SASEC Events

Training on Customs Valuation and Risk Management
2-6 February 2015: Mumbai, India

The Central Board of Excise and Customs of India, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank held a training course for 22 SASEC government officials on practical aspects of developing and using Customs valuation databases and risk management systems, together with other tools for enhancing the efficiency of Customs controls.

Meeting of BBIN Transport Secretaries on Regional Road Transport Connectivity
2-3 February 2015: Kolkata, India

The Meeting of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) Transport Secretaries on Regional Road Transport Connectivity facilitated discussions among senior officials of the four SASEC member countries to finalize the draft BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement, a transport facilitation framework that aims to enhance road connectivity in the subregion by allowing passenger, personal, and cargo vehicles to cross international borders and travel along designated key trade routes.

SASEC Projects

Railway Sector Investment Program Approaching Completion
24 February 2015: Manila, Philippines

The Asian Development Bank approved the Railway Sector Investment Program on 10 October 2006 as a multitranch financing facility amounting to $430 million, with counterpart financing of $107.5 million from the Government of Bangladesh. It is expected to improve transport by enhancing efficiency and capacity of Bangladesh’s railway sector to contribute to sustainable economic growth and promote further poverty reduction. One of the main components of the investment project—the construction of the 64 km Tongi-Bhairab Bazar Double Track on Bangladesh Railway’s Dhaka-Chittagong railway corridor—is approaching completion within 2015.

SASEC Calendar

Upcoming SASEC Events

Third Meeting of the SASEC Customs Subgroup
11-12 March 2015
Goa, India

National Workshop on Time Release Study
17-19 March 2015
Kathmandu, Nepal

National Workshop on Revised Kyoto Convention and Draft Customs Act
16-20 March 2015
Phuentsholing, Bhutan

National Workshop on Draft Customs Act for the Government and Autonomous Agencies
26-27 March 2015
Thimphu, Bhutan

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SASEC Transport Project Improving Bhutan-India Connectivity Receives Go Signal
24 February 2015: Manila, Philippines

Works to improve road connectivity and facilitate trade between Bhutan and India are set to begin soon along the Phuentsholing-Jaigaon border. An Asian Development Bank-financed project under the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program will construct a bypass road from Jaigaon, India to Pasakha, Bhutan and include a mini-dry port in Phuentsholing to enable faster Customs clearance of cargo. A land customs station will also be constructed in Pasakha to monitor the bypass road.

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Dagachhu Hydroelectric Project Commissioned
21 February 2015: Thimphu, Bhutan

Commissioning of the first unit of the 126 Megawatt (MW) Dagachhu Hydroelectric Project officially began at 15:25 on 21 February 2015 with commercial generation of energy from Bhutan to India, coinciding with the 35th birthday of the King of Bhutan. Generating capacity during peak season can reach a maximum of 63 MW. The Green Power Development Project under the SASEC program funded its construction.

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SASEC News

Bangladesh Nominated as LDC Coordinator for WTO in 2015
22 February 2015: Geneva, Switzerland

Bangladesh has once again been nominated as least developed countries’ (LDC) coordinator for 2015—its first time was in 1996 when former Industries and Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed attended the WTO Ministerial Conference in Singapore. Bangladesh was nominated due to its vital role and experience in bargaining with the developed world on behalf of the LDCs.

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Bangladesh-India Business Council by April 2015
22 February 2015: Dhaka, Bangladesh

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has proposed a joint business council for Bangladesh and India to meet by April 2015 to address existing disputes in bilateral trade and business. The proposal followed discussions with business leaders during a 3-day visit to Bangladesh. The India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Indian Chamber of Commerce signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the presence of Chief Minister Mamata, to conduct a joint study on the bottlenecks that hinder the growth of bilateral trade and business between India and Bangladesh.

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Nepal Electricity Authority to Cut System Loss to 10%
21 February 2015: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Nepal Electricity Authority plans to reduce current system loss to 10% by 2020 through several technical and non-technical measures, including unbundling of development and operation of electricity transmission lines. NEA's total energy generation loss in 2013-2014 stood at 25%. It is currently implementing the Energy Access and Efficiency Improvement Project under the SASEC program.

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Bangladesh Identifies Nine Sectors for Development Cooperation with India  
**20 February 2015: Dhaka, Bangladesh**

The Bangladesh Prime Minister’s Office has identified nine priority sectors for development cooperation with India under an umbrella agreement: power and hydropower, energy, commerce, connectivity (rail, road, water and motor vehicle), customs and immigration regulations, water management, and capacity building and capital dredging of Mongla Port. The countries signed the framework agreement to promote trade, investment and economic cooperation.  
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Nepal Prime Minister Koirala Emphasizes Importance of Regional Cooperation to Nepal's Foreign Policy  
**18 February 2015: Kathmandu, Nepal**

Nepal Prime Minister Sushil Koirala emphasized Nepal's strong engagement in the process of regional cooperation—through membership in SAARC and BIMSTEC—as “a major defining feature” of Nepal’s foreign policy in a speech delivered at the 67th anniversary of Nepal Council of World Affairs.  
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India-Sri Lanka Bilateral Talks to Deepen Economic Ties  
**16 February 2015: Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena’s recent visit to India after assuming office last month allows both countries to adopt a fresh approach to bilateral ties. New leadership in both New Delhi and Colombo has the potential for economic cooperation in development, commerce, and trade. According to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is proud to be a trade partner of Sri Lanka and plans to take bilateral relations to a new level. Meanwhile, President Sirisena calls his first official visit to India successful and fruitful – a contribution to the developing and ensuing friendship between the two countries. He eagerly awaits Prime Minister Modi’s arrival in Sri Lanka in March.  
[Read More >>](#)

Motor Vehicles Deal Underway for Seamless Transport through BBIN Subregion  
**6 February 2015: Raichak, India**

The linking of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal through a subregional Motor Vehicles Agreement was discussed at a meeting in Raichak, India on 2-3 February 2015 attended by transport secretaries from the four South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation member countries. This agreement will enable seamless transit of passenger and goods along designated key routes in the four South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation countries without the need for transshipment at border-crossing points, reducing costly and time-consuming unloading and loading of people and cargo. The agreement would help transform transport corridors linking the four countries into economic corridors and enhance people-to-people contact.  
[Read More >>](#)
India Expands Duty-Free Items to Sri Lanka
4 February 2015: New Delhi, India

India plans to reduce the number of sensitive items subject to import duty under the South Asia Free Trade Agreement for Pakistan and Sri Lanka. It has already decreased the number of sensitive list items for least developed countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region. According to A.M. Gondane, Joint Secretary, SAARC, this will have Customs revenue implications for both countries. Read More >>

Asian Development Bank to Give $1 Billion Credit to Improve Nepal's Infrastructure
3 February 2015: Manila, Philippines

Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Takehiko Nakao called on Nepal Prime Minister Sushil Koirala on 3 February 2015 during a visit to Nepal, and met with Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat and National Planning Commission Vice Chairperson Govinda Pokharel. ADB plans to provide about $1 billion in concessional loans and about $13 million in technical assistance grants to Nepal over the next three years to support faster and more inclusive growth in the country. An estimated 80% of the $1 billion credit from ADB will be allocated to improve the country's infrastructure sector, notably on energy and transport. Read More >>

Nepali-language Version of Revised Kyoto Convention Published
26 January 2015: Kathmandu, Nepal

Nepal is currently in an advanced stage of acceding to the Revised Kyoto Convention (RKC) through submission of its Instrument of Accession to the World Customs Organization. In support of Nepal's accession and future implementation of the provisions of the RKC, a Nepali-language translation has been published under the ADB-financed SASEC Trade Facilitation Program and launched during the 63rd International Customs Day on 26 January 2015. Two thousand copies of the translation are being distributed to Customs posts and offices throughout the nation. Read More >>

Related Publications

Unlocking Bhutan’s Potential: Measuring Potential Output for the Small, Landlocked Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan

Revised Kyoto Convention (Nepali-language Version)

Climate Proofing ADB Investment in the Transport Sector