

# Informatization: The SAARC Scenario

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**Table 2 (Infrastructure dimension - Media)**  
(Daily Newspaper Circulation, Radio and Television density in SAARC countries)

Media	DAILY NEWSPAPER				RADIO				TELEVISION			
	Circulation per 100 people				Receiver per 100 people				Receiver per 100 people			
Country	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	1980	1985	1990	1992	1980	1985	1990	1993	1980	1985	1990	1995
Bangladesh	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.8	1.7	4.1	4.5	4.7	.09	.26	.49	.07
Bhutan					0.6	1.3	1.6	1.7				
India	2.1	2.6	3.1	3.1	3.8	6.5	7.9	8.0	.44	1.3	3.2	6.1
Maldives	0.6	0.8	1.2	1.8	4.4	10.3	11.6	11.8	0.7	1.7	2.4	4.0
Nepal	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.7	2.0	2.7	3.4	3.5		.12	.18	0.3
Pakistan	1.2	1.1	1.5	0.6	6.4	8.3	8.7	9.1	1.1	1.3	1.6	2.2
Sri Lanka	3.0	2.4	3.2	5.7	9.8	15.8	19.7	20.1	2.4	2.8	3.5	6.6

In daily newspaper circulation per 100 people, Sri Lanka leads the SAARC countries (5.7) even though it is far behind the minimum standard (10.00) set by the Unesco in 1962. In the case of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal the figures are very low.

Regarding radio penetration (i.e. receivers number per 100 people) Sri Lanka again tops the list (20.1 per 100 people) followed by

Maldives (11.8). The other SAARC members are not even in a position to reach the double digit figure. The Unesco standard is 5 radio receivers per 100 persons. Regarding television, the SAARC countries are well below the world average (22.8 per 100 person). In this case, Bangladesh and Nepal even do not reach 1 per 100 persons.

Table 3 gives us the picture about telecommunications

dimension of informatization. Telephone density i.e., the main telephone lines per 100 people is an important indicator of informatization. The telephone lines average for Asia is 5.38 per 100 people and for the world is 12.4 per 100 people. As shown in table 3 all the SAARC countries except Maldives are well below the average for Asia. It is observed from the table that India and Pak-

istan have crossed Sri Lanka in this respect. The current projections show that by the year 2000 Maldives, Pakistan and India will substantially increase their lead over Sri Lanka.

Cellular telephone density and radio paging density have emerged very vital indicator of the infrastructure dimension. Table 3 shows that the data for international outgoing telephone traffic (minutes per person)-another indicator of informatization do not give any good picture for the SAARC countries (except Maldives). Computerization is a closely related indicator of informatization. Telecommunication and computerization have a mutually causal relationship with country is economic development. Table 4 gives us the estimated number of computer as well as computer & in-

ternet density, i. e. computer per 100 people for the SAARC countries. The world average for this is 4.23 and for the Asia is 1.23. It is to be mentioned that the information technologies like telecommunications (telephone, cellular, paging, telex, international telephone traffic etc.) and computerization linked with electronic media are the main feature of the present day digital age. TV and the computers are in the process of merging now. This has indeed turned the concept of 'global village' into 'global family'. This indicator thereby carries a special significance in measuring informatization i.e. quality of people, level of information technology and their penetration as well as economy. In comparison to other parts of the world the SAARC countries' achievement for these is not that

mentionable. Regarding economy dimension it is to be observed that the data on information economy, i.e. share of primary information workers (percentage of information workforce in the total labour force) is not easily available. In spite of the absence of economic scene, the people and the infrastructure dimensions provide a sufficient profile of the degree of informatization in these countries. It is found that as the highest scorer on literacy Sri Lanka can become the winner to formulate an information society vision. Maldives, Pakistan and India despite the latter two's weakness on people dimension can beat Sri Lanka in

gion' to become the information gateway to Asia at the turn of this century. They can thus generate multiplier effect in the process of economic development throughout this region. Today we are just living in a new communications environment which is called digital age. In this new environment of technological hybridization the issues, ideas, elements and the sharing are mixed and overlapped among the nations so largely that we can't keep ourselves isolated except as labels of identification. Any innovation that happens in America today cross U.S. border faster than the physical movement of the innovator him-

self. On the other day I had a sharing with a British. He was from Northern Ireland. While discussing media and other socio-political issues of our two countries he was found to be so influenced and so impressed about the Peace Treaty in CHT of Bangladesh which he saw on the TV screen in his own house. It was possible because of the information technologies. He described his feelings in the way—'When I saw the telecast of surrendering of arms in exchange of white roses by the CHT rebels it stroke

me so profoundly that at the moment I thought could this scenario be happened in our parts of land?' Very recently, of course, it has happened in Ireland too. So, it is media vis-a-vis communications that can sensitize and mould peoples' mind even for such a

**Table 4 (Infrastructure dimension-Computer/Internet)**

(Indicators of Computerization: Penetration of PCs and Internet in SAARC Countries.)

Computer/Internet Indicator	Estimated personal Computers				Internet	
	Total (000)	No. per 100 people	Total No. of hosts	Hosts per million people	Total estimated users	Users per million people
Country	2	3	4	5	6	7
	1995	1995	1995	1995	1995	1995
Bangladesh						
Bhutan						
India	1,200	0.13	788	0.85	10,000	10.76
Maldives	3	1.23				
Nepal			19	0.87	185	8.44
Pakistan	155	0.12	17	0.13	160	1.23
Sri Lanka	20	0.11	6	0.33	60	3.27

telecommunications front by the year 2000. Bangladesh and Nepal can follow them too. We have seen that some countries with 'fertile spot' (As for example-Bangalore in India) is leapfrogging into 'cyberspatial heights' in the global information society. 'Cyberjaya' another 'fertile spot' in Malaysia is an exciting example, which has a vision of informatizing the nation by 2020 through its Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC). The SAARC countries can think together to work on joint 'fertile re-

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challenges of communication technologies and thus accrue their blessings. SAARC emerged with the spirit of cooperation—now SAARC should go with infusing and expanding this spirit for the search of peace and advancement through adopting information technologies during these days of new communication environment.

(Data Source-Media Asia 1997 vol. 24, No. 4. AMIC, Singapore)

**Table 3 (Infrastructure dimension - Telecoms.)**

(Telecommunications Scenario and Their Projections for the year 2000 of SAARC Countries)

Telecom dimension	Telephone Penetration Rate and its Projections for year 2000				Cellular, paging and International Telephone Traffic		
	No per 100 people 2000	Projected No. per 100 people 2000	Estimated investment 1996-2000 (US\$ mil)	Estimated per year investment (US\$ mil.)	Cellular tele-phones per 100 people	Radio paging per 100 people	International outgoing tel. traffic (minutes per person) 1995
Country	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	1980	1985	1990	1992	1980	1985	1990
Bangladesh	0.24	0.26	80	16			0.2
Bhutan	0.62	0.73	14	3			0.5
India	1.29	2.78	24,441	4,888	0.01	0.02	0.3
Maldives	5.67	11.13	25	5	0	0.37	12.6
Nepal	0.36	0.61	103	21			0.6
Pakistan	1.64	3.62	4,856	971	0.03		0.5
Sri Lanka	1.11	1.81	209	42	0.33	0.12	1.5

## Information Flow

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to be reflected in the mass media which ultimately reinforce the awareness of the people regarding their rights and duties to the societies and consequently it will help them to achieve a better life. If there is imbalance in domain of communication domestically we could hardly expect justice and balance in regional as well as international field of communication. One of the most contributing factors for betterment of the communication is the development and protection of truly democratic institutions at local, national and multilateral levels. In view of the realities and challenges, in the mass media activities in the South Asian countries, there is a need for promotion of social values and pragmatism within society as well as to maintain inter-societal links. There is also a need to comprehend the popular perceptions of

the societies and articulate them. To promote media professionalism in the region it is recommended that the newsmen and the professionals of the SAARC countries should be exempted from visa restrictions while travelling in the countries of the region. There is a vital need to promote and exchange newspapers, magazines, and printed as well as audio-visual materials. Mass Communication and Media Education need to be included in the curricula and educational programmes introduced in colleges and universities. The governments of the SAARC region should provide resources and promote exchange of experts in the field of journalism as well as mass communication for development and better understanding among people. All these will lead to adequate flow of information resulting in better understanding and spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

আপনার রোপিত চারা গাছ  
গুলোকে পরিচর্যা করে  
সবল ও বড় করে  
তুলুন ও ভবিষ্যত  
সম্পদ গড়ে তুলুন।



ফরেস্ট্রী সেন্টর প্রকল্প  
বন অধিদপ্তর

## জমিতে সার ও কীটনাশক পরিমিতভাবে ব্যবহার করুন

- মাটি দূষণের ফলে মাটির উর্বরা শক্তি কমে যায় এবং খাদ্য ঘাটতি দেখা দেয়।
- মাটিতে নির্দিষ্ট পরিমাণের বাইরে সার ব্যবহার করলে জমির উর্বরতা হ্রাস পায় এবং পরিবেশের ক্ষতি হয়। তাই জমিতে পরিমাণমত সার ব্যবহার করুন।
- জমিতে কীটনাশক ঔষধের ব্যবহার প্রয়োজনমত ও নির্দিষ্ট সীমার ভিতরে রাখুন। কীটনাশক ঔষধ পরিবেশকে ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত করে।
- পরিবেশ সুস্থ রেখে আপনি বাঁচুন এবং অন্যকে সুস্থভাবে বাঁচতে সহায়তা করুন।



পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর  
পরিবেশ ও বন মন্ত্রণালয়  
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার