

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO-73
ANSWERED ON- 20/07/2023

ISSUES IN SOUTH ASIAN UNIVERSITY

73. SHRI ELAMARAM KAREEM

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be please to state :-

- (a) whether Government is aware of the protest of students and faculties in South Asian University (SAU);
- (b) the number of students and faculties who have been suspended from SAU recently and the reasons for such decision;
- (c) whether Government intervened in this issue at any point to address the concerns raised by the students; and
- (d) the manner in which Government is planning to avoid such issues in the future?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

(DR. RAJKUMAR RANJAN SINGH)

(a) The South Asian University (SAU) is a self governing, autonomous international body jointly managed and financed by the 8 SAARC member states. It is hosted by India under the South Asian University Act 2008 by Parliament. Under the SAU Act, the University has full legal personality including provision to make rules and regulations for the operation of the University.

The University authorities have been keeping the Ministry informally informed regarding the issues that have come up between the management and the students and faculty members due to their involvement in acts of indiscipline and violation of Code of Conduct.

(b) As informed by SAU, disciplinary action was taken against five students. The University authorities have informed us that due process as prescribed in the SAU Rules and Regulations was followed including constitution of a High-Powered Committee to consider the matter of students' indiscipline, including manhandling of the Acting President in October - November 2022.

Four faculty members were suspended for their violation of the Code of Conduct as per SAU Regulations for instigating the students. The University has also conveyed that due process as

prescribed in the SAU Rules and Regulations was followed including constitution of a Fact Finding Committee, which recommended the action.

(c) Even though India hosts the University, legally South Asian University is an international organization that is autonomous, jointly managed by the eight SAARC member states through its own independent institutional architecture. Thus India does not exercise any direct control over the day to day functioning of the University. The SAU Governing Board (GB), comprising two nominees from each SAARC member state and the University's President serves as the highest policy and decision making body of the University. The Indian Board Members have to therefore, work with the other 15 Board members to manage the affairs of the University. It is well known that due to hurdles created by one SAARC member state all SAARC meetings, including the SAU Governing Board Meeting have not been held in recent years. This has inevitably impacted the proper functioning of the University.

(d) India remains committed in promoting regional cooperation in the SAARC region, and works with other like-minded SAARC countries to develop the South Asian University into a regional centre of excellence in higher learning for the benefit of the youth of South Asia.
