



## SASEC Events



- [SASEC Event Page](#)
- [IMT-MVA India Meeting](#)

### Meeting between India, Myanmar, and Thailand on the Motor Vehicle Agreement 13-14 July 2015: Bangkok, Thailand

The Meeting of Transport Secretaries of India, Myanmar and Thailand (IMT) on Cross-Border Transport Facilitation was held to prepare implementing protocols for the final draft of the IMT Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA). This was preceded by a Customs Sub-group Meeting on 13 July 2015, which focused on Customs-related protocols of the IMT MVA. The Meeting agreed on the substantive content of all articles and schedules for the proposed draft protocols, including the IMT Ministerial Meeting in Myanmar in November 2015, and the way forward in implementing the MVA.

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- [SASEC Trade Facilitation Program](#)

### Regional Workshops on RAMIS Automated Customs Module: Priority 1 1-11 July 2015: Phuentsholing, Paro, Samtse, Gelephu, Samdrupjongkhar, and Thimphu, Bhutan

The Department of Revenue and Customs (DRC), Ministry of Finance, Bhutan conducted a User Acceptance Testing (UAT) in May 2015 of the initial component of the Revenue Administration and Management System (RAMIS) Customs and Excise Module for focal officials of DRC. This technical training was the first in a series for RAMIS, DRC's upgraded automated system for Customs clearance procedures to be rolled out in early 2016. Following the UAT, the DRC focal officials delivered hands-on testing and training sessions in July 2015 to all Customs officers throughout Bhutan on how to use the first components of RAMIS applications.

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### Focused Workshop on ASYCUDA World Prototype Development 30 June -5 July 2015: Biratnagar, Nepal

The Nepal Department of Customs (DOC) conducted a Focused Workshop on ASYCUDA World Prototype Development facilitated by Asian Development Bank e-Customs expert, Mr. David Wright. Seventeen participants from DOC's Project Management Unit, and selected staff from Customs offices attended the Focused Workshop to discuss features and functionalities of the ASYCUDA World software, conduct hands-on training using a test installation of the ASYCUDA World software, and identify necessary steps to be carried out by DOC to develop the ASYCUDA World prototype in Nepal.

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## SASEC Calendar

August 2015						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

### Upcoming SASEC Events

[National Seminar for Bangladesh Customs: Combating Counterfeiting and Piracy](#)  
2-6 August 2015  
Sri Mangal, Moualvi Bazar, Bangladesh

[Bangladesh National Workshop on the New Customs Act and Related Best Practices](#)  
17-20 August 2015  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

[RAMIS Technical Training on Automated Customs Module: Priority 2](#)  
17-26 August 2015  
Thimphu, Bhutan

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## SASEC Projects



- [Kuensel Online](#)
- [SASEC News](#)

### **Bhutan SASEC Road Connectivity Project to Begin September** **23 July 2015: Thimphu, Bhutan**

Construction to improve Pasakha Access Road in Phuentsholing, Bhutan will start in September, said officials from Bhutan's Department of Roads, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement (MOWHS). This road section—a key output of the SASEC Road Connectivity Project in Bhutan—will access a bypass road from Bibarey near Manglabarey, providing trucks and other vehicles an alternate route to industrial sites in Pasakha. Once constructed, it is expected to decongest traffic in Phuentsholing and Jaigaon, India. MOWHS awarded the contract to build the 1.2-kilometer access road to the Gaseb-SPML-Macaferi joint venture. This commission is scheduled to be completed by September 2017.

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- [Daily Sun](#)
- [SASEC Project](#)

### **ADB Power Grid Loan Under Preparation** **14 July 2015: Manila, Philippines**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has set three conditions for the \$120 million loan that will finance expansion of the Bangladesh-India Electrical Grid Interconnection Project: public notification of tariff regulations, issuing bids for power purchase from India, and written confirmation from the power grid corporation of India for transmission of an additional 500 megawatt of electricity to Bangladesh. The \$120 million loan being negotiated will finance interconnection facilities for the Bheramara-Bahrampur grid link. ADB approval is targeted for third quarter of 2015, and installation of grid interconnection is set for completion by October 2017.

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## SASEC News



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### **Bangladesh and Bhutan Customs Officials Discuss Removal of Non-Tariff Barriers**

**28 July 2015: Thimphu, Bhutan**

Customs officials from Bangladesh and Bhutan discussed removal of barriers that restrict bilateral trade, and the sharing of import and export data between the two countries. As important trading partners, Bangladesh and Bhutan are working to resolve non-tariff barriers to enhance trade efficiency and boost the exchange of goods. Currently, 18 products from Bhutan are duty free in Bangladesh and 90 products from Bangladesh are duty free in Bhutan. Bilateral trade has been rapidly growing in recent years.

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- [eKantipur](#)
- [KuenselOnline](#)

### **Paro Declaration Calls for Free Trading, Freedom of Energy Transit** **27 July 2015: Paro, Bhutan**

The Cleaner, Greener South Asia: Managing Climate Change and Water Resources Conference organized by the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in collaboration with the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, concluded with the Paro Declaration on 25 July 2015 in Bhutan. The Declaration called for free trading of energy-related materials, products, and equipment; freedom of energy transit through pipelines and grids in the region; and urged protection and promotion of foreign investment in energy and an extension of most-favored nation treatment.

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### **Asian Highway Section to be Operational in 2016** **26 July 2015: Bangkok, Thailand**

The Asian Highway – and part of the India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway – will connect Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand, via Mandalay and Yangon in Myanmar. The road will be linked further to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The IMT Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) will help seamless movement of cargo and passenger across borders. The IMT MVA is scheduled to be signed during a transport ministers meeting of the three countries in Myanmar in November 2015 and expected to be operational in 2016.

[Read More >>](#)

- [The Times of India](#)
- [SASEC Event](#)



### **Indian Government Approves India-Bangladesh Rail Link** **26 July 2015: Agartala, India**

The Indian Government sanctioned about \$155.8 million to lay a 15.06-kilometer (km) section of railtracks, connecting Indian Railways with Bangladesh through the North East. This India-funded Agartala-Akhaura railway junction in Bangladesh would reduce the distance from Agartala to Kolkata from 1,650 km to 515 km, avoid mountainous terrain, improve trade and commerce, and enhance connectivity. The project is expected to be completed in 2017.

[Read More >>](#)

- [The Economic Times](#)
- [Business Standard](#)



### **SASEC Region Trade Integration Indicators Updated** **22 July 2015: Manila, Philippines**

Integration indicators in the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) subregion have been updated to include 2014 data, based on calculations by the Asian Development Bank's Asia Regional Integration Center. SASEC trade integration has continued to increase over 2012-2014, as shown by its Intra-regional Trade Intensity Index (ITII) which now has caught up – and even exceeded in 2014 – Asia's ITII. SASEC still mostly trades outside its region but the intra-regional trade share indicates an increasing trend in intra-regional trade.

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- [Direction of Trade Statistics](#)
- [ARIC Technical Notes](#)



### **BRICS Launches New Development Bank** **21 July 2015: Shanghai, China**

Officials from the world's largest emerging nations – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) – launched the New Development Bank (NDB) on 21 July 2015 in Shanghai, China. The NDB will lend money to developing countries and help finance infrastructure projects in BRICS countries. Pitched as an alternative to institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, NDB President Kundapur Vaman Kamath said the bank's objective is not to challenge the existing system but to improve and complement the system. [Read More >>](#)

- [ADB Press Release](#)
- [Global Trade Review](#)



### **Bangladesh Setting Up National Single Window** **17 July 2015: Dhaka, Bangladesh**

An inter-ministerial meeting in Bangladesh reached consensus to set up a National Single Window (NSW) to facilitate cross-border trade and reduce the cost of doing business. The NSW will use a virtual system through which different organizations will be interconnected. The National Board of Revenue's Customs wing will be lead agency for the NSW. [Read More >>](#)

- [The Financial Express](#)



- [bdnews24.com](http://bdnews24.com)
- [SASEC News](#)

## **India Releases Full Padma Bridge Grant, Asks Bangladesh to Start New Loan Implementation**

**16 July 2015: Dhaka, Bangladesh**

The full \$200 million grant pledged by India to Bangladesh for construction of Padma Bridge under a \$1 billion loan agreement has been disbursed. An official from Bangladesh's Economic Relations Division confirms release of the final \$50 million tranche of the grant in late June 2015. The Padma Bridge is a multipurpose road-rail bridge across the Padma River which the Government of Bangladesh plans to build by 2018, connecting the country's southern districts to Dhaka.

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- [The Economic Times](#)
- [Business Standard](#)

## **SAARC Cross-border Infrastructure Boost from India's Capital Contribution to the SDF**

**16 July 2015: New Delhi, India**

The Government of India headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has cleared utilization of India's capital contribution to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Development Fund (SDF) for its Infrastructure and Economic Windows, to address infrastructure bottlenecks and promote growth in the SAARC region. This approval will help boost projects, including cross-border infrastructure, that will increase intra-SAARC trade and maximize the region's growth potential. It will also help improve financial inclusion and social security among disadvantaged or vulnerable members of SAARC. [Read More >>](#)



- [The Himalayan Times](#)
- [eKantipur](#)

## **Nepal Budget Emphasizes Air, Road Connectivity**

**14 July 2015: Kathmandu, Nepal**

The Government of Nepal unveiled a number of infrastructure projects for transport and energy in its budget for fiscal year 2015-2016 to further increase the country's economic growth, announced by Nepal Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat. The Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport Management received an increase of 25% from the budget. Total allocation of about \$531 million from the total budget of around \$8.11 billion includes planned road projects to boost transport connectivity. About 170 bridges will also be completed under this funding line, along with strategic road sections in the Terai-Madhesh region. [Read More >>](#)



- [Tech2](#)
- [bdnews24](#)

## **India's North Eastern States Receive Internet Gateway at Agartala via Bangladesh**

**12 July 2015: Agartala, India**

India's Communications and Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad laid the foundation stone on 13 July 2015 to link Agartala, India in the Tripura border area with International Gateway Service at Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. This will strengthen telecommunications services and improve Internet connectivity in the landlocked North Eastern states of India. The project is likely to be commissioned by January 2016.

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- [The Economic Times](#)
- [The Economic Times](#)

## **BRICS Outlines Economic Cooperation Strategy at Ufa Summit**

**10 July 2015: Ufa, Russia**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi outlined a 10-point program for future cooperation, 'Das Kadam', proposed during his address at the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – plenary at the 7th BRICS summit in Ufa, Russia. The program included a trade fair, railway research center, and digital initiative, among others. The Economic Cooperation Strategy was also adopted by the world's five growing economies at the Summit. The [BRICS Economic Cooperation Strategy](#) provides a comprehensive framework for easier trade between the BRICS developing markets and introduces new areas of cooperation in trade, economic affairs, and connectivity. [Read More >>](#)



### **First Bhutan-India Hydropower Project Joint Venture Formally Registered 8 July 2015: Thimphu, Bhutan**

The certificate of incorporation for the 660 megawatt Kholongchu Hydropower Project (KHP) was formally handed over to Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation and India's Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam on 3 July 2015 by Bhutan Economic Affairs Minister, Mr. Norbu Wangchuk. Construction license from the Bhutan Electricity Authority is expected to follow KHP's formal registration, allowing the company to begin works on the hydropower project. Officials of KHP expect construction of about 40 kilometers of road leading to the project site to soon commence, and estimate completion of the roads in a year.

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- [Kuensel](#)
- [The Hindu](#)



### **India Considers Re-establishing Rail Link with Sri Lanka 7 July 2015: Chennai, India**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is considering a proposal to establish a rail bridge linking Rameswaram, a coastal pilgrim center in Tamil Nadu and Talaimannar, Sri Lanka. The two countries would be linked if the project materializes. A short boat ride used to connect the railway lines that ended at Talaimannar, Sri Lanka and Dhanushkodi, India. A proposal of about \$3.6 billion for road and rail link has been submitted to the Asian Development Bank for pre-feasibility study and financing.

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- [Deccan Chronicle](#)
- [Daily News](#)



### **Bangladesh Prioritizes FTA, PTA with India, China, and Market Diversification 7 July 2015: Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Bangladesh's 7th five-year plan focuses on a bilateral free trade area (FTA) with India and preferential trade area agreements with China to facilitate exports to these countries. India and China are important trading partners for Bangladesh due to their vast economies. The 7th five-year plan also prioritizes market diversification by exploring emerging potential markets to lessen dependence on the European Union and United States. However, exporting to India and China remains difficult due to restrictive Rules of Origin and non-tariff barriers. Bangladesh can benefit if the FTA reduces non-tariff barriers and encourages foreign direct investment.

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- [The Financial Express](#)



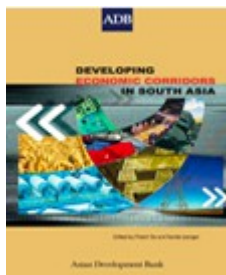
### **World Trade Organization's Fifth Global Review of Aid for Trade 2 July 2015: Geneva, Switzerland**

Heads of various international agencies agreed during the Fifth Global Review of Aid for Trade that reducing trade costs through initiatives such as World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement will help poor countries reap benefits of the global trading system. The Fifth Global Review examines actions taken to reduce trade costs so that developing countries and least-developed countries can participate more effectively in global trade.

[Read More >>](#)

- [ADB Speech](#)
- [WTO Speech](#)

## **Related Publications**



[Developing Economic Corridors in South Asia](#)



[Asian Development Outlook 2015 Supplement](#)



[Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2015](#)



How Much Could South Asia Benefit from Regional Electricity Cooperation and Trade?



UNRC Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation Survey 2015: Asia and the Pacific Report



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