

‘Remove trade barriers in Saarc region’

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Speakers at a roundtable on Sunday urged the policymakers of the Saarc region to take more steps to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers and set a standard for products to boost trade and businesses in the region, reports UNB.

“Trade and business won’t get a boost unless the tariff and non-tariff barriers are removed,” said Shafiqul Islam, additional secretary to the Commerce Ministry, while addressing the event.

Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) organised the roundtable titled “Unleashing South Asia: Imperatives for Action, Revitalising Safta: Beyond Barriers” at Sonargaon Hotel in the city.

Pakistan’s Commerce Ministry’s joint secretary Taimur Tajammal, first secretary of Afghan Embassy in Dhaka Farida Azizi Shariszata, former official of Indian Foreign Trade and Development Commission Sanjeev Nandwani and Sri Lankan

Institute of Policy Studies official Kithmina Hewage, among others, spoke at the function.

However, no government official from India participated in the roundtable.

Shafiqul Islam said the Saarc member countries should work more for tariff harmonisation of products to ease the business among themselves.

Monjur Ahmed, former FBCCI director, said setting a Saarc standard is now essential for the sake of increasing regional trade. "Saarc standard organisation SARSO must be strengthened and equipped with skilled manpower to deal with the trade-related issues", he said.

Kithmina Hewage said most of the Saarc member states are focusing on India to enhance regional trade whereas India is focusing on its own business for global trade.

Afghan businessman Jalaluddin Saif said there is no difference of opinions among the businessmen of different countries in the region regarding enhancing the trade relations.

"But all the problems are lying on the policymaking and political levels," he said.