



News and Events

BIMSTEC Meeting on BTILS

5-6 June 2013: Yangon, Myanmar



Senior officials of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) member countries met to begin updating the ADB-assisted BIMSTEC transport infrastructure and logistics study (BTILS), and establish the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Road Development (BEGRD). Highlights of the meeting include

- Decision to focus BTILS updating on core themes of connectivity, modal integration, country ownership, and institutional building/strengthening;
- Identification of country focal points for inputs to BTILS updating;
- Discussion of terms of reference and agreement on work plan for the BEGRD; and
- Participation of BEGRD members in BTILS Interim Workshop, October 2013.

SASEC Nodal Officials' Meeting

3 May 2013: Greater Noida, India



Nodal Officials from the four SASEC countries gathered in Greater Noida, India to discuss progress made in SASEC transport, trade facilitation, and energy initiatives over the past year. Mr. Juan Miranda, Director General of ADB's South Asia Regional Department chaired the meeting. Officials discussed

- Progress made in transport, trade facilitation, energy, and ICT cooperation since the last Nodal Officials' Meeting in May 2012;
- Project priorities with emphasis on the need to fund regional initiatives; and
- Subregional and inter-regional cooperation through the SASEC and BIMSTEC Programs.

[Progress Report of the Nodal Officials' Meeting](#)
(click to open)

Myanmar attended the meeting for the first time as Observer. The significance of South Asia's integration with South East Asia to unlock the full growth potential of Asia was noted, together with the important role of Myanmar in this integration.

Seventh Informal Meeting of SAARC Finance Ministers

3 May 2013: Greater Noida, India



His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Saleem, Secretary General of SAARC, joined the SAARC Finance Ministers in Greater Noida, on the sidelines of the Asian Development Bank's 46th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors. Mr. Juan Miranda, Director General of ADB's South Asia Regional Department spoke on Infrastructure Financing in South Asia. His presentation noted

- Infrastructure demands as the main development challenge facing South Asia;
- The possible role of governments, banks and financial institutions, together with the private sector in charting a roadmap to overcome infrastructure financing constraints; and
- Suggested solutions, including leveraging savings through local currency bond markets, and adopting risk sharing principles through development of effective public-private partnership frameworks.

[Infrastructure Financing in South Asia](#)
(click to open)

Workshop on the World Customs Organization SAFE Framework of Standards and Authorized Economic Operator Programme

27-31 May 2013: Singapore



ADB, Australian Aid, Singapore Customs, and the World Customs Organization (WCO) co-sponsored this workshop, attended by officials from customs administrations and government finance agencies of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The workshop

- Introduced current practices of the WCO SAFE Framework of Standards (FoS);
- Differentiated between Revised Kyoto Convention compliance and AEO Programs;
- Detailed the implementation and benefits of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Programs and Mutual Recognition Agreements/Arrangements;
- Mapped priorities for each countries in RKC compliance, SAFE FoS and AEO actions;
- Led a site visit to a Singapore AEO company.

WCO Asia-Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building, Customs and Tariff Bureau, Ministry of Finance, Japan, and Singapore Customs co-facilitated the workshop. Resource persons contributed from the United States Customs and Border Protection, Hong Kong Customs, Customs and Central Excise of India, Malaysia Customs, and Singapore Customs.

\$47 million SASEC Trade Facilitation Program: Tranche 1 Fully Disbursed



[SASEC Trade Facilitation Program](#)
(click to open)

The first tranche of the ADB-financed SASEC Trade Facilitation Program (STFP) was fully disbursed on 10 May 2013. SASEC members Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal met all conditions for the first tranche of their respective policy-based loans and grants. The conditions constitute important steps taken in each country toward sub-regional accession to the World Customs Organization's Revised Kyoto Convention, as well as ICT solutions in support of enhanced trade facilitation. The STFP aims to develop more efficient, transparent, secure, and service-oriented processing of cross-border trade for Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal by

- Modernizing customs administrations and/or managements;
- Streamlining and increasing transparency of trade processes and procedures; and
- Improving services and information for private sector traders and investors.

The first tranche release comprised a loan of \$10.7 million to Bangladesh, a loan of \$3.1 and a grant of \$3.3 million to Bhutan, and a grant of \$8.0 million to Nepal.

South Asia Regional Power Exchange Study (SARPES)

30 May 2013: Asian Development Bank, Manila, Philippines



Priyantha Wijayatunga of ADB's Nepal Resident Mission presented SARPES at the 120th South Asia Seminar Series, held jointly with ADB's Energy Community of Practice. SARPES examines how power shortages and reliance on imported energy resources coexist with huge hydro potential in South Asia. A regional power exchange could produce large benefits, but requires reliable transfer capacity within and between countries. Key results show, among others

- Higher benefits over costs of interconnection/grid reinforcement projects;
- SAARC grid could interconnect Pakistan and Afghanistan with the Central Asia region;
- Regional Power Exchange could contribute to clean power transfer in the region; and
- Displacing thermal generation with reduced carbon and other emissions brings additional benefits.



[\(click to open publication\)](#)

Addressing Hard and Soft Infrastructure Barriers to Trade in South Asia

T. Mirza and E. Bacani. South Asia Working Paper Series, No. 16. February 2013

[This paper](#) explains the trade barriers in South Asia by analyzing transport links and trade facilitation issues. It examines data on transport networks and trade logistics from national statistics, government agencies, and consultations with private stakeholders and freight forwarders to understand physical barriers; and it estimates trade gains from addressing soft-side issues, including efficiency improvements in the movement of trade cargo. Results indicate considerable opportunity to increase trade flows in South Asia through institutional reforms and by streamlining customs-related processes at borders.



[\(click to open publication\)](#)

An Overview of Energy Cooperation in South Asia

P. Wijayatunga and P.N. Fernando. South Asia Working Paper Series, No.19. May 2013

The working paper shows there is wide variation in commercial energy supply and demand. The resources of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are largely natural gas and coal while Bhutan and Nepal have mainly hydropower. There is a need to enhance regional energy transfer by leveraging economies of scale through a more vibrant intra- and inter-regional energy trade structure. Existing intraregional energy trade among SASEC countries is limited to electricity trade between India and Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka: there is no inter-regional energy trade between South Asia and countries outside of the region. Key issues faced in the energy sector are centered on the need to develop a regional power market; energy supply availability; energy trade infrastructure; and harmonized legal regulatory frameworks.

Recent Events

Date	Event	Venue
6 Jun	First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Road Development	Yangon, Myanmar
5 Jun	Inception Workshop on BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study Updating	Yangon, Myanmar
27 – 31 May	Regional Knowledge Sharing Workshop on SAFE Framework, Authorized Economic Operators and Authorized Trader Program	Singapore, Singapore
20 May	Brainstorming Meeting on the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study Updating	Manila, Philippines
03 May	SASEC Nodal Officials' Meeting	New Delhi, India
4 – 5 Apr	Asia-Pacific and Americas: Customs Leaders' Partnership Dialogue	Panama City, Panama
25 – 28 Mar	SASEC Trade Facilitation Week	Bangkok, Thailand
28 Mar	<i>Inception of the Customs Subgroup (closed meeting)</i>	
27 Mar	<i>Information Sharing on Customs and Standards</i>	
26 Mar	<i>Exchange of Experiences on Nonphysical and Non-tariff Barriers to Trade</i>	
25 Mar	<i>Business Process Analysis Finalization</i>	

2013 SASEC Indicative Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Venue
TBD	Visit to Malaysia-Singapore Border Checkpoints and Singapore Port	Singapore, Singapore
TBD	SASEC Trade Facilitation and Transport Working Groups Meeting	Singapore, Singapore
20 – 22 Aug	National Workshop on the Authorized Economic Operators' Program	Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh
26 Aug	Nepal National Trade Facilitation Workshop	Kathmandu, Nepal
29 Aug	Bhutan National Trade Facilitation Workshop	Thimphu, Bhutan
Sep	Meeting of the SASEC Electricity Transmission Utility Forum	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Oct	Inception Meeting of SASEC Network of National Energy Efficiency Institutions	Bangkok, Thailand
3 Oct	SAARC Workshop on SAARC Regional Economic Integration Study	Kathmandu, Nepal
4 Oct	SAARC Workshop on Macroeconomic Surveillance Study	Kathmandu, Nepal
20 – 24 Oct	Workshop on Customs Valuation	Male, Maldives
12 – 13 Nov	Workshop on the Interim Report of BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistic Study Updating	Bangkok, Thailand
19 Nov	ADB-Confederation of Indian Industries Conference on Promoting Mekong-India Cooperation	New Delhi, India
4 Dec	Meeting of the SASEC Trade Facilitation and Transport Working Groups	Kathmandu, Nepal
5 Dec	Meeting of the SASEC Energy Working Group	Kathmandu, Nepal

Publications



[An Overview of Energy Cooperation in South Asia 2013](#)



[Bhutan Transport 2040: Integrated Strategic Vision 2013](#)



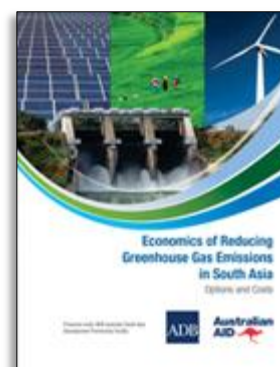
[Addressing Hard and Soft Infrastructure Barriers to Trade in South Asia 2013](#)



[Asian Development Outlook 2013](#)



[Developing South Asia: Lessons and Insights 2013](#)



[Economics of Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions in South Asia 2013](#)

See more publications on regional cooperation in South Asia and other regions at <http://sasec.asia/web/index.php/en/knowledge-products/books>

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