

SASNET Builds Up Indo-Swedish Collaborations

SASNET, a Swedish research network about South Asia, has been credited for boosting up several Indo-Swedish research projects

By Lars Eklund

SASNET, the Swedish South Asian Studies Network, was established through a grant from Sida/SAREC and Lund University in 2000 in order to create an institutional base in Sweden for academic competence building and thematic work on present day India and South Asia.

The organisation was initiated by Swedish government with an aim to strengthen the then relatively weak academic competence in Sweden in this economically and strategically important region - South Asia.

The driving force behind the creation of SASNET was Professor Staffan Lindberg, who became its first Director. He was succeeded by Dr. Anna Lindberg in 2007. As I had an experience of 25 years in running a Swedish magazine on South Asia (SYDASIEN), I too was roped in on the board of the network

The objective of the network has always been to encourage and promote an open and dynamic networking process, in which Swedish researchers cooperate with researchers in India and with researchers from rest of the world especially South Asia. The



WORK IN PROGRESS: Mr. Lars Eklund (left) with SASNET's Founder and the former Director, Prof. Staffan Lindberg

network is open to all sciences - from medicine and technology to social sciences and humanities. SASNET gives high priority to building co-operation between disciplines, across faculties, as well as with institutions in the Nordic countries and in South Asia. The basic idea is, South Asian studies can be most fruitfully pursued in co-operation among researchers who are working in different institutions but are experts in their mother disciplines.

Networking

SASNET has so far identified more than 230 Swedish university departments involved in some kind of South Asia (mostly India) related research and educational collaboration projects.

The main tool for community building has been the Internet gateway. Our website www.sasnet.lu.se has made it possible for researchers at Swedish universities to connect, and become a useful

resource for Scandinavian researchers, European researchers as well as colleagues in India, and the other parts of the world. Our website allows researchers across the world to be updated with the latest South Asia related research. There are more than 400 researchers working in Sweden on South Asia.

The website also contains extensive information about conferences held over the world and other

SASNET's website is one of the best managed sites for information on South Asian Studies in the world



Mr. Lars Eklund with SASNET's Current Director, Dr. Anna Lindberg

grant. It was only after that, the project received a huge grant from the European Commission in 2004, and now it is fully running with yearly workshops in India and an active network of scientists all over South Asia.

SASNET has also played a key role in implementing a successful application for Lund University to coordinate the European Commission-funded Erasmus Mundus External Co-operation Window Lot 15 (EMECW15) for India. This programme, aiming at increasing cooperation and

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knowledge exchange between Europe and India, will start functioning from 2009. This EMECW15 is a consortium of twelve European and eight Indian universities. Through EMECW15, students, researchers and academic staff from both Europe and India will have an opportunity to study or work in the partner universities on advantageous scholarships.

Other focused SASNET activities include seminars, workshops, and organising conferences in Sweden at least once a year. At the European level, SASNET has contributed to the vitalisation of the European Association of South Asian Studies (EASAS) by hosting the 18th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies in 2004 with more than 400 delegates. ■

(The writer is the Deputy Director for SASNET, based at Lund University. He was also a Former Editor of SYDASIEN magazine)



Lund University

useful information for academics as well as non-academics. Today, SASNET's website is considered to be one of the best managed sites for information on South Asian Studies in the world.

Boosting Indo-Swedish collaborations

The most important feature of SASNET has the provision of planning grants to encourage new researches and educational projects. Our planning grants have helped Swedish universities to initiate and stimulate many new research and education projects in South Asian studies, whose

rate of success has also been remarkably high. Today, most of the project plans have developed into full-fledged projects, receiving institutional funding from various sources.

The SASNET Fermented Foods project, initiated by Prof. Baboo Nair, Dept. of Applied Nutrition and Food Chemistry, Lund University is one of our many success stories. This Indo-Swedish project focusing on fermentation as a method of food preservation in relation to public health and social welfare was first supported by SASNET through planning