

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY OF INDIA: IN PERSPECTIVE OF SAARC COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

India has been one of the founding major 07 countries of SAARC. All the countries involved in SAARC are neighbouring countries of India. Therefore, the success of SAARC depends on how India has relations with its neighbours. India has always emphasized the peaceful resolution of disputes with neighbouring countries. In the conduct of foreign policy, India has always had the friendly attitude and positive cooperation with its neighbours. Neighbouring nations have always been given priority by India in its foreign policy; for this reason India always established multilateral relations with neighbours. India through SAARC not only strives to raise the standard of living of the people of neighbouring countries, but also committed to make the entire region self-reliance. The objective of the study is to enlighten the India's policy in the context of neighbouring and its role in SAARC. Secondary data has been used for the present study.

KEYWORDS: Contemporaneous, Meteorology, Multilateral, Panchsheela Doctrine, Tranquility

In 1922, C.R. Das, president of Indian National Congress urged Indians participation in an Asian federation which he regarded as inevitable. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, in his speech at many times said that India should closer ties with south Asian countries for friendly cooperation. Nehru in Kashmir in 1945 said that: Small states of the world tomorrow have no future in store and they are sure to be reduced to the status of satellite state. I stand for a South Asian federation of India, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and Burma. After World War 2nd, there was a glut of regional cooperation organization in the world. Regional organizations formed after World War 2nd can be broadly divided into two parts: first organization that is like a Military Treaty; NATO, CENTO, ANZUS Treaty, SEATO and WARSAW PACT etc. Second, organization that aims to work in the field of economic development, political, cultural, scientist and public welfare. ARAB LEAGUE, ASEAN and SAARC etc. are prominent among such organizations.

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION (SAARC)

Origin:

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the regional intergovernmental organization and geo-political union of states in South Asia. SAARC comprise 03 percent of the world's area, 21 percent of the population and 4.21 percent (US \$ 3.67 Trillion) of the global economy. In 1980, Bangladesh contemporaneous president Ziaur Rahman put the idea of regional cooperation in South Asia. He perceived the regional cooperation in terms of a potential for peace keeping if it is executed in good faith

by all the participants, which would not only offer economic progress but also reduce the political dividends. The Foreign secretaries of the seven inner South Asian Nations that included Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, delegated a committee of the whole in Colombo (Sri Lanka) on September 1981, which identified five broad areas for regional cooperation. Other new areas of cooperation were added in the following years. In August, 1983 the international conference was organized in Dhaka (Bangladesh), the foreign minister of the inner seven countries adopted the declaration on South Asian Association Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and formally launched the integrated programme of Action (IPA). Nine area of cooperation were underlined namely: Agriculture; Rural Development; Telecommunication; Meteorology; health services; Post and Telegraph Services; Science and Technology; Tariff; Sports and Cultural Cooperation. Two years later, some more topics were added to it: Terrorism, drug trafficking and the role of women in regional development.

The head of state or government at their first SAARC summit held in Dhaka (Bangladesh) on 7-8 December, 1985 adopted the charter formally establishing South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The summit was hosted by Hussain Ershad, President of Bangladesh. Contemporaneous Prime Minister Sh. Rajiv Gandhi participated in this summit and signed the declaration. The SAARC Secretariat was formed at Kathmandu on January 16, 1987 to coordinate and monitor the implementation of SAARC activities and as a channel of communication between SAARC and other international organization.

Objectives:

The objectives contained in the SAARC charter are as follows: (1) To promote the welfare the people of South Asia and to improve their quality of life; (2) To accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and provide all individuals the opportunity to live with dignity and to realize their potential; (3) To promote and strengthen collective self-reliance among the countries of South Asia; (4) To contribute to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problem; (5) To promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, culture, technical and scientific fields; (6) To strengthen cooperation with other developing countries; (7) To strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interests; and (8) To cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.

Principles

Cooperation within the framework of the Association is based on respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non interference in the internal affairs of other states and mutual benefit;

Such cooperation is to complement and not substitute bilateral or multilateral cooperation; and

Such cooperation should be consistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations of Member States.

General Provisions

Decisions at all levels in SAARC are to be taken on the basis of unanimity; and

Bilateral and contentious issues are to be excluded from the deliberations of the Association.

INDIA CONTRIBUTION IN SAARC

India's foreign policy issues within the Sub-Continent are conducted through the SAARC. India is founder member of SAARC and has always contributed positively in it at every step. Presently, Total 08 countries are its members, other than India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. After establishing in 1985, SAARC is accelerating cooperation in rural Development, Culture, Health, Science and Technology, Population control, Narcotics control and Anti-Terrorism and Agriculture. India has been playing an important role in various activities related to the SAARC. India is committed to collective self-reliance among SAARC countries for this reason; he always emphasizes the collective use of resources in this area. For the year of 1986-87, 1996-97 and 2007-08 India was the president of SAARC.

Since 1998, India has ended Quantitative Restriction on trade for SAARC countries. At the 10th SAARC Summit held in Colombo (Sri Lanka) on 29-31 July, 1998; Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced \$ 150 million

investment by India in SAARC countries. Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the 11th SAARC Conference held in Kathmandu (Nepal) on 5-6 January, 2000; offered all possible assistance from India for trade promotion and reactivation of the SAARC Poverty Alleviation Commission. India provided scholarship under "**India Silver Jubilee Scholarship**" to the 100 students of least developed countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal) of SAARC.

India keeps organizing continues special programmes for SAARC countries such as: Special Training Courses, Seminars, Workshops, Research Projects, and Technical Studies etc. From 01-04 September, 1998 in Pune at India SAARC Multilingual and Multi-Media Information Technology summit was organized. India also organizes other related activates from time to time such as: 2nd SAARC band festival in New Delhi, SAARC Literature festival in Agra and SAARC Folklore festival in Chandigarh.

There are many special and recognized body of SAARC presently working in different fields of member countries. Some of which are situated in India. The SAARC secretariat is supported by its 06 (six) regional centers. They are established in member states for promoting regional cooperation. SAARC Documentation Center (SDC) is one of them, established in New Delhi (India).

The Foundation of SAARC Writers and Literature (FOSWAL) was established in 1987. Its head quarter is situated in New Delhi. It performs several functions under the SAARC banner: promote cultural connectivity, establish peace in the region, and promote people-to-people contact and dialogue.

The SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDCM-IU) was established in Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM) campus at Gandhinager (Ahmadabad) in November 2016. It is serving the member states by providing policy advice, technical support on system development and training for holistic management of disaster risk to the SAARC members. It is also facilitates exchange of information and expertise for effective and efficient management of disaster risk. South Asian University (SAU) is an international university established by 08 member nation of SAARC in 2010. The university is currently functioning in New Delhi. India contributes in this project \$ 239 million (79 percent), whereas total expenditure of this project was \$ 300.91 million.

Following the neighborhood first policy Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi, during 18th SAARC Summit in Nepal in 2014, mooted the idea of a satellite to serving the needs of SAARC member countries. India launches south Asia Satellite on 05 May, 2017. Afghanistan, Bangladesh,

Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka are the users of the multi-dimensional facilities provided by satellite.

South Asia Foundation (SAF) was founded in 2000. SAF's core objective is to promote regional cooperation. India is only the member country of SAARC, who has contributed \$ 189 Billion as aid in South Asia Foundation. India is completely committed to SAARC and wants to strengthen this organization for collective benefit with SAARC countries. But at many occasions forwarding activities has come to standstill in SAARC, due to strain between India and Pakistan. Under circumstances arising out of Uri attack (18 September, 2016) India refuse to participate in 19th SAARC Conference, which was proposed in Islamabad (Pakistan) on dated 09-10 November, 2016.

Principles of Neighbourhood policy of India and its relation with SAARC countries

With the establishment of the Interim government in September 1946, Indian foreign policy began to develop. Since its begging (after independence) India has followed a foreign policy that has many important features: The policy of Non-Alignment Movement; Policy of Peace, Friendship and Peaceful Co- Existence; Act as a Mediator between Superpowers; Use of holy & Peaceful Means; Panchsheela Doctrine; Opposed of Imperialism and Racialism; Support of United Nation for Peace Making; and Policy of Protection of National Interest. These principles always functioned as foreign policy by the Indian Leadership. Indian's foreign policy has kept evolving and has changed over time to time according to its national interests.

Nehru policy was stressed to increase global cooperation and support. India's Prime minister and 1st Foreign Minister Pandit Nehru articulate India's approach to the world. India joined commonwealth of nation and strongly supported independence movements in other colonies. During Cold-War, India adopted a foreign policy of Non-Alignment Movement. However, India developed close ties with the Soviet Union and received extensive support from it. The end of Cold-War significantly affected India's foreign policy, as it (end of Cold-War) effect for much of the world. The India now started to accelerate its diplomatic and economic relationship with United States, European Union, Japan Israel, Mexico and Brazil. India has also closed ties with the member of states of ASEAN, the African Union, the Arab League and Iran etc.

The objective of Indian foreign policy has always been to maintain world peace. For the resolution of international disputes, India has always emphasized on bilateral negotiations, arbitration and forum decision to establish peace. India always used means of peace to settle their

disputes with all neighbouring countries. Whether it is: Indus Water Treaty; Tashkandh Agreement; Shimla Agreement; Farakka Compromised, Border/ River Disputes etc. India's foreign policy apart from friendship with neighbouring countries has also been of positive cooperation.

Presently, there are 08 countries in SAARC organization including India. India has a strong relationship with these countries. Multilateral relationship with these neighbouring countries are based on- Political (High level visits/ Exchange), Defense, Education, Energy and Water Resource, Connectivity and Development Partnership and Commerce etc.

INDIA AND AFGHANISTAN

Since ancient times, India and Afghanistan have cordial and harmonious relationship. India was the nation, who advocacy that Soviet-Union would go back from Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in 1980s. India and Afghanistan relations were dismissed during the afghan civil wars and under the rule of Islamist Taliban in the 1990s. India aided deracinates the Taliban and provide the largest humanitarian and reconstruction aid. During the United States led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, India offered intelligence and other forms of support for the coalition forces. After the overthrow of the Taliban, India established diplomatic relations with the newly established democratic government, provided aid and participated in the reconstruction efforts.

In 2005, India proposed Afghanistan's membership in SAARC and in 2007; Afghanistan finally became the eighth member of SAARC. Both nations also developed strategic and military cooperation against Islamic Militants. In October 2011, Afghanistan signed its first The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) with India. An agreement providing \$ 50 million to promote bilateral businesses between Afghanistan and India was signed during the visit of the afghan Foreign Minister between Dr. Spanta 29 June-01 July, 2006. During the same year, India raised its aid package to Afghanistan by \$ 150 million to \$ 750 million.

Our leaders have met each other during bilateral visit as well as on the sidelines of International events. India's pledge to rebuild Afghanistan has reached a total of \$ 02 Billion in May 2011 after Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh arrived to Kabul (Afghanistan) for two-day visit. In the same year, India donated 250,000 tons of wheat to Afghanistan as part to humanitarian assistance programme. On 25 December, 2015 Indian Prime minister Narendra Modi, visited Kabul to open the newly constructed Afghan Parliament, for which India gave \$ 90 million assistance. On 04 June 2016, Prime Minister Modi and Afghanistan's Ashraf Ghani inaugurated the \$ 290 Salma Dam.

The bilateral trade for the year 2017-18 was USD 1.143 billion approx and has immense potential to expand further. The prominent Indian Companies doing businesses in Afghanistan is: (1) KEC- Electrical Transmission Lines; (2) Phoenix- Consultancy in Electrical Transmission; (3) AIPL- Establishment of Hydro Power Project in Hilmand Province; (4) APTECH-Computer & Management Education; (5) Spice Jet; (6) GAMMON India-Power Transmission Line & Power Sub-Station; (7) ANAAR Group (AIR INDIA GSA).

On 15 August, 2019; on Indian Independence Day Prime minister Narendra Modi, greeting to Afghanistan, who is going to celebrate 100th year of Afghan Independence Day of 19 August 2019.

India's support and collaboration extends to rebuilding of air links, power plants and investing in health and education sectors as well as helping to train Afghan civil servants, diplomats and police. Indian also seeks the development of supply lines of electricity, oil and natural gas. India also provides Afghan students scholarship.

The Indian Army's Border Road Organization (BRO) constructed a major road in 2009 in the remote Afghan province of Nimroz, Connecting Delaram to Zaranj. This has proved a viable alternative route for the duty- free movement of goods through the Chabahar Port in Iran to Afghanistan.

India and Afghanistan share century's old cultural heritage with deep- rooted linkages in the field of music, arts, architecture, language and cuisine. The India- Afghanistan culture week was held in New Delhi in November, 2017, as a result of collaboration of India Afghanistan Foundation (IAF) and Indian Council for Cultural Relation (ICCR).

INDIA AND PAKISTAN

After the dissolution of British raj in 1947, Dominion of India and Dominion of Pakistan came in existence. Soon after independence, both Indian and Pakistan tried to establish diplomatic relation but violent partition, numerous military conflicts and territorial claims make strain between them. Although numerous attempts have been made to improve the relationship. After the 1965 war, both signed the Tashkent Deceleration at Soviet Union on 10 January, 1966 that resolved the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. In July, 1972 also Indian Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi and Pakistani Presedent Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed the Shimla Agreement and India returned all Pakistan personnel (Over 90000) and captured territory in the west. Between both countries trade and diplomatic relationship again alive in 1976. On 21 December, 1988 in Islamabad Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Prime Minister Sh. Rajiv Gandhi signed the "**Non-Nuclear Attack Agreement**" (NNAA).

In Lahore on 21 February 1999 both, Indian Prime Minister Sh. Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaj Sharif signed the Lahore Declaration. Both governments asserted their commitment to the vision of peace, stability and mutual progress and their full commitment to the

Shimla Agreement and the United Nations Charter. It was emphasized to discuss and resolve their conflict in future under the auspices of SAARC. It also brought responsibility to both nations leadership toward avoiding nuclear race. It is also called the second nuclear treaty, first was NNAA signed in 1988. In 2001, Agra summit was organized, but talk fell through. In 2004, both nations were agreed to extend nuclear testing ban and to set up a hot line for preventing misunderstandings that might lead to a nuclear war. Both have organized many Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs) to ease tensions. These include high level talks, easing visa restrictions, restarting of Cricket, Transportation (Bus, Railway & Air service including goods transports).

On 26 May, 2014 Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi invited Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaj Sharif for his swearing-in-ceremony to normalize relationship. On 08-09 December, 2015 India's External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj traveled to Pakistan to attend the Heart of Asia Conference.

Pakistan's exports of \$ 383 Million to India in 2018, constituted 1.6 percent of Pakistan's global exports. Similarly India exports to Pakistan constitute a mere 0.7 percent of its global exports but value nearly \$ 02 Billion in absolute terms.

India always took initiative with Pakistan to establish CBMs (Confidence Building Measures) in South Asia region, but Pakistan's attitude was always negative and irresponsible. Many issues and conflicts between India and Pakistan are: Siachen Conflict, Kashmir problem, Controversy over Canal and river water division etc.

After terrorist attack on Pathankot Air Force Base camp (02 January, 2016); Uri Military Camp attack (18 September, 2016) and attack on CRPF soldier at Pulwama (14 February, 2019), the relationship between both countries are currently in a state of undisclosed war. India boycotts the SAARC meeting proposed in Pkistan in 2016. India has also withdrawn the Most Favoured Nations (MFN) Status from Pakistan on 15 February 2019 as tensions rise between both countries.

An agreement between India and Pakistan for the facilitation of pilgrims to visit Gurdwara Darbar sahib, Kartarpura (Pakistan) was signed on 24 October, 2019, in order to fulfill the long standing demand of pilgrims to have easy and smooth access to the holy Gurudwara.

INDIA AND NEPAL

Relation between both countries initiated with 1950's Indo-Nepal treaty of Peace and Friendship. The accord cemented a special relationship between India and Nepal. The treaty provides for an open border between the two countries and allows Nepali nationals to work in India without a work permit, to apply for government jobs and the civil services (except for the IFS, IAS and IPS), to open bank accounts and buy properties. In 1950, with the cooperation of India; Ranashahi was ended and democracy was established in

Nepal. On repeated pleas of India in United Nations, Nepal became its member in 1955. In 1951, an Indian military mission was established to train and organize the Nepal military.

India has contributed the highest funds for Nepal's development work. Among the projects in which India has assisted Nepal are: (1) Devi Ghat, Trishul, Karnali, Pancheshwar Hydro Power Schemes; (2) Tribhuvan Ganpath, Kathmandu-Trishuli Marg, Tribhuvan Airport; (3) Khamandu-Raksaul Telephone Plant; (4) Chatra Canal Project, Koshi and Gandak River Project; (5) Virganj and Hitoda Railway construction.

India has allowed to Nepal, 61 Kilo-Meter transit route from Bangladesh to Nepal for trade purpose. India has been renewing Transit Treaty since 1950. India is Nepal's largest trading partner. India's export to Nepal grew over eight times from INR 4201 crores in 2006-2007 to INR 36579 crores (US \$ 5.45 Billion) in 2016-17.

On 10 September, 2019 Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nepal jointly inaugurated, South Asia's first cross-border petroleum products pipeline from Motihari (India) to Amlekhgunj (Nepal). Over 552 large, intermediate and small-scale projects at an estimated cost of NPR 77 Billion have been implemented across Nepal with Indian assistance since 1951. Till September, 2019 India has gifted 752 ambulance and 148 school buses to various institutions and health posts across Nepal's 77 Districts.

Despite of the cooperation, many critical issues are between India and Nepal. These are: abrogation of 1950s treaty of peace and friendship, increasing influence of Maoists, political instability, China's interest in Nepal, Madheshi crisis, Border dispute, illegal trade, human trafficking. Presently Kalapani and Lipulekhah road has become paramount dispute between both.

INDIA AND SRI LANKA

The relationship between India and Sri Lanka is more than 2500 years old. Like India, the policy of Sri Lanka's has been peacemaking, Non-Alignment and co-existence in international arena and friendly with other countries. The nearly three decades long armed conflict between Sri Lanka forces and LTTE came to an end in 19 May, 2009. During the course of conflict, India supports the Govt. of Sri Lanka to act against terrorist. Under the Rajiv-Jayewardene agreement Indian peace keeping force were sent to Sri Lanka in 1987.

Sri Lanka is one of the India's largest trading partners in SAARC. "India- Sri Lanka trade agreement" concluded between both countries in March 2000 to enhance trade. According to Sri Lanka customs, bilateral trade in 2018 amounted to US \$ 04.93 Billion. Exports from India to Sri Lanka in 2018 were US \$ 04.16 Billion, while exports from Sri Lanka to India are US \$ 767 Million. Sri Lanka is also the

major recipient of development aid from the government of India.

India made a commitment to build fifty thousands (50000) houses for war affected as well as the estate workers in plantation areas, under Indian Housing Projects. On 12 August, 2018 Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi handed over the first lot of these houses. Besides housing, Indian also assists in a large number of High Impact community development projects in area of Education, Transports, Connectivity and Health Training across the country under grant assistance. A modern fifteen hundred (1500) seat auditorium in Ruhuna University Matara in Sri Lanka was handed over in October 2018. The Operation of the 1990 Emergency Ambulance Service, financed under Indian grant assistance was launched in Jaffna (Sri Lanka) on 21 July, 2018, where in Prime Minister Narendra Modi through a live video link from New Delhi joined Prime Minister Ranil Wickreme Singhe. India announced US \$ 100 Million LoC (Indian Line of Credit) for undertaking solar projects in Sri Lanka during the founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance held on 11 March, 2018; The president of Sri Lanka Maitripala Sirisena participated in this conference.

The cultural cooperation agreement signed by the Government of India and Govt. of Sri Lank on 29 November, 1977 at New Delhi forms the basis for periodic cultural exchange programmes between the two countries. The Indian cultural centre Colombo actively promotes awareness of Indian culture by offering class in Indian music, dance, Hindi and yoga. Tourism also forms an important link between India and Sri Lanka. Govt. of India formally launched the e-tourist visa (e-TV) scheme for Sri Lanka tourists on 14 April, 2015.

India offer about 710 scholarship slots annually to Sri Lanka students including study in Sri Lanka and in India. From academic session 2017-18, Sri Lanka students can also appear for National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) in centers in India for MBBS or BDS admissions. IIT JEE (Advanced) Entrance examinations have commenced in Sri Lanka from 2017.

Political relation between the two countries have been marked by high-level exchanges

of visits at regular intervals. Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi visit Sri Lanka on 09 June, 2019, and meets Sri Lanka President Sirisena to discuss bilateral issues of mutual interest. Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi visited Sri Lanka twice earlier too in March 2015 and may 2017. In November, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that India will invest \$ 400 million in infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka amid improving ties after talk with Sri Lank's new President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Presently, the growing Chinese influence in Sri Lanka and the presence of Chinese experts to built ports, use of Yuan diplomacy by China etc., is a matter of concern for India, because it can endanger India's security.

INDIA AND BANGLADESH

India is the first country to recognize Bangladesh as a separate and independent nation. India immediately established diplomatic relations with Bangladesh after its independence on 06 December 1971. India's links with Bangladesh are civilization, cultural, social and economic. There is much that unites the two countries- a shared history and common heritage, linguistic and cultural ties, passion for music, literature and the arts.

There have been regular high level visit and exchanges between both countries. Apart from it there have been also frequent visits at ministerial level as well as between senior officials on regular basis. Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a state visit to Bangladesh on 06-07 June, 2015. During the visit, 22 (twenty two) bilateral documents were concluded. Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasiana paid a state visit to India from 7-10 April, 2017. During the visit, 36 (thirty six) bilateral documents were concluded in various areas. Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi meets to Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasiana on the sidelines of the 04th BIMSTEC summit, in Kathmandu (Nepal) on August 30, 2018.

Trade between India and Bangladesh could almost double to \$ 10 billion by 2018. Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh stood at USD 6.6 billion in 2013-14. India Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Bangladesh reached US \$ 88 million in 2015-16. During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi state visit to Bangladesh on 06th June 2015, announced LoC (Indian Line of Credit) of \$ 02 billion to Bangladesh.

A number of agreements related to security cooperation have been signed between both countries. The Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) signed in 2011, aims to synergize the efforts of both the border guarding forces for checking cross border illegal activities and crimes as well as for maintenance of peace and tranquility along with the Indian-Bangladesh border. On July 31, 2015 the enclaves of India and Bangladesh in each other's countries were exchanged and strip map were signed.

India and Bangladesh share Fifty four (54) common rivers. A Bilateral Joint River Commission (JRC) is working since June 1972 to maintain liaison between the two countries to maximize benefits from common river systems. Joint River Commission (JRC) technical level meeting are also held regularly. The Ganga water treaty signed in 1996 for sharing of water of river Ganga.

India-Bangladesh is good examples of connectivity through all models of transports. The movement of goods by road is operationalised through Thirty six (36) functional Land Customs Stations (LCSs) and two integrated check posts (ICPs) along the border. There are regular bus services between Kolkata-Dhaka, Shillong-Dhaka and Agartala-Kolkata via Dhaka. A new bus service (Dhaka –Khulna-

Kolkata) was launched by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasiana's visit in April, 2017. Four(4) Broad Gauge inter – country rail links between the two countries are operationalised now.

A number of training courses are being conducted for interested Bangladesh official/ nationals including personnel of administration, police, judiciary fire-fighters, narcotic officials, nuclear scientists, teachers etc. Scholarships are granted by Indian Council for Cultural Relation (ICCR) every year to students from Bangladesh for pursuing general courses in arts, science engineering and also specialized course for culture, drama, music, fine arts and sports etc.

The Indira Ghandi Cultural Centre (IGCC), High Commission of India, is a cultural centre of the Indian council for cultural relations of India in Bangladesh. IGCC inaugurated in 2010, regularly organizes programmes covering a wide- gamut of cultural activities. Despite of this cooperation there are many areas of contention between of both countries: Farakka Barrage dispute, Dodge Problem of Refugees, Protest of barbed fence of India on the border, Bangladesh has constantly denied India transit facility to landlocked North Eastern region of India.

INDIA-BHUTAN

The bilateral relationship between Bhutan and India is traditionally close. The basic framework of India-Bhutan bilateral relations is the treaty of friendship and cooperation signed in 1949 between the both, and revised in February 2007. Diplomatic relations between both were established in 1968 with the establishment of special office of India in Thimphu. With the cooperation of India Bhutan became a member of United Nations Organization in 1971 and Non – Alignment movement in 1973.

The special relationship has been sustained by tradition of regular high level visits and dialogues between the two countries. Prime Minister Lyochhen (Dr.) Lotay Tshering visited India to attend swearing – in- ceremony of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 30 May to 01 June, 2019. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a state visit on 17 – 18 August, 2019 to Bhutan.

India is Bhutan's largest partner. Under the Transit Agreement of 1972, both countries have a tax free trade. For 12th five yearly plan of Bhutan, 4500 Crore have been given by India. In 2018, total trade between the two countries stood at Rs. 9227.7 Crore.

Govt. of India has consistently supported to the socio – economic development of Bhutan. Hydro power cooperation between the two countries is an example of win – win cooperation. Govt. of India assisting Bhutan in these Hydro – Power projects namely: Namat Punatsangchu – I (1200 MW), Punatsangchu – II (1020 MW), and Mangdechu (720 MW). The major projects in which India is supporting Bhutan are: Chukha Haydil Project and Pendena Cement Plant.

The new capital of Bhutan, Thimphu was built with the cooperation of India; Paro, the other important city of

Bhutan, was also developed with the cooperation of India. Border Road Organization of India (BRO) has constructed about one thousand (1000) kilometer of road in Bhutan, which costs around thirty Crore.

India is the most popular educational destination for Bhutanese students – almost four thousand (4000) Bhutanees students are enrolled in Indian Universities, many of whom are also provided scholarship by Govt. of India.

There are vibrant cultural exchanges between the two countries, a number of Bhutanese pilgrims travel to holy Buddhists sites in India. Reflecting the special nature of the relationship, the two countries share an open border with regular exchange of travelers in both directions for work, tourism, shopping and medical care etc.

Despite of this cooperation, both countries has some disputes as: No permit system of tourist for Bhutan, Amendment in treaty signed in 1949, at many time Bhutan adopted different approach to India in international issues.

INDIA AND MALDIVES

India and Maldives both are neighbours. Both nations established diplomatic relations after the independence of Maldives from British rule in 1966. India was the one of the first nation to recognize Maldives independence. Since then India and Maldives have developed close strategic, military, economic and cultural relations. Both nations are founding members of the SAARC.

Indian and Maldivian leaders have maintained high – level contacts and consultations on regional issues. Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi visited Maldives on 7-8 June, 2019. During his visit 06 (six) agreement were signed on various issues and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was also honored with Maldives highest honor “**Rule of Nissan Ijmuiden**”. All Prime Ministers of Maldives visited India during their Tenure.

Currently, India has provided US \$ 100 million standby credit facility (SCF) to Maldives, including long term loans and revolving credit for trade. Both signed a trade agreement in 1981, which provided for export of essential commodities.

Since 1988, defence and security has been a major area of cooperation between India Maldives. India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF). A comprehensive action plan for defence was also signed in April 2016, to consolidate defense partnership. Maldives was freed from the rebels by India in the year 1988 by running Operation Cactus.

India is leading development partner of Maldives and has established many of the leading institutions of Maldives including The Indira Ghandi Memorial Hospital (IGMH), Faculty of Engineering Technology (FGT) and India-Maldives Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies (IMFFHTS).

India has offered assistance to Maldives whenever required. After the Tsunami that struck Maldives on 26 December, 2004 India was the first country to rush relief and aid to Maldives. The reconstruction and maintenance of the airport at Male is done by the GMR an Indian company.

The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), established in Male in July 2011, conduct regular courses of yoga, classical music and dance. From India total export to Maldives in 2018 US \$ 286.18 million. India offer several scholarships to Maldivian students: Indian Council for Cultural Relation (ICCR) Scholarships, SAARC Chair fellowship, Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Training and Scholarships, Medical Scholarships.

Currently, Maldives inclination towards china and china’s economic investment in Maldives is a matter of concern for India.

Conclusively, India not only has a 70 percent share in SAARC in term of area and population, but also has more than 70 percent in the organization’s economy. At present, India has 17.5 billion exports with other SAARC countries and imports are mere 2.5 million. It shows the dependence of South Asian Countries on India. Whether it is Afghanistan or Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan or Nepal, India continues to support every one financially. India is apart from borders, also linked with SAARC countries on the basis of religion, language, culture. In keeping with its “Neighbourhood First Policy”, India desires normal neighbourly relations with SAARC. At present, economic investment in the South Asia region by China, impetus of terrorism by Pakistan, the increasing proximity of neighbouring countries with china is a matter of concern for India.

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SHARMA : NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY OF INDIA : IN PERSPECTIVE OF SAARC COUNTRIES

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