

## **SAARC Award - 2004**

### **Citation**

The cross-fertilization of philosophies, cultures and ideas in the South Asian region has gifted us a shared heritage. Despite these, and the realities of common challenges and a shared future, the region has been slow to take on the mantle of regional cooperation. The imperative to resolutely fight poverty, disease and ignorance and ensure the welfare of the peoples of South Asia clearly underscores the need for enhancing cooperation in the region.

The late President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh took the bold initiative, in the early 1980s, of setting in motion the process of consultation and deliberations for the creation of a forum of cooperation in the region aimed at promoting overall progress and economic development. His vision and unremitting efforts at mobilizing public opinion in the region in favour of institutionalized cooperation culminated in the formation of SAARC in December 1985. SAARC was thus born out of a collective desire to harness the positive impulses in South Asia to reinforce the primacy of the spirit of cooperation in a region that is home to one fifth of humanity.

Recognizing with deep appreciation his contribution to fostering regional cooperation, the Heads of State or Government of SAARC at the Thirteenth Summit, decided to confer the SAARC Award-2004, the first such award, posthumously to the late President Ziaur Rahman. The seed of regional cooperation sown by the late President continues to grow with the intensification of the SAARC process. SAARC will remain a testimony to his vision and foresight.

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