



लोक सभा सचिवालय

प्रेस एवं जन सम्पर्क स्कंध

संसद भवन, नई दिल्ली

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

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## प्रेस विज्ञप्ति PRESS RELEASE

### **'PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY IS IMPERATIVE FOR SAARC COOPERATION': SAYS LOK SABHA SPEAKER**

**Camp: Colombo, 05 October 2017:** On the second day of the 8<sup>th</sup> Conference of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, Lok Sabha Speaker Smt. Sumitra Mahajan chaired the Session on the theme "Promoting Parliamentary Diplomacy and Open Parliament in the age of digitalization". Mr. Abdulla Maseeh Mohammed, Speaker of Maldives; Mr. Karu Jayasurya, Speaker of Sir Lanka; and Mr. Itfikar Ahmed Cheema, MP, Pakistan were the lead Speakers.

Introducing the theme to the delegates, Smt. Mahajan observed that parliamentary diplomacy is imperative for SAARC cooperation. She said that Parliaments have various avenues to take part in international diplomacy and the breakthrough in digitization had further enhanced parliamentary cooperation. Smt. Mahajan was of view that sharing of information and interactions among Parliamentarians would help in meeting the common challenges that SAARC countries are facing.

Smt. Mahajan informed the delegates about the steps being taken in Parliament of India to make parliamentary institutions more accountable and transparent. Referring to several steps taken during recent years, she observed that the functioning of Parliament has become more open with the help of digitalization. As such, both parliamentarians and parliamentary officers are being sensitized to take up the challenges of digitalization for meeting the increasing expectations of the people. On a suggestion of Speaker of Bhutan to extend cooperation in capacity-building, Smt. Mahajan assured that Parliament of India is always ready to help SAARC countries.

Participating in the discussions, Shri Rajeev Shukla, MP (Rajya Sabha) mentioned that International organizations had justified their existence by furthering friendship, peace and prosperity among nations through collective endeavour. He was of the opinion that parliamentary diplomacy provides a foundation for understanding the role and challenges of international organizations. In this regard, Shri Shukla added that friendly relations among parliamentarians always help in strengthening the bilateral and multilateral relations.

Speaking on theme, Shri Satish Kumar Gautam MP, (Lok Sabha) informed the delegates that Lok Sabha Speaker had taken effective steps to make Parliament of India paperless which is a step towards *e-sansad*. He said that direct telecast of Parliamentary proceedings had made parliamentary functioning more transparent. Further, the Websites of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha provide information about activities of the Parliament to the stakeholders. He said that these initiatives had brought Parliaments and the people closer.

The second topic was “SAARC Parliamentarians’ role in preserving Cultural and Archaeological Heritage in South Asia Region’. Speaker, Bhutan chaired the session. Participating in the discussion, Dr. Vinay P. Sahasrabuddhe, MP (Rajya Sabha) emphasized the common cultural identity of the SAARC countries. He mentioned that these countries have common problems of poverty and other challenges and also common aspiration to be developed. He further said that it is not that we are united despite being diverse, but that we are united because we are diverse. He added that SAARC countries have common spiritual and cultural roots which help them in overcoming challenges. All our countries worship nature. He informed the delegates that Article 29 and Article 51 a (f) of Constitution of India give freedom to preach, practise and preserve its own cultural heritage.

Several delegates participated in the discussions, with constructive and meaningful suggestions.

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