

# WIDENING OF TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN BANGLADESH AND SAARC COUNTRIES: A SENSIBLE STUDY ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE SCENARIOS

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**Abstract** *This study examines the bilateral trade and economic relations between Bangladesh and SAARC countries. In this regard, export and import scenarios, considered the main focus of international trade and overall foreign trade volumes over the last five years (2016-2020) were studied. Using panel data analysis, the relationship between the nature and direction of export-import and economic cooperation of this research was examined. The study found that economic ties and cooperation have strengthened in recent times, and bilateral trade with SAARC countries has increased over the previous year, although the rate was disappointing at the beginning of the pandemic. The results also show that Bangladesh has long suffered from trade imbalances with India and is in less or more good standing with other SAARC countries. Researchers have found that the impact of economic relations with SAARC countries has not led to adequate export adaptations for economic growth. According to the results of the survey, it is suggested that steps should have to be taken to increase exports, to reduce trade deficiency. The Bangladesh Export Processing Bureau (EPB), the Ministry of Commerce, and EPZ authorities need to be more vigilant in expanding trade facilities and developing infrastructure.*

**Keywords:** *Bilateral Trade, Economic Cooperation, SAARC, Export, Import*

**JEL:** *F02, F23, F43, F53*

## INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh always stands by its neighbouring countries as a trusted friend in the field of regional cooperation, prosperity, and economic development (Gazi, 2021). SAARC is a manifestation of the determination of the people of South Asia to cooperate regionally and to work together to solve their common problems in the spirit of friendship, trust, and understanding, based on mutual respect, justice, and the benefits of partnership. Bangladesh is an inaugurating member of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) (ITC by Country Report, 2021). The regional integration and cooperation initiative in South Asia began in 1985 with the formation of SAARC. SAARC includes a total of eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka (SAARC, 2020). Afghanistan joined as the eighth member of the Association at the 14<sup>th</sup> SAARC summit held in

New Delhi in April 2007 (economicsdiscussion.net/). The objective of this cooperation is to strengthen the economic, political, and cultural ties with each other (Sampathkumar & Rajeshkumar, 2016). The SAARC countries signed the agreement of SAPTA (SAARC preferential trade agreement) on April 1, 1993, which took effect in December 1995, with the aim of working together in areas of trade, economic, and intra-regional cooperation. In 2006, SAPTA was established in the place of SAFTA to further actively and easily expand trade and facilitate intra-regional economic cooperation among the SAARC member countries (Mukherji & Pandey, 2014). In addition to SAFTA, three trade agreements were formed in South Asia, namely the India-Bhutan Bilateral Free Trade Agreement, the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Bilateral Free Trade Agreement, and the India-Sri Lanka Bilateral Free Trade Agreement (Chakraborty & Sen, 2021; Deepika & Neena, 2014). Moreover, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) have undertaken a sub-regional cooperation

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initiative which has played an important role in the smooth functioning and cooperation of the socio-economic aspects (Raihan & Ashraf, 2017). In spite of these, the least integrated regions in the world are South Asia Internal trade within the South-Asia region, the proportion of the global trade mark of almost 5% mark. Bangladesh is the 54<sup>th</sup> largest export economy in the world and the 123<sup>rd</sup> most complex economy, according to the Economic Complexity Index (ECI) (OECD, 2020). Baysan et al. (2006) argued that South Asia was relatively weak economically for regional integration. Raihan and Kim (2016) observed that the trade transaction cost was one of the major trading barriers prohibiting the growth of SAARC intra-regional trade. SAARC was established with the aim of working together in the field of economic development, socio-cultural exchange, sports, regional security, human resource diversification, and health. On the other hand, in early 1990, the liberal economic policies of the South-Asian economies began to soothe their import substitution policy. SAARC planned a Free Trade Area, a Customs Union, a Common Market, and a Common Economic and Monetary Union. SAARC was committed to enhancing support to the least developed and landlocked member states in their development efforts, with a view to ensuring equitable benefits of free trade arrangements (SAARC, 2020). Just as Bangladesh played a leading role in the establishment of SAARC, it has been extending its hand of friendship to all, after independence, first and foremost in inter-regional cooperation. Despite various international and geopolitical obstacles, mutual cooperation, sympathy, and the friendly relationship between Bangladesh and SAARC countries will not be adversely affected.

## REVIEW OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON BANGLADESH EXPERIENCES WITH SAARC TRADE

Many studies focused on South-Asian regional economic integration and trade. The trend towards regional integration has been supported in many areas by regional policy initiatives, particularly in the field of trade (Safdari et al., 2012). In 1993, SAARC member states agreed to promote trade and economic cooperation, among other areas of integration. Rahman et al. (2006) have shown that the removal of trade hurdles and fundamental rigidity arising from contrary dogmatic relations can lead to a significant upsurge in intra-SAARC trade. Pitigala (2005) revealed that the trade structure that SAARC countries have in the SAPTA agreement may not facilitate the rapid growth of intra-regional trade between South-Asian countries, due to the weakened trade relations. SAPTA came into action in 1995 and was formed in April 1993; it aims to promote trade by reducing tariff barriers and others (Venkateswaran & Bhat, 2022). Das (2007) stated that South-Asian trade is mixed, so priority trade initiatives were based on a weak proposal. Gazi et al. (2014) found that Bangladesh has been

languishing from historic trade deficits with India since its independence. This unbalanced trade system between Bangladesh and India makes the former overly dependent on India, which has been a source of significant economic and political concern (ShaheenIrun, 2013). The BBS (2020) report showed that import payment was USD6,823.2 million and USD6,086.6 million for the FY 2018-19 and 2017-18, respectively; in dollar terms, this increased by 12.1% among the SAARC countries. Newfarmer and Pierola (2007) found in South Asia that the biased business system, product discounts, product selection, restrictive rules of origin, special management, and limited resources are less possible, including SAFTA. In addition, SAPTA inter-regional import figures showed the highest gains by Pakistan (39.6 per cent), followed by India (30 per cent), Nepal (35.2 per cent), Sri Lanka (12 per cent), and Bhutan (17 per cent); however, the Maldives and Bangladesh were at a peripheral level (Mukherji, 2000). In spite of granting various priorities, SAPTA trade involvement with Bangladesh in the region remained closed. Hossain and Kibria (2001) demonstrated that Bangladesh export and import in the world has increased its trade with South-Asian countries in the region. Bangladesh's exports increased from USD83 million (i.e., before the SAFTA agreement) to USD86 million in 1999 (i.e., years after the SAFTA agreement) in 2005, and imports within the SAARC region fell from USD1,151 million in 1995 to USD1,054 million in 1999 (Deepika & Neena, 2014). South-Asian countries have experienced a fall in real GDP; and Nepal and Bangladesh would be affected, because the two countries India and China are the biggest trade preferences (Chawla & Sharma, 2020; Raihan, 2017). De (2013) and De et al. (2013) analysed numerous restrictions for rising potential bilateral trade among India-Bangladesh-Pakistan. In general, this indicates that under the existing scenarios, the potential benefits originating from regional trade cooperation among the SAARC countries would not be substantial. Bangladesh's gains also appear to be inconsequential (EduCheer, 2021). With the increased intra-regional trading activities, the economic relationship among the SAARC nations is bound to be stronger in the future (Economy Watch, 2020).

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study has a considerate domineering which will pursue regional economic development over and done with regional cooperation. The present study has delineated the following objectives:

- To analyse the economic relationship between Bangladesh and SAARC countries.
- To explain the relations between Bangladesh and SAARC countries, and to demarcate the boundaries of economic cooperation.
- To understand policy implication.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### Data Collection

All the data were collected and retrieved from the 2020 edition of UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) and SAARC, IMF, OECD, SAFTA, and SAPTA databases. Data was also retrieved from the official websites of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Bangladesh Bank (BB), National Board of Revenue (NBR), and Export Processing Zone (EPZ). The authors have reviewed the documentation for this research paper, like Bangladesh Economic Review, Bangladesh Bank Economic Data, government documents, and other research work. They have considered the related research articles in the international journals in the conceptualisation of the current scenario of Bangladesh and SAARC countries' economic cooperation and consensual trade, and articulated the attributes in this paper.

### Research Design

This study is exclusively based on secondary source of data and information. To achieve the objective of this

study, descriptive research design was espoused. Further, quantitative research methods have been used to test the stated objectives in this study. For analysing the present export and import scenarios, researchers used the panel data method. The researchers used panel data because the cross-section adjusts with the time series during observation; panel data gives more informative data, greater freedom, more efficiency, more variability, and less collinearity (Taani, 2013). The research covers the last five years. Panel data covers the fiscal years 2015-2016 to 2019-2020, including export-import data and information.

## OVERALL PICTURE OF BANGLADESH AND FOREIGN TRADE

Table 1 shows that in FY 2015-16, overall exports revenue was USD33,441 million, the whole import expense was USD39,901 million, and trade shortfalls was USD6,460 million. In FY 2016-17, FY 2017-18, and FY 2018-19, export earning was USD34,019 million, USD36,205 million, and USD39,604 million, respectively, and import expense was USD43,491 million, USD54,463 million, and USD55,439 million, respectively.

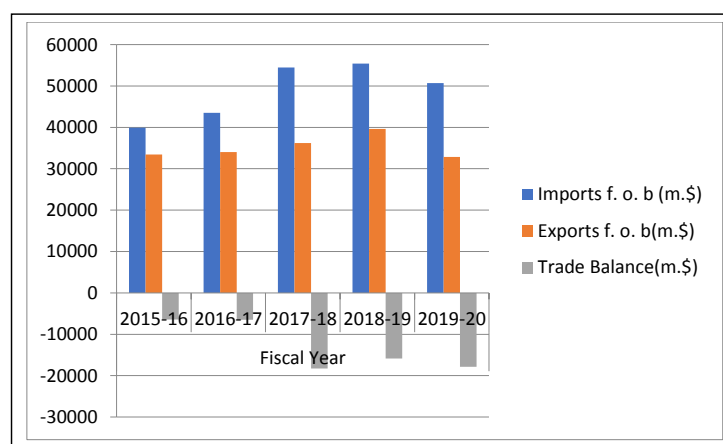
**Table 1: Export, Import, and Trade Balance**

Particulars	Fiscal Year				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Imports f. o. b (m.\$)	39901.00	43491.00	54463.00	55439.00	50691.00
Exports f. o. b(m.\$)	33441.00	34019.00	36205.00	39604.00	32830.00
Trade Balance (m.\$)	-6460.00	-6472.00	-18258.00	-15835.00	-17861.00

Source: BBS, Finance Division, Bangladesh Bank and Economic Review 2020.

In FY 2019-20, export was USD32,830 million and import was USD50,691 million. The two FY, 2017-18 and 2019-

20, signpost huge volume of trade deficits – USD18,258 million and USD17,861 million, respectively.



**Fig. 1: Export, Import, and Trade Balance**

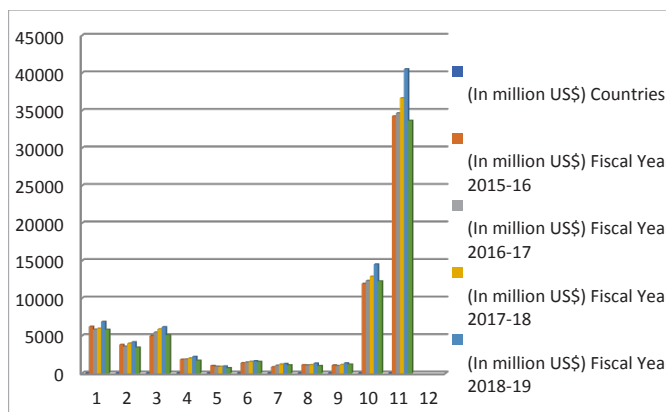
**Table 2: Country-Wise Export Scenario**

(In million USD)

Countries	Fiscal Year				
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20*
USA	6220.65	5846.64	5983.31	6876.29	5832
UK	3809.70	3569.26	3989.12	4169.31	3454
Germany	4988.08	5475.73	5890.72	6173.16	5099
France	1852.16	1892.55	2004.97	2217.56	1704
Belgium	1015.33	918.85	877.90	946.93	723
Italy	1385.67	1462.95	1559.92	1643.12	1559.92
Netherlands	845.92	1045.69	1205.37	1278.69	1099
Canada	1112.88	1079.19	1118.72	1339.80	1000
Japan	1079.55	1012.98	1131.90	1365.74	1201
Others	11947.24	12352.06	12906.24	14524.44	12279
Total	34257.18	34655.90	36668.17	40535.04	33674

Source: Export Promotion Bureau, NBR; \*Provisional. Economic Review 2020.

Table 2 exhibits that overall merchandise exports price of Bangladesh for FY 2015-16, FY 2016-17, and FY 2017-18 were USD34,257.18 million, USD34,655.90 million, and USD36,668.17 million, respectively. Its mean export income every year has increased, but not expectedly. In FY 2018-19, total export value was USD40,535.04 million; it is more than the previous year. In every fiscal year, most portions (almost 69%) of the earned export income from the above-stated countries, and the remaining export earnings of other countries of the world, make up only 31%. However, in the FY 2019-20, the export value declined from the previous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The export income was USD33,674 million, which was 16.93% less than that in FY 2018-19.



**Fig. 2: Country-Wise Export**

**Table 3: Country-Wise Import**

(In million USD)

Countries	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20*
India	5722.00	6336.00	8941.00	8242.00	5082.00
China	12582.00	13292.00	15937.00	17265.00	10573.00
Singapore	1203.00	2113.00	2255.00	2274.00	1288.00
Japan	2075.00	2031.00	2422.00	2254.00	1492.00
Hong Kong	827.00	726.00	976.00	614.00	288.00
Taiwan	1004.00	990.00	1129.00	1175.00	798.00
S. Korea	1417.00	1483.00	1907.00	1618.00	1093.00
USA	1134.00	1358.00	2160.00	2370.00	2050.00
Malaysia	1184.00	1040.00	1342.00	1520.00	1148.00
Others	15974.00	17636.00	22096.00	22583.00	15496.00
Total	43122.00	47005.00	58865.00	59915.00	39308.00

Source: Economic Review 2020, BB and NRB; \*Revised, \*\*up to February 2020.

Table 3 indicates that in FY 2019-20, import expenses stood at a total of USD39,304 million, a decrease of 8.56% over the previous FY. Import expenses of food grains (7.76%) and consumer goods (5.38%) increased. Table 5 shows that total import payments were USD43,122 million, USD47,005 million, USD58,865 million, and USD59,915 million for FY 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19, respectively.

The EPZ enterprises have contributed significantly in terms of export diversification of the country. To create a Digital Bangladesh, BEPZA started the process automation system. The Financial Times, a London-based FDI magazine, ranked the Chattogram Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> position in Best Cost Effective Zone category and 4<sup>th</sup> in the Best Economic Potential category, among the 700 economic

zones in the world, for FY 2010-11 (FDI magazine of The Financial Times, London, June-July, 2010 issue).

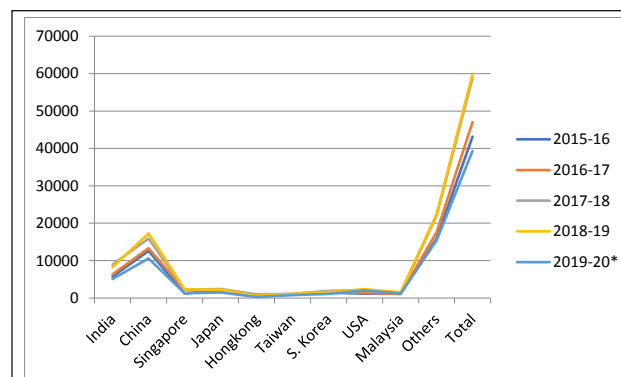


Fig. 3: Country-Wise Import

Table 4: EPZ-Wise Investment and Export

(In Million USD)

Name of EPZ	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20*
Dhaka	1,997.50	2183.9	2091.30	2200.30	2206.31	1409.08
Chattogram	2383.76	2419.71	2254.16	2442.20	2391.69	1558.95
Mongla	84.26	74.66	45.79	52.55	89.44	75.66
Cumilla	274.63	308.33	337.39	408.26	490.76	356.86
Uttara	87.99	188.80	227.07	224.93	293.76	169.03
Ishwardi	108.26	114.74	96.55	131.39	150.22	94.91
Adamjee	467.40	562.90	644.00	762.06	826.40	567.00
Karnaphuli	709.74	823.28	853.08	976.85	1075.52	705.31

Source: BEPZA. \*Up to February 2020. Bangladesh Economic Review 2020.

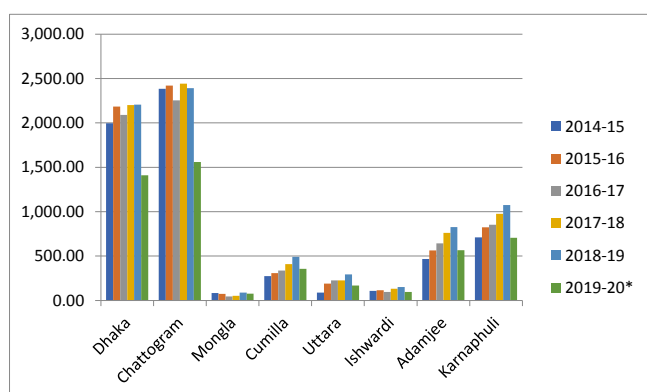


Fig. 4: EPZ-Wise Investment and Export

They have also ranked Chattogram Export Processing Zone in the 9<sup>th</sup> position for FDI Global Free Zone of the future 2012/2013 category (FDI Magazine of The Financial Times, London, June-July, 2012 issue).

## SAARC GLOBAL EXPORT AND IMPORT SCENARIOS

### Exports, FOB from Partner Countries

Table 5 shows the SAARC worldwide exports during 2016 to 2020. Total exports of SAARC countries was USD27,38,917.002 million. The growth rate of exports also augmented 8.51% from 2016 to 2020.

**Table 5: Exports, FOB from Partner Countries**

USD in Million

Countries	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Afghanistan	15464.93	7641.50	7819.99	7335.04	6796.43	45057.89
Bangladesh	43706.34	50692.14	57863.73	58120.36	50402.74	260785.31
Bhutan	496.83	480.22	771.80	775.33	769.80	3293.98
India	346826.27	419339.47	485218.86	454177.09	350394.95	2055956.64
Nepal	6584.79	8045.68	10129.80	10187.49	8408.29	43356.05
Maldives	1848.34	2028.53	2404.51	2341.00	1409.13	10031.51
Pakistan	6796.43	58958.00	60958.78	52218.09	47193.60	226124.9
Sri Lanka	18194.88	20136.24	21464.01	19050.66	15464.93	94310.72
Total	439918.81	567321.78	646631.48	604205.06	480839.87	2738917.02

Source: Direction of Trade Statistics, IMF.

India is the biggest exporter among all the member states of SAARC. The percentage portion of India's exports was 75.06 per cent in SAARC countries in 2016-2020, which increased to 79.65 per cent in 2016-2020.

### Imports, CIF from Partner Countries

Table 6 exhibits that the entire imports expenses of SAARC countries also amplified from USD3,19,943.27 million in 2016 to USD3,60,312.54 million in 2020. Total import expenses for 2017, 2018, and 2019 were USD3,61,415.37 million, USD3,98,197.93 million, and USD4,05,741.72 million.

**Table 6: Imports, FOB from Partner Countries**

USD in Million

Countries	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
Afghanistan	1127.83	1065.70	1286.55	2360.99	2373.55	8214.62
Bangladesh	34562.28	35953.41	39677.72	41549.57	36317.85	188060.83
Bhutan	259.98	261.84	352.55	330.95	236.22	1441.54
India	250436.50	287712.18	318229.74	323834.28	287045.44	1467258.14
Nepal	744.54	1376.01	1278.33	1466.70	1345.96	6211.54
Maldives	274.61	412.14	540.86	284.39	235.74	1747.74
Pakistan	22379.55	23827.84	25213.86	24360.98	22550.14	118332.37
Sri Lanka	10157.98	10806.25	11618.32	11553.86	10207.64	54344.05
Total	319943.27	361415.37	398197.93	405741.72	360312.54	1845610.83

Source: International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Overall, SAARC global export and import data shows that complete exports value was USD27,38,917.02 million and imports expenses was USD18,45,610.83 million; this shows the positive trade balance for the last five years throughout the world. India accounts for 79.50 per cent of the global imports of SAARC countries for the last five years. The second-largest importer is Bangladesh, among the SAARC countries.

## BANGLADESH AND SAARC COUNTRIES' INTERNATIONAL TRADE REVIEW

Bangladesh and SAARC countries' international business is sewed by the mutual comparative benefit.

**Table 7: Direction of Export by SAARC Countries**

(In million USD)

Countries	Financial Year					Total
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
Afghanistan	363.00	396.00	573.00	526.00	438.00	2296.00
Bhutan	205.00	272.00	360.00	637.00	299.00	1773.00
India	48903.00	56213.00	76173.00	107101.00	88645.00	377035.00
Nepal	217.00	2481.00	3734.00	3252.00	3536.00	13220.00
Maldives	14716.00	18072.00	19526.00	24070.00	17540.00	93924.00
Pakistan	3491.00	5139.00	6072.00	19523.00	3785.00	38010.00
Sri Lanka	2181.00	27454.00	19726.00	22732.00	7895.00	79988.00
Total	70076.00	110027.00	126164.00	177841.00	122138.00	606246.00

Source: BBS, Statistical Yearbook Bangladesh 2020.

Table 7 indicates that Bangladesh's export income from SAARC countries is not an optimum amount. Total export income was USD6,06,246 million during the last five years. Among these, in FY 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19, it was USD70,076 million, USD1,10,027 million, USD1,26,164 million, and USD1,77,841 million,

respectively. In FY 2019-20, Bangladesh earned a total of USD1,22,138 million from exports. Specifically, the export income earned by Bangladesh from Afghanistan was USD2,296 million, from Bhutan USD1,773 million, from India USD3,77,035 million, from Nepal USD13,220 million, from Maldives USD93,924 million, from Pakistan USD38,010 million, and from Sri Lanka USD79,988 million.

**Table 8: Direction of Import by SAARC Countries**

(In million USD)

Countries	Financial Year					Total
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
Afghanistan	24723.00	39844.00	32799.00	35167.00	43806	176339.00
Bhutan	-	4348.00	6306.00	9397.00	7616	27667.00
India	463777.00	573555.00	776828.00	752048.00	656981	3223189.00
Nepal	4.00	669.00	1124.00	1580.00	894	4271.00
Maldives	12.00	157269.00	212229.00	218278.00	219741	807529.00
Pakistan	14021.00	51985.00	63997.00	67782.00	67254	265039.00
Sri Lanka	9064.00	458468.00	475440.00	17744.00	15900	976616.00
Total	511601.00	1286138.00	1568723.00	1101996.00	1012192	5480650.00

Source: BBS, Statistical Yearbook Bangladesh 2020.

Table 8 shows that Bangladesh imported a total of USD54,80,650 million during the last five years from SAARC countries. In FY 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19, Bangladesh spent USD5,11,601 million, USD12,86,138 million, USD15,68,723 million, and USD11,01,996 million, respectively, for import. In FY 2019-20, Bangladesh imported from SAARC countries a total of USD10,12,192 million. In FY 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20, Bangladesh imported USD1,76,339 million, USD27,667 million, USD32,23,189 million, USD4,271 million, USD8,07,529 million, USD2,65,039 million, and USD9,76,616 million from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, respectively.

**Table 9: Total Export, Import, and Trade Balance**

(In million USD)

	Export	Import	Total Trade Balance
2015-16	70076	511601	(-441525)
2016-17	110027	1286138	(-1176111)
2017-18	126164	1568723	-(1442559)
2018-19	177841	1101996	(-924155)
2019-20	122138	1012192	(-890054)
Total	606246	5480650	(-4874404)

Source: Author's Analysis.

Furthermore, Table 9 exhibits that Bangladesh experienced huge trade deficits every year with the SAARC countries.

Bangladesh, during the last five years, experienced a total trade deficit of USD48,74,404 million; the total export and import were USD6,06,246 million and USD54,80,650 million, respectively. In FY 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20, the trade deficit with SAARC countries were USD4,41,525 million, USD11,76,111 million, USD14,42,559 million, USD9,24,155 million, and USD48,74,404 million, respectively. Table 9 reveals that the highest trade deficit was in the FY 2017-18 (USD14,42,559 million).

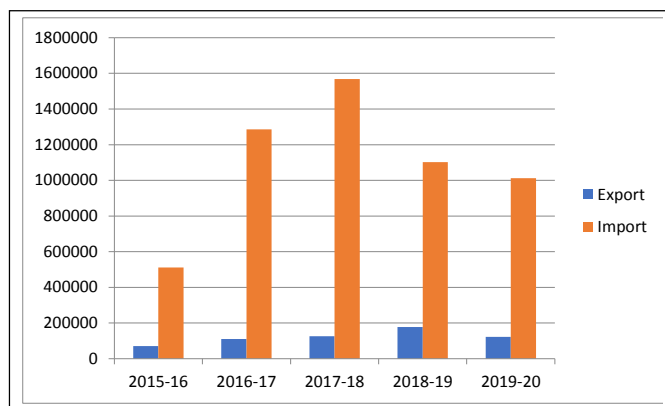


Fig. 5: Export and Import from SAARC Countries

Table 10: Direction of Export and Import by SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Co-Operation) Countries by Broad Commodities

Countries		Financial Year ('000' Taka)				
		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Afghanistan	Export	160633	334345	363101	396017	573392
	Import	-	-	-	-	-
Bhutan	Export	204709	272261	359600	635551	299003
	Import	3248881	4348245	6306272	9396974	7615669
India	Export	48887900	56166414	76172584	107101238	88479027
	Import	463775976	573552283	776828017	752025415	656980680
Nepal	Export	216878	2481296	3734049	3252348	3522280
	Import	3527	668629	1123618	1579668	894055
Maldives	Export	226933	250600	442260	563423	363852
	Import	12092	831436	342879	3947377	188667
Pakistan	Export	3490997	5139166	6071777	19522708	-
	Import	55821336	51984631	63997201	67782466	67253576
Sri Lanka	Export	2181072	3600046	2610094	3964988	7895387
	Import	9063862	12521639	12635914	17743621	15899623

Source: BBS, Statistical Yearbook Bangladesh 2020.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In 2019-20, Bangladesh exported goods to SAARC countries of Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, and Sri Lanka worth BDT5,73,392, 2,99,003, 8,84,79,027, 35,22,280, 3,63,852, and 78,95,387 thousand, respectively. This year, Bangladesh did not export to Pakistan and did not import from Afghanistan. In FY 2019-20, Bangladesh's import expenses were BDT76,15,669, 65,69,80,680, 8,94,055, 1,88,667, 6,72,53,576, and 1,58,99,623 thousand from Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, respectively. The document reveals that Bangladesh imported the highest amount from India (Table 10).

The SAARC countries have always been working as an alliance to increase mutual cooperation, economic development, and expansion of bilateral trade among South-Asian countries. The SAARC countries have good economic and trade relations with Bangladesh. A review of the basis of data analysis shows that Bangladesh is exporting huge quantities of goods to all SAARC countries, which are much more than imports. However, in the case of India, the picture is different. There is a long-standing trade deficit with India; this should be reduced in quantity, even if it cannot be overcome. In addition, Bangladesh needs to look at countries that have more export trade opportunities, such as the Maldives, Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bhutan, which



have opportunities to export more Bangladeshi products. At the same time, Bangladesh needs to reduce its import dependence on SAARC countries and the world. The goal should be 'more exports, limited imports', so that the domestic industries can develop. The concerned authorities should understand the issue. The government and policy makers should analyse the current business with SAARC countries. All SAARC member countries should have guaranteed access to the market for Bangladeshi products. The Export Promotion Bureau and the trade authorities should be more vigilant in developing infrastructure in an effort to increase export and improve trade facilitation.

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