

REGIONAL BONDING: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON RANIL WICKREMESINGHE'S PRESCRIPTION FOR INDIA-PAKISTAN PEACE

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - Sri Lanka

At a time when India has more or less shut down all conversations on the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and walked away from the ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), former Sri Lankan Prime Minister [Ranil Wickremesinghe's push](#) for [regional economic integration](#) and for India-Pakistan dialogue should be studied carefully by New Delhi. Speaking at [The Hindu's Huddle conclave](#) last week, [Mr. Wickremesinghe set out a number of suggestions](#). He blamed India-Pakistan tensions for bringing economic integration within the SAARC region to a "standstill", explaining that the original purpose of the South Asian group was to build a platform where bilateral issues could be set aside in the interest of regional growth. Decrying the lack of economic integration in South Asia, and the failure of SAARC, as well as BIMSTEC (which includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand), to engender more intra-regional trade, Mr. Wickremesinghe suggested an even smaller sub-grouping of four countries with complementary economies: India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Thailand, to begin the process of reducing tariffs and demolishing non-tariff barrier regimes. When it comes to the intra-regional share of total trade, SAARC and BIMSTEC languish behind groupings such as ASEAN, EU and MERCOSUR. The Sri Lankan leader also suggested that with India's leadership, a more integrated South Asian region would be better equipped to negotiate for better terms with RCEP so as not to be cut out of the "productivity network" in Asia, and envisioned an Economic Integration Road Map to speed up the process.

Given the current policy trajectory of the Modi government, it is unlikely that any of the suggestions will be welcomed. The government has made it clear that talks with Pakistan are strictly off the table, and that a SAARC summit, which has not been held since 2014, is unlikely to be convened anytime soon. Second, the government, which has taken a protectionist turn on multilateral trade pacts, is relying more on direct bilateral deals with countries rather than overarching ones that might expose Indian markets to flooding by Chinese goods. For any regional sub-grouping in South Asia to flourish, it is India that will have to make the most concessions given the vast trade deficits India's neighbours have at present, which it may not wish to do. However, the overall projection that India's global reach will be severely constrained unless it is integrated with its neighbours, and tensions with Pakistan are resolved, cannot be refuted. India needs to be more accommodative for the realisation of its ambitions.

You have reached your limit for free articles this month.

Register to The Hindu for free and get unlimited access for 30 days.

Already have an account ? [Sign in](#)

Sign up for a 30-day free trial. [Sign Up](#)

Find mobile-friendly version of articles from the day's newspaper in one easy-to-read list.

Enjoy reading as many articles as you wish without any limitations.

A select list of articles that match your interests and tastes.

Move smoothly between articles as our pages load instantly.

A one-stop-shop for seeing the latest updates, and managing your preferences.

We brief you on the latest and most important developments, three times a day.

*Our Digital Subscription plans do not currently include the e-paper ,crossword, iPhone, iPad mobile applications and print. Our plans enhance your reading experience.

Why you should pay for quality journalism - [Click to know more](#)

Please enter a valid email address.

From the abrogation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, to the landmark Ayodhya verdict, 2019 proved to be an eventful year.

Subscribe to The Hindu now and get unlimited access.

Already have an account? [Sign In](#)

Sign up for a 30-day free trial. [Sign Up](#)

To continue enjoying The Hindu, You can turn off your ad blocker or [Subscribe to The Hindu](#).

[Sign up for a 30 day free trial.](#)

END

Downloaded from **crackIAS.com**

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS