

'Media must help build Pak-India friendship'

Experts say Saarc can't reach potential until both countries trust each other

✪ OUR CORRESPONDENT
LAHORE

Independent media in India and Pakistan can play an important part in cooling tensions between the two countries, which are the only impediment to a prosperous and stable South Asian region, said speakers at a seminar at the University of Management and Technology on Saturday.

The seminar, titled 'Role of media for a stable and prosperous South Asia', was held in connection with the 26th anniversary of the South

Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

If Germany, France and other countries could come together shortly after World War II to develop exemplary ties in the form of the European Union, there is no reason why Pakistan and India, who lived together for 800 years before Partition, could not do the same, said Rahmatullah Javed, former secretary general of the Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Javed briefly discussed the history, objectives and func-

tioning of Saarc. He said that the organisation could not reach its true potential unless India and Pakistan improved their relationship.

"Unfortunately the distrust increases quickly, even after a fireworks blast in India or Pakistan. The media can play a greater role in this regards by promoting people-to-people contacts and trade ventures among SAARC countries," he said.

UMT Rector Dr Hassan Sohaib Murad said that Pakistan and India needed to learn from other regional

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Prof Mujahid Mansoori

blocs and associations. "Pakistan must cash in on its geopolitical position by working as an active member in all regional and international organisations and also

by getting observer status in other regional associations," he said.

He urged media students to think outside the box and rather than just becoming reporters of events, to try to become "creators of events".

"Our needs are common and we have tremendous potential and capacity for trade and to serve these common needs. The only problem is unfriendly ties between India and Pakistan," said Prof Mujahid Mansoori, the chairman of the UMT Department of Media and

Communication, about the potential of Saarc. He said the media should not be a mere propaganda tool but try to be a peacemaker. Prof Mian Muhammad Asif, who has taught political science at universities in Pakistan and Canada, presented a comparison of the European Union and Saarc. "Pakistan and India must recognise the problems of their people and realise that, in the greater interest of the people of South Asia, they need to activate and strengthen the Saarc forum," he said.