

Mongla, where Chittagong is overburden and Mongla is underutilized due to improper inland connections. Lastly, Maldives (Fernando, 2012) maritime strengths and port development is based on the prime port Male who is fully responsible for international maritime traffic unhurriedly. However, the stage of port facility is in a balance position where development opportunity remains in the port sector but the inland connections are in an infant condition. Except India, all countries are suffering with the poor inland connections of road, rail and river infrastructure that resulted huge freight cost and time that is not competitive in doing international business cost-effectively.

#### 4. PORT COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA

Types of port cooperation that described by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development-UNCTAD (1996) to gain in the port sector nationally, regionally and internationally as follows:

- a. Institutional Cooperation. In this type of cooperation, agreements are signed by the governments bilaterally, under the forum of regions, a consortium of some countries. Currently, institutional relationship or cooperation's are exit in the banner of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), BBIN, BCIM, B&R as well as coastal shipping agreement in between Bangladesh and India.
- b. Industrial Cooperation. This kind of cooperation is promoting the port activities on a non-profit making basis. Now-a-days, it helps to establish industry or export economic zone and connect to the easy access seaports irrespective of any country's port. This cooperation is highly required for landlocked Nepal and Bhutan as well as landlocked part of India to use Bangladeshi ports to save money and time.
- c. Commercial Cooperation: It is motivated by profit and commercial benefits. In here, Bangladesh may seek the cooperation of Indian ports in handling the full cargo of Nepal and Bhutan and provide the free access of Indian cargo and container to transport from the mainland to "Seven Sisters" via surface road or inland waterways where intermodal container is the best way to avoid multiple handling of cargo.

In the perspective (Islam, 2016; Rahmatullah, 2010) of bilateral port cooperation, India and Bangladesh have the opportunity to use Bangladeshi seaport Chittagong and Mongla by Indian traders with the opportunity of Bangladeshi traders to trade with Nepal and Bhutan by using the surface land of India. From the British period, Bangladesh is well connected with India, Nepal and Bhutan and by renovating the railway and it is possible to start intermodal container transportation where Bangladeshi seaports are feasible to connect the port access to surface land under the protocol of BBIN MVA optimistically. Recent investment of India in developing the rail network of Mongla and Payra port will help to start the freight transportation instead of using Haldia and Kolkata that have low navigability and congested as stated by Kharel (2009) and Ghosh & De (2001). The idea (Alam, 2014) of cooperation is an evolving process where South Asian regional integration process and its political economy is required to provide effort by all countries and understand the regionalism profitably instead of wrong assumption towards cooperation. The great barriers are assumed in the transport connectivity and non-working port rivalry without providing or sharing any cargo and containers. The competition among the countries without any feasibility study or any future demand forecasting of freight transport. This non-cooperation in freight transport and accessing the ports are bearing huge additional transport cost by all.

Conventionally, port (Ghosh and De, 2001) competition belongs to the coverage of

hinterland or region served by the specific ports. At present, in India, there is fresh competition among the private and public ports to offer the maximum port facilities to the port users and stakeholders, that is fully absent in other countries of South Asia. On the contrary, in Bangladesh, Bangladesh is showing the cooperation among the seaports by their main seaport Chittagong who involved in the process of building third seaport Payra and riverine inland container terminal (RICT) in various locations of the country.

In a research, Islam (2016) claimed that South Asian region remains internally disconnected region of the world who has the opportunity to integrate the transport management by developing the infrastructure of rail, road and waterways. Unfortunately, the development is in stagnant position by political will and mutual trust among the countries of the South Asia. In order to understand the port cooperation's importance and implications, Islam (2016) advised to view the regional transport connectivity for regional integration through the lenses of geo-political issues that are affecting in port development, spatial connections and others. In line with such motivation, modern (Tsekeris & Tsekeris, 2011) societies are experiencing a growing demand of freight movement where competitive or substitutive and complementary relationships among the modes of transport and necessary inputs in planning, designing, evaluating and regulating transport and supply chain system.

## 5. PORT DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH ASIA

Port development is a key issue in the South Asia for increasing the records of Logistics Performance Index (LPI) because region has labour intensive market and place for foreign direct investment. So, it is essential to think about the freight transport connectivity and increase maritime logistics services inevitably. In addition, need to increase the hinterland for a port that may be possible by linking with other ports to utilize the existing capacity or increase the capacity of the port as future demands or trade forecast feasibility study optimistically. Increasing competition or business rivalry among the seaports as well as mode of transports especially in between the sea and other forms of transport, port has to think differently to stay with the transport chain, not only the port development but also hinterland connection development by port authorities are appreciated to secure the cargo and container preferably. In addition of port (Wang & Notteboom, 2015) core competency, likewise, efficient logistical networks and hinterland connections, it is essential effective facilities and promotes innovation by utilizing innovative technologies to confine to their port perimeter. In addition of port development, Brooks et al. (2017) argued for port reform where some countries are showing significant improvements but yet others rethinking or not started or no reforms at all. Moreover, they added that port reform is a complex process that needs port governance decision in both strategies and structures.

UNCTAD (2011) focused the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in port development especially to finance in the inland transport infrastructure development and rail transportation as vital point to clear the cargo and container from the seaport to hinterland easily and smoothly. To follow the statement of UNCTAD(2012), port development is the derived demand of the port users that depends on the actual, historical and anticipated volumes of cargo as per requirements of the services and installing the facilities to handle the cargo and container efficiently and through or catch to/from inland transport networks. Transport (Tsekeris & Tsekeris, 2011) investment cost is very high especially in infrastructure development investment in highway, rail, seaports that requires long-term financial commitments with high risk along with sunk cost. Therefore, accurate business forecasting and probability of doing business are required to invest

in port and logistics sector

Among the countries of South Asia, Bangladesh is potential to serve the rest of the nations by their natural seaport in the coastline of the Bay of Bengal. In line with previous trends, regional (Rahmatullah, 2010) connection is possible by Chittagong port towards all hinterland countries India, Nepal and Bhutan with the possibilities to serve South-West (SW) China and Myanmar. This will be treated as “Maritime Logistics Services”. In this connection, Bangladeshi seaports have the opportunity to tie with the Chittagong and other regional ports especially with Colombo and Major Indian ports for sharing cargo and containers and facilitate the intermodal freight transportation in the sea and surface areas of the region. Just then, Bangladeshi seaports need to think to send their containers within the hub port of India and Sri Lanka only instead of using Singapore, Malaysia or Vietnam. It will help to operate big vessels by India and Sri Lanka where port cooperation is must and mutual understanding will bring the benefits for all. Finally, Taneja et al. (2012) advised to the port authorities to stake with the innovation for improving operational efficiency, gaining competitive advantages, achieving and maintaining resilience in the changing environment. Already, port (Galvao et al., 2016) modernization process is completed in different parts of the world to accommodate increased volume of cargo and container with the technological updated with the larger vessel berthing in the port protected area efficiently.

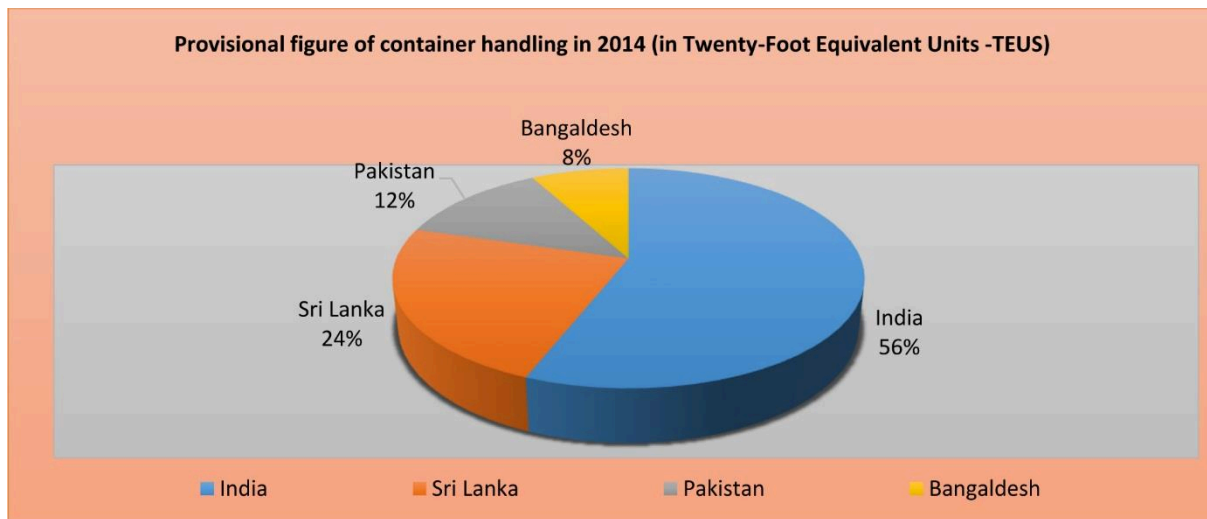
## 6. MARITIME LOGISTICS SERVICES IN SOUTH ASIA

Having in mind, maritime logistics is lagging behind in the South Asia because of non-cooperation among the counties and not sharing the facilities each other where opportunity remains to use the maritime access by all countries of the region by improving the port and its inland distribution networks or improving transport networks. To improve the maritime logistics services, World Bank (2007) favours to the private companies to carry out the port operation under the supervision of public port authority. On a related matter, Notteboom & Rodrigue (2005) explored that port expansion is the product of evolving maritime technologies and improvement in cargo handling. In here, expansion is the derived demand of port users and subject to the new industrialization or basic requirements of the neighbours for doing maritime logistics business.

India (UNCTAD, 2015) is handling approx. 56% of containers by their ports where JNPT and Mundra are covering the maximum share. After that, Sri Lanka is managing 24% including the feeder containers from other South Asian countries and Pakistan has the record of 12% with the containers for Afghanistan. Lastly, Bangladesh has the performance of handling 8% and trying to share to handle the cargo and container of Nepal and Bhutan by providing port access under the banner of BBIN.

After the containerization of cargo, freight industry operated by multimodal and synchro-modal system. Furthermore, Notteboom & Rodrigue (2005) prescribed that port authority has to play an important role in the creation of core competencies and economies of scope by an active engagement in the development of inland freight distribution. Importantly, Mathisen & Hanssen (2014) are focusing on the rail transport wherever intermodal currently engaging with the road and waterways with the political concern of environment, furthermore, increasingly popular to reduce the emissions from trucks. In line with such motivation, a new stream (Notteboom & Yang, 2017) of port strategies has emerged to build the relationship with the local community by focusing the social and environment aspects. In this connection, port authorities may offer by their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scheme to develop the port city and using carbon free trucks and trailers with in the port city as a part of sustainable port development. This

research explored the possibilities of Chittagong port as the main gateway to South Asia. In addition, author argued for Chittagong as main maritime load centre of OBOR. In the essence, Mooney (2016) found enormous opportunity to improve the quality infrastructure of port, cargo handling processes and inland connectivity to India, Nepal and Bhutan to foster the international trade of those countries including own development.



**Figure 2. Container throughput of South Asian countries except Maldives (UNCTAD, 2015).**

## 7. BELT & ROAD INITIATIVE AND SOUTH ASIA

B&R or OBOR initiative (Xinhua, 2017; Xue, 2016) that was announced by the Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 with the spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and benefits. In addition, B&R initiative (BDO Singapore, 2015) is the development approach of China to improve the connectivity in major five areas: policy, infrastructure, trade, currency and people. In this connection, the 21<sup>st</sup> century MSR is the core part and sea transport line of B&R initiative that will connect the South Asia with the outer world for facilitating international trade profitably with safe seaborne trade. This section tried to focus the B&R initiative of China in the cluster South Asia. Quite the opposite, India opted out from the B&R and make the complex situation to implement the Chinese plan in the region smoothly. However, in south Asia except India, all are connecting to B&R to get financial, technical and regional support to build or develop transport infrastructure connectivity.

Conversely, Bhutan and Nepal are facing the scarcity of port transport access highly because of their poor and costly connection with the Indian Ports. Even so, North-East (NE) part of India also facing the same problems like Nepal and Bhutan. Recent development of BBIN MVA is showing the path to develop intra-regional transport connectivity but it is essential to extend the inland connection to the port access of Bangladesh that is feasible in comparing with Indian Ports. After leaving of India, it is complex to implement the MSR and serve maritime logistics service and inland connections by spatial transportation of cargo and container timely and economically. In here, Bangladeshi seaports are viable to act as maritime load centre and assist the regional countries easily. In addition, Bangladesh has the opportunity to connect the overland Silk Road by using her seaport and serve Southern part of China and Myanmar internationally.

The Bay of Bengal (Karim, 2015) is strategically important for India and China that would

add huge value in their development and economic growth. He added that newly forum of BCIM may not effective due to power rivalry where MSR could be an effective alternative to the land based forum BCIM. At sea, B&R is trying to build transport routes for connecting major seaports of the world and Chittagong is the best ports to cover the freight of surface level industry of South Asia also for China and Myanmar. In this connection, research organization Knight Frank (2015) argued for infrastructure development of this initiative that will focuses on trade facilitation, financial integration, cultural and educational exchanges with China to drive the initiative as priority and increase the speed of South Asian regional development optimistically. Moreover, Lain and Pantucci (2015) expected to work together by India and China to promote the BCIM in connecting it with the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and MSR where China has to disclose her details intention or aim for South Asia. Overall, China's (Xue, 2016) influence to the world on the banner of B&R would help to develop the trade facilitation irrespective of small or big country. Similarly, it will bring the good things for South Asia and transport connectivity as well as port development in this region will help to develop intelligent transport management system.

## 8. INLAND TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

Freight movement is a process of efficient ways that promotes the economic growth but hampered due to lack of information in the developing countries highly. Waterborne transport is always healthy and brings the environmental benefits in comparing with the road and air transportation. The widespread (UNCTAD, 2011) view on the rail transport is growing due to the rising price and demand of raw materials also the most optimal modes of transport for carrying large, heavy, bulk, container over long destination by ensuring safety and damage free options attractively. In addition, UNCTAD (2011) stated that inland water transport has an environmental transportation system in terms of energy consumption and exhaust gas emissions. The Port (Monios & Wilmsmeier, 2013) regionalization concept is extended to improve the inland connections as a part of port development on the focus of institutional relationship in fostering the spread of inland transport networks.

Monios & Wilmsmeier (2013) revealed that port authorities and terminal operators are able to develop the inland terminals for increasing inland distribution networks. For instance, Bangladesh's (Saha, 2015) main seaport Chittagong's port authority and its terminal operator Saif Powertek is operating the inland terminal Pangaon RICT and providing service to the user smoothly. However, it is observed that operational issues, spatial development, role of inland transport operators or market players are creating obstacles in port regionalization. Rapid (Tsekeris & Tsekeris, 2011) growth of transport technology and various policy initiatives for developing integrated transport services that created the opportunity to invest in the port development also inland transport network development for increasing the maritime facilities out of boundary and forwarding to extended hinterland as port rivalry within the country or region. The port (Taneja et al., 2012) sector is in the midst transition where innovations are required to face three major challenges or factors: globalization, changing market place and changing technology. In addition, role of port that changed from the traditional cargo & container handling to add in the active supply chain and involvement with the land transport in the inland transport networks to attract the port users in offering the complete port transport services. Therefore, port has to use the innovative solutions in handling the cargo and container and use the developed intermodal transport network efficiently.



## 9. INTERMODAL FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION

Intermodal (Jarzemskis, 2008) transport is the well-known way to reduce transport costs, pollution and congestion in the passage significantly. Remarkably, intermodal is popular types of freight transport that is growing concern of world trader even to the governments for its passion of single handling of cargo and full pattern of logistics from origin to destination. Rapid (Sugawara, 2017) growth of globalization and international trade, the importance of global freight transport and logistics are increased significantly, in particular, intermodal freight transportation is extremely important to implement efficient logistics networks from ports to the hinterland. Notably, due to product (UNCTAD, 2012) and service quality of container as well as it is practical, versatile, ubiquitous and well understood for easy moving from one mode to another, user chosen the service of container for saving time and costs. It is highly remarkable that containerization augmented the speed of cargo movement where intermodal add the value in decreasing multiple handling at various modes with the features of environmental factors that has positive strength in the concern of climate change. In addition, UNCTAD (2011) reported that inland transport networks is a vital issue in port productivity where inefficient inland connectivity and its services to the users always hampered the country's connectivity and in achieving the global market competitiveness and balancing the trade internationally. To unfold, Monios & Wilmsmeier (2013) argued for the development of intermodal transport in the process of port regionalization where inland terminals are key mode to manage cargo and container more strategically by adding the integrated inland logistics service to the hinterland from port.

In addition of general cost of freight, there are some external costs like accidents, noise, air pollution, climate change and congestion where intermodal has reduced external cost in operating the freight at intermodal supply chain in international trade. Maritime (Sakalys & Batarliene (2017) found that it is possible to establish innovative transportation and logistics services by developing cooperation among the port, inland and intermodal terminal and transport corridor to serve region and create the opportunity of trade zone development. This is the starting of port services to the neighbours by major transport corridors by intermodal freight transportation system. In South Asia, there are huge number of transport cross border corridor especially from Bangladesh to Nepal, Bhutan and India but not functional due to policy matter or lack of trust or geopolitics. In this line, Hanaoka & Regmi (2011) examined that with the parallel development of containerization, it is demonstrated the needs of improved intermodal transportation inevitably. In order to promote the intermodal, it is expected to improve the highways, railways and inland waterways to shape the full pledged intermodal transportation of every country for easy connecting with seaports irrespective of maritime or landlocked country.

Overall, Yevdokimov (2000) measured the economic benefits of intermodal transportation comparing with other modes of transportation by computer simulation. Connectively, intermodal transportation will help the region to increase the connectivity among the countries in avoiding the unnecessary handling at the cross border or dry port or land port. This will reduce the transport cost within the region and further international trade by seaborne transport. Furthermore, Yevdokimov (2000) added that intermodal transportation is gaining rigorous acceptance as an integral part of the freight transport system in conducting business in an increasingly competitive and interdependent global economy.

## 10. CASE STUDY: CHITTAGONG PORT AS GOLDEN GATE OF SOUTH ASIA.

To enter into the South Asia by sea, there are some seaports including, Colombo, Chittagong,

Haldia, Gwadar, JNP are remarkable where Chittagong has surface or spatial connections with inland transport networks by rail, road, river comparing with others in terms of covering maximum geographical areas of South Asia and having the chance to gain hinterland out of the country even to China and Myanmar. This section focused the principal seaport “Chittagong” of Bangladesh who has great features to act as golden gate of South Asia as well as international maritime load centre in the plan of MSR. Emerging opportunities, UNCTAD (2011) praised the initiative of Bangladesh in developing RICT nearby capital city Dhaka where Bangladesh entered into the full options of Intermodal facilities to port users after rail container transportation from Chittagong Port to Dhaka Inland Container Depot (ICD). Moreover, Chittagong has the opportunity to serve the maritime logistics services by inland transportation with the system of intermodal freight transportation system as a part of regional connectivity in South Asia proudly. On the contrary, Bangladesh’s Mooney (2016) port sector desperately needs the modern port infrastructure where its more than 90% cargo are carrying by old and inefficient principal seaport Chittagong.

Greatly, Islam (2016) favoured to the Chittagong port and found the prospects to become a regional trading and transport hub in the South Asia. He requested to use Bangladeshi port especially Chittagong Port by India, Nepal and Bhutan but not diverting to far distance port Vishakhapatnam or JNPT as it will be costly by landlocked countries Nepal and Bhutan also time factor in catching the international shipment and perishable cargo. Furthermore, Kharel (2009) stated that transit issue of Nepal and Bhutan needs to reconsider by the Indian government because access ports of India are congested and inefficient where he found the potential alternative ports Chittagong and Mongla. Even so, for “Seven Sisters” of India may be benefitted by using Chittagong Port which is far closer than Kolkata port that could be reduced import and export cost also bring the export competitiveness internationally. Overall, in the sense of B&R initiative and position in the Bay of Bengal, Chittagong port is the “Golden Gate” of South Asia that will open the door of opportunity to all especially to act as prime maritime load centre in the mix of maritime and land based transportation also cover the largest coverage of hinterland up to SW China.

## 11. CONCLUSION

Global supply chains are highly depends on the secured maritime transport chain and users are always optimistic for reliable maritime logistics services for ensuring their freight at the right place timely and economically. Regional cooperation in the South Asia is essential to facilitate the trade and increase the transport services inevitably. High levels of port development and its related transport chain development is prescribed to reduce the dependency on the international market arguably. It’s a gentle reminder that unsatisfactory quality poor port services may remove the country from the international trade market. Economic (Silborn, 2008) growth indicates the increased traffic flows and need to manage the traffic by establishing proper transport system where intermodal freight transportation system is the less congested environment friendly. In the necessity of port reform, Brooks et al. (2017) identified the characteristics of special influences of politics, culture and institutional arrangements. In south Asia, among the countries, all of political, cultural and intuition values are very high where regional policies that developed by the cultural dynamic also affected by the religious factors, in here, intuition approaches are minimum or low.

From the UNCTAD (1996) secretariat, it is clear that port cooperation is essential for all maritime nations to provide effective maritime logistics services uninterruptedly. In addition,

containerization and intermodal system created the new era in the freight transport management aggressively. Moreover, B&R initiated to facilitate inland transport connectivity with the touch of intermodal freight transportation in South Asia in driving the international trade profitably. This research described the port development status of South Asia with the opportunity along with the case study of “Chittagong Port” where research found the necessity of port cooperation among the countries and ports in strengthening the maritime logistics services.

The most important hindrance in strengthening the maritime logistics support is inland transport connectivity in South Asia. In addition, intermodal freight transportation is not exercising here as required for containerization due to poor infrastructure of port, inland connections and others where capital investment is appreciated through PPPs and government initiative conceivably. As has been stated, cooperation is appreciated among the seaports to understand each other's problems, best practice and probable solutions to achieve the common goal to provide integrated maritime logistics services to all. In this connection, recent initiatives by various forums for developing the regional transport system will provide the necessary guidance in developing the port sector and inland transport system especially on rail and waterways in the motto of integrated intermodal freight transportation system. However, the cost (Rahmatullah, 2010) of non-cooperation in transport among the South Asian countries are very high and needs to share the natural sea access by all and develop seaports and inland connections immediately to mitigate the maritime access demand of landlocked Nepal, Bhutan and NE part of India which one is basically landlocked. Overall, this paper found some possible ways for improving the performance of ports through regional cooperation to enhance the maritime logistics services in South Asia and ensure the maritime logistics services to the region for economic growth of trade and development.

## 12. RESULTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Research found below results and suggested to follow the future directions to maximize the cooperation among the ports and make a plan for developing ports to work together in the South Asia.:

- I. UNCTAD (1996) guided the port for institutional cooperation where regional cooperation in port development is essential and it needs to lead by the India in the banner of SAARC, BBIN and BCIM to improve the freight transport efficiency in South Asia.
- II. Dappe and Suarez-Aleman (2016) found that fragile transport and logistics services with including sluggish development and expansion of port productivity resulted to South Asia's lack of competitiveness in the international trade. Therefore, simplification of freight transportation and need to enhance the port capacity of regional ports immediately.
- III. Need to fulfil the requirements of LPI indicator that ranked by World Bank for the interest of region. By increasing the LPI, shipping and logistics cost will be reduced and will possible to catch global trade candidly.
- IV. Port performance is highly depended on the inland transport networks. Besides investing in the port development, it is necessary for investment in the development of inland transport network and capitalize the strength of spatial transportation.
- V. To ensure the integrated Intermodal Freight Transportation System, it is necessary to emphasize on the regional rail networks and waterways development as well as start the coastal shipping in a large scale because water transport is cheap and energy efficient, resilient transport system and it is important to develop the waterways and start the



- coastal shipping and spatial connections with the RICT as a part of intermodal freight transportation.
- VI. Traffic (Wang et al., 2014) flow volumes, profits and share volumes are the key indicators to qualify the performance of intermodal freight transportation system but not sufficient to analysis of different operation strategies, commercial policies and planning methods. Need to design the intermodal freight transportation for South Asia proximately.
  - VII. South Asia is lagging behind in rendering the port services and logistics support because of less regional agreement of port cooperation also unable to utilize the existing port facilities. In this connection, needs to strengthen the BBIN, BCIM corridor for integrating with OBOR.
  - VIII. Need to increase the Asian cooperation and work with B&R or OBOR initiative by all countries of South Asia and connect with China and its infrastructural development plan with the department of transport and communication.
  - IX. Port (Galvao et al., 2016) academic research has traditionally focused on improving the port efficiency that resulted to resolve the conflict in the port management and address the causation of poor performance that may be occurring due to stakeholders' conflict. Besides the infrastructure development of port, it is essential to solve the conflict that raised in the process of port development by academic business research and needs to emphasize in conducting research on port development.

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