



**SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
SECRETARIAT**

**Message No. 208 ESC 26
No. SAARC/ESC/243/2026**

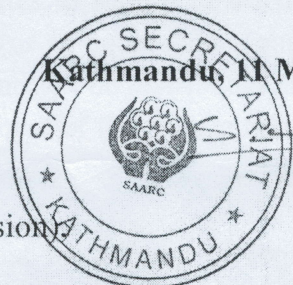
The Secretariat of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) presents its compliments to the Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs of the Member States and has the honour to inform that, in accordance with the Calendar of Activities of the SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) for the year 2026, approved by the 15th Meeting of the Governing Board of SAARC Cultural Centre (SCC) held on 19–20 August 2025 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and subsequently endorsed at the 62nd session of the Programming Committee Meeting held in Kathmandu from 11 to 12 February 2026, the SCC has announced the theme “*Interpreting Shared Heritage: Cross-Cultural Narratives in Museums in the SAARC Region*” under the SAARC Research Grants-2026 based on the sub-themes identified in the Call for Proposals.

In this connection, as informed by the SCC, the proposed research initiative will provide an opportunity for the Member States to conduct in-depth studies on how museums in the SAARC Region (re)interpret and present shared cultural heritage, and to assess the role of museums in promoting regional solidarity through cross-cultural narratives and use the findings of research for the benefit of their people.

In this regard, as informed by the SCC, the Secretariat kindly requests the esteemed Ministries to disseminate the enclosed Call for Proposals and format for submitting research proposals among academics and researchers interested in the above mentioned area of study in their respective Member States. The interested applicants are invited to submit their research proposals on or before **10 May 2026** in accordance with the Guidelines outlined in the enclosed Call for Proposals and the format for submitting research proposals.

The Secretariat of SAARC avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs of the Member States, the assurances of its highest consideration.

Encls: a.a.



Kathmandu, 11 March 2026

Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs,
(SAARC/Regional Organizations/Multilateral Affairs Division),
Member States of SAARC.

Copy to: Director/SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka.



SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

www.saarcculture.org

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

SAARC RESEARCH GRANTS 2026

INTERPRETING SHARED HERITAGE: CROSS-CULTURAL NARRATIVES IN MUSEUMS IN THE SAARC REGION

1. Background

As approved by the Fifteenth Meeting of the Governing Board of the SAARC Cultural Centre held in Colombo from 19-20 August 2025 and the Sixty-second Session of the Programming Committee Meeting held in Kathmandu from 11-12 February 2026, SAARC Cultural Centre proposes the SAARC Research Grants 2026.

SAARC Region is home to diverse cultures and vibrant artistic traditions that are reflected in languages, philosophies, performing arts, crafts, rituals, tremendous knowledge of the universe and nature, historical identities, and many others. Museums in the SAARC Countries are uniquely positioned to interpret and communicate these cross-cultural narratives, fostering mutual understanding, honour, and respect of self and others, and regional solidarity.

The history of museum-making shows that museums are not merely repositories for storing and exhibiting artifacts, but also active agents in the construction of cultural narratives, consequently shaping public understanding of history and culture. Museums in South Asia have vast collections of artifacts ranging from textiles, sculptures, manuscripts, to art pieces that transcend national borders yet often present fragmented narratives that overlook cross-cultural linkages.

Therefore, it is imperative to re-examine the traditional role of museums and to explore and examine how museums in the SAARC Region (re) interpret and present shared cultural heritage, and to analyse the role of cross-cultural narratives that reflect the complexities of cross-cultural interactions.

The SCC invites academics and researchers from Member States to submit detailed research project proposals. Each researcher will be granted US \$ 3,000 (or an equivalent amount in the local currency) for carrying out the research. The Research Grant will be distributed in Two (2) installments, the First installment (US\$1500) at the commencement of the project and the Final installment (US\$1500) after the submission of the final Report.

The selection of research project proposals shall be carried out by a Team of Experts. The Research Grants will be subject to a **Mid-term Review** during which the Grantees shall submit a Progress Report and presentation to the Team of Experts via online/offline mode. Any suggestions/recommendations made by the Team of Experts during the Review must be incorporated duly into the final Report by the respective researchers. At the end of the Grant period the Grantees shall submit the final Report to the SCC.

2. Sub-Themes

- 2.1. Museums-Colonial Legacies and Decolonization
- 2.2. Re-examining Museum Practices and Processes of Collecting and Curating
- 2.3. Museums as Repositories and Communicators of Culture and Knowledge
- 2.4. Museums as Spaces shaping South Asia's Cross-Cultural Dialogues

3. Objectives

- 3.1. To assess the role of museums in promoting regional solidarity through shared heritage interpretation
- 3.2. To identify overlapping heritage elements across SAARC countries as represented in museum collections
- 3.3. Analyse and re-examine the current museological practices and to evaluate the challenges in developing cross-cultural narratives
- 3.4. Explore ways to include marginalized voices in heritage narratives
- 3.5. Develop inclusive methodologies and foster an understanding of interconnected histories in a region characterized by diversity.

4. Participation and Nominations Process

- 4.1 Applicants from the SAARC Member Countries are requested to submit a detailed research proposal, along with a detailed budget breakdown (as per the enclosed format), on any of the themes given above.
- 4.2 Each Member State can forward any number of research proposals for consideration. Research proposals should be innovative and original research.
- 4.3 All applicants must submit the Registration form and Format for the Submission of Research Proposals through the SAARC Division of the respective Foreign Ministries/External Affairs of the Member States for onward transmission to the SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu.
- 4.4 An advance copy of the above documents can be emailed to sccpublications@gmail.com
- 4.5 Format for the application can be downloaded from the SCC website. (www.saarcculture.org)
- 4.6 Only those research proposals as received through official channel will be accepted by the SAARC Cultural Centre and placed before the Research Grants Committee (RGC) of the SAARC Cultural Centre. The RGC will review the research proposals and select up to Eight proposals for the purpose of research grant.
- 4.7 All the research grants will be subject to a mid-term review and the continuation of the project will be subject to the approval of the Progress Report by the Research Review Committee (RRC) of the SAARC Cultural Centre. For this purpose the SAARC Cultural Centre would hold a Review Meeting of the project in which all the researchers would be required to present their progress of the research. Any suggestions/ recommendations made by the SAARC Cultural Centre at this stage may

be included in the research process by the respective researchers.

4.8 At the end of the research project each researcher will be required to submit a publishable draft of the Research report (c. 20,000 to 30,000 words).

4.9 All Research reports will be reviewed, edited (if so required) and, subject to the recommendation of the reviewer, published by the SAARC Cultural Centre under its publications programme.

NB: Academics, scholars, and researchers of the SAARC Member States who have previously received the SAARC research grants, within the last 5 years, are not eligible to apply.

5. Tentative Time Schedule

10 months (Starting from May 2026-March 2027)

Last Date for submitting research proposals	- 10 May 2026
Approval of the research project	- 30 May 2026
Progress Report	- October 2026
Final Report	- March 2027

6. Additional Information

Focal person at SCC:

Deputy Director (Research)

Email: sccpublications@gmail.com



SAARC Research Grants 2026

**INTERPRETING SHARED HERITAGE: CROSS-CULTURAL NARRATIVES IN
MUSEUMS IN THE SAARC REGION**

FORMAT FOR SUBMITTING RESEARCH PROPOSALS

(To be filled for Research Project Proposal)

PART A- Personal Information

1. Applicant's Name (as in the passport with the surname underlined):

2. Date of Birth:

3. Nationality

3.1. Please give the National ID No. or the Passport No.:

4. Postal Address:

5. Contact Information

5.1. Email:

5.2. Mobile Phone No.

5.3. WhatsApp/Viber/Skype ID:

6. Institutional Affiliation, if any:

6.1. Present Designation:

6.2. Name and Address of the Institute:

Name, Designation, Email and Phone number(s) of the Head of the Institute

7. Whether the Applicant has received any Grants, Fellowships or Assistance for the same project or is receiving such assistance currently, or hopes to receive it in future? Please provide complete details, with amounts received/ expected.

8. Academic Record of Applicant from the First Degree obtained: (Please use additional paper if necessary.)

Recent
Passport Size
Photograph

Degree Obtained	College and University	Year	Subjects	Division

9. Languages (please indicate your proficiency level against each language, viz. *Read only; Read and write; Read, write and understand*):

Languages	<i>Read only</i>	<i>Read and write</i>	<i>Read, write and understand</i>

10. Previous research experience:

10.1. Period:

10.2. Publications: Books/Papers (published only):

(Give full References; please feel free to attach one or two off-prints of the articles if you wish.)

10.3. Assignments/Positions held:

Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. The entries made in the form above and the additional particulars furnished by me are true to the best of my knowledge.
2. I agree to abide by the Rules of the SAARC Cultural Centre. In the event of a research project assigned/awarded to me, I shall fulfill all the requirements of the award and shall refund to the SAARC Cultural Centre any unutilized amount.
3. I would not deviate the research fund for any other purpose other than that approved by the SAARC Cultural Centre.
4. I am not in receipt of any other grant, fellowship or assistance from any other source for the same project, except to the extent stated above.

Place:

(Signature)

Date:

(Full Name)

PART B- Research Proposal Format

Title of the Research Project:

Add a clear title with subtitles if necessary, reflecting the nature, scope and chronological range (where applicable) of the proposed research project.

1. Themes of the Research Project:

Please refer to the themes below. If you are using a theme not included in the list, please state it here.)

- 1.1. Museums-Colonial Legacies and Decolonization
- 1.2. Re-examining Museum Practices and Processes of Collecting and Curating
- 1.3. Museums as Repositories and Communicators of Culture and Knowledge
- 1.4. Museums as Spaces shaping South Asia's Cross-Cultural Dialogues

2. Abstract:

The abstract should summarise the proposed research project including objectives, details of the expected outcome, etc. The abstract should be limited to a maximum of 350-500 words.

3. The Research Problem:

What problem do you want to address or what research question(s) do you want to find answers? Please elaborate on the variables and their relationships.

4. Background to the Research Problem:

The relevance of your research vis-à-vis other research that has been done. The selection of the research problem should be justified both academically and about its application values for Interpreting Shared Heritage: Cross-Cultural Narratives in Museums in the SAARC Region. This should also include the importance of the research problem at the local/national/international level, information on scholars who have carried out research in similar problems and areas, methodologies used thus far and conclusions of previous research.

5. Research Methodology:

What methodology would you apply to collect data for the research project? Mention what would be your primary sources and how would you analyse the data?

6. Expected Results:

What are the results you expect from the research? Please elaborate on how you will use

your data to answer your research question(s), defend assertions, examine possible alternative outcomes, to construct a plausible research argument.

7. References:

Please include a select bibliography.

PART C- Timeline & Budget for the Research Proposal

Timeline of the Project:

Please give a calendar of research activities from the award of the project till the submission of the final report to the SAARC Cultural Centre.

Detailed Budget:

Please give the breakup of the items on which the research fund would be utilized.