

South Asia Node of APFRN Annual Report 2007

Node Leadership

With the departure of Dr Sanjay Seth from La Trobe University in July 2007, Professor John Fitzgerald stepped in as the interim node convenor. In 2008 he was succeeded by Professor Sisira Jayasuriya who joined La Trobe University as a Professor of Economics in January 2008. In addition to acting as node convenor, Professor Jayasuriya also assumes the role as Director of the South Asia Research Facility under the umbrella of the South Asia node.

The Node wishes to express its gratitude to Professor Fitzgerald for taking on the role as the Node convenor during the year.

South Asia Nodal conference, 21-22 June 2007

The South Asia Node held its feature conference over two days at the end June 2007. The conference was supported by node funds and assisted by a grant from the La Trobe Institute for India and South Asia. The theme of the conference was "Historiography and Non-Western Pasts". It brought together historians of South Asia and of aboriginal Australia to discuss the common challenges they faced in writing the history of peoples who had ways of remembering their pasts other than that of rationalist historiography (including myth, epic, legend). The conference assembled very distinguished participants, including Henry Reynolds, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Jorn Rusen, Bain Atwood, Greg Denning and others.

In terms of intellectual interest, attendance, and future outcomes, it was by any measure a notable success. Average attendance each day was over fifty people. Some papers delivered at the conference will be published in a special issue of the international journal, *Postcolonial Studies*, and all papers will appear in an edited volume, in which both Routledge and Cambridge Scholars Press have expressed interest.

South Asia Node and the South Asia Research Facility

a) Annual conference

On September 27 & 28, the South Asia Research Facility (SARF) organised the second of its five annual conferences, focussing on current issues and presenting commissioned research on key topics nominated by AusAID. The 2007 conference, titled *South Asia Update and Poverty Dynamics*, was held at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. Around one hundred participants took part over the two days including representatives of foreign governments and international organisations, senior public servants, academic specialists, postgraduate students and members of the Press. Of special note was the participation of Mr Nazrul Islam, Counsellor of the High Commission of Bangladesh; His Excellency Mr Jalil Abbas Jilani and Tanveer Khaskheli, High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan respectively; and His Excellency Mr Kusumpala Balapatabendi, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka.

Mr Praful Patel, Vice President of the World Bank, delivered the Opening Address on “Economic development in South Asia”. Other speakers included Mr Richard Vokes, Asian Development Bank Country Director for Sri Lanka, and researchers from local and overseas universities and from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. DACSA scholarship holders, funded through the node’s contract with AusAID, were also active participants.

Professor Anne Krueger, of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and formerly Chief Economist at the World Bank and First Deputy Managing Director of the IMF, gave a special address on the topic “India’s Reforms and Prospects” at the conference dinner.

Selected papers were refereed and published on the ARC APFRN website

http://www.sueztosuva.org.au/south_asia/sa_research_facility.php

b) Targeted Supplementary Research

Murdoch University was commissioned to undertake a research on the environment of South Asia with a grant of \$10,500.

c) PhD Scholarship Program

The South Asia Node, through SARF, manages the PhD scholarship program on behalf of AusAID. Under this program eight scholarships were awarded in 2006 to successful applicants from Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the Maldives. Those eight applicants are hosted by the Australian National University, Monash, La Trobe, University of Wollongong, Curtin, Murdoch and James Cook. However, due to the political situation that hindered his return to Australia to continue his candidature in 2007, the student from Pakistan had to have his scholarship withdrawn. The other seven students are progressing well in their studies.