

Outcome of 18th SAARC Summit in Kathmandu -

The theme of the summit was "Deeper Integration for peace & prosperity". But, the countries failed to sign two major agreements on rail & road connectivity. The pact on energy, however was signed.

The 36 point concluding Kathmandu Declaration, states that members will continue their efforts to intensify regional cooperation on connectivity, renew their commitment to a South Asian Economic Union, strengthen the Social Window of the SAARC Development Fund, and reiterate their commitment to free south Asia from poverty.

The Kathmandu Declaration lists a lot of other lofty goals like developing a "blue economy" (ocean based economy) for the region, monitoring cyber crimes, good governance, reinforcing cultural heritage, universal health coverage, food security etc.

The Kathmandu declaration accepted that observer countries of SAARC may be engaged in "demand driven priority areas". Almost all of India's neighbouring countries are attracted to china, both for the lure of greater economic resources, as well as strategic potential of keeping India in balance.

The Leaders welcomed the offer of govt of Islamic Republic of Pakistan to host the 19th summit of SAARC.

Why were connectivity agreements not signed?

Three imp agreements related to connectivity - The Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger and Cargo Vehicular Traffic

the SAARC regional Agreement on Railways and the SAARC framework agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity) were expected to be signed. The first two agreements were stalled because Pakistan held back, saying it still had to complete its "internal processes" regarding these pacts. The third on energy was signed.

What were the new initiatives proposed by India? India promised to launch a satellite for the region by SAARC Day in 2016, set up a Special Purpose Vehicle in India to finance infrastructure projects in the region, ease business visas by launching a SAARC business traveller card, and provide immediate medical visas for patients & attendants.

P.M. Modi also suggested that a SAARC regional Super Reference Laboratory can be established to fight common diseases of T.B. and HIV in South Asia. In the field of education and research, he pledged to expand India's high-speed broadband National Knowledge Network, which will connect universities in India to the SAARC region, in order to help disseminate information and build regional research capabilities. In addition, Modi suggested that the South Asian University, set up in 2010 in New Delhi, can develop a partnership with at least one university in each of the member states.