

Abstract

At the 16th Summit of South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Thimphu, Bhutan in 2010, member countries declared 2010-2020 as the decade of Intra-regional Connectivity in SAARC. They unanimously acknowledged the importance of developing transport infrastructure and transit facilities, especially for the landlocked countries as a means to promote intra-SAARC trade.

In this context the study was conducted to find out the level/degree of the connectivity within South Asian region countries, opportunities & challenges of maintaining connectivity. Research conducted focusing on three main arms of connectivity i.e land maritime and air. To Quantify or measure the connectivity; connectivity indices were developed using Graph -theory based approach to measure road and rail connectivity and modified Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI) to measure Maritime and Air connectivity. Then the results of same along with present states of each arm/sector has been tested with the SAARC endeavors in achieving the regional connectivity. Consequently it was found that for establishing greater connectivity; firstly, all SAARC member countries will have to overcome their bilateral issues and all countries should agree to provide transit/ transshipment facilities to have accesses to each other. Secondly countries should promote regional trade. A proper time frame with a stipulated action plan to complete priority infrastructure projects could speed up the process further. In this context, unless SAARC member countries exploit opportunities that lie ahead and focus on the benefits of regional connectivity, connecting SAARC will remain a distant possibility.

Keywords: land, maritime, air, connectivity, index, opportunities, challenges