them. A basic feature of the book is the portrayal of youth as pioneers of change. It contains articles of eminent writers from across the region.

Recent events in the South Asian subcontinent, particularly the disturbing escalation in everyday violence, have led to this conclave of South Asians who can work in search of strategies that may diminish the antagonisms, suspicions and fears. Not addressing the issues young people face today can result in adverse economic, social and political consequences. Governments and policy makers across the region are looking at youth issues, mainly education and employment, and their impact on the countries' development.

"The turbulent past 60 years of South Asia have cost the region dearly. The prospects of a region, which could have been a leading geopolitical entity in a multipolar world, have been dampened. Therefore, it is high time new solutions and right directions are sought, especially with the help of the youth of the region," says D. Dhanuraj, Secretary General, LYSA.

South Asia is home to 1.5 billion people, who together comprise 1/5 of all humanity. One fifth of the population in South Asia is **between** the ages of **15 and 24**. This is the **largest number of young people ever to transition into adulthood**, both in South Asia and in the world as a whole. The prevailing conditions of political and economic insecurity, and the need to address them in a collective manner, are compelling reasons to forge a strong South Asian community capable of acting locally and regionally.

"South Asia portrays a culturally rich region, which has for decades been a victim of turbulence. Politically, the young generation's opinion is of crucial importance as they are open to ideas of change and it is they who can make an impact and lead to the formation of a peaceful and democratic South Asia. Thus, the youth of the region are the torchbearers of a globalised world", says Dr René Klaff, Regional Director, FNSt.

Some of the eminent participants from South Asia who are attending the Summit include: Ms. Arpita Nepal, Samruddhi Foundation, Nepal, H.E. Mr. Afrasiab, Deputy High Commissioner, Pakistan, Dr. Donya Aziz, Member, National Assembly Pakistan, Mr. Fazle Rahim Khan, Former President of the Liberal Forum, Bangladesh, Mr. Pradeep Peiris, Centre for Policy Alternatives, Sri Lanka, Dr Najmul Hossain, Economist, Bangladesh, Prof. PV Indiresan, Padma Bhushan recipient and former Director IIT Madras, Prof. Dipankar Sen Gupta, Jammu University, India etc.

"The nations of South Asia are more alike than they are different." Cultures and languages spill across national borders, most of which were created in the colonial era. Together, the eight countries of South Asia—India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives and Afghanistan are members of SAARC—the South

Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. Through SAARC, its member countries are working together to identify solutions for their common problems. South Asian economies are a mixture of poverty and plenty, with advanced and productive economies coupled with persistent poverty.

Notes to Editor

About South Asia Youth Summit (SAYS'08)

SAYS! The South Asian Youth Summit, with its vision of making a democratic and peaceful South Asia with open borders is designed to provide a platform for youth to interact, debate, and understand various issues confronting the region from a liberal perspective. SAYS, designed to be an annual event is organised by Liberal Youth South Asia (LYSA), and is hosted by Centre for Policy Research, India to take a stock of socio-economic and political milieu of the South Asian countries and to emphasize the role of youth in restructuring the society, by addressing challenges which present a defining test to the global arena.

About Friedrich- Naumann –Stiftung für die Freiheit

Friedrich-Naumann—**Stiftung** für die Freiheit is committed to achieving and maintaining human rights and human dignity, the basis on which freedom flourishes. In South Asia, the Foundation has been working towards the strengthening of democratic structures and the implementation of human rights. In doing so, it helps to create a broad and firm political base for economic and social reforms. Since personal freedom and free trade are inseparably linked, the Foundation seeks to promote open markets in South Asia as well as throughout the world.

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