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SASEC NEWS

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SASEC Trade Facilitation Working Group (TFWG) Meeting

4-5 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan



SASEC Transport Working Group (TWG) Meeting

5-6 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan



SASEC Energy Working Group (EWG) Meeting

6 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan



SASEC Senior Officials Meeting

8 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan



SASEC Holds Meetings with Senior Officials, Working Groups

November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan

The South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program held a series of meetings with the SASEC technical working groups, and proceeded to convene the meeting of senior officials from SASEC countries. Read more below or check out the [SASEC events page](#).

SASEC EVENTS



- **Meeting of the SASEC Senior Officials**
- **SASEC Energy Working Group Meeting**
- **Workshop on Non-Intrusive Inspection Technologies for South Asia Customs Officials**

Workshop on Non-Intrusive Inspection Technologies for South Asia Customs Officials

2-4 December 2024: Andhra Pradesh, India

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in collaboration with India's National Academy for Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN), conducted a capacity-building workshop on Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) Technologies on 2-4 December 2024 at the NACIN Palasamudram Campus, Andhra Pradesh, India. 20 Customs Officials from SASEC countries attended.

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Meeting of the SASEC Senior Officials

8 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan

The meeting for the SASEC Senior Officials was held in Thimphu, Bhutan, on 8 November 2024. Senior officials from the SASEC countries' finance, planning, and economic ministries, heads of delegations for the SASEC technical working groups, and ADB delegation members attended the meeting.

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SASEC Energy Working Group Meeting

6 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan

The meeting for the SASEC Energy Working Group was held in Thimphu, Bhutan. The meeting discussed energy cooperation and was attended by energy officials from the SASEC countries.

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SASEC Transport Working Group Meeting

5-6 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan

The meeting for the SASEC Transport Working Group was held in Thimphu, Bhutan. The meeting discussed transport connectivity and regional cooperation and was attended by transport officials from the SASEC countries.

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SASEC Trade Facilitation Working Group Meeting

4–5 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan

The meeting for the SASEC Trade Facilitation Working Group was held in Thimphu, Bhutan. The meeting discussed regional integration and the facilitation of intercountry trade. Officials from the SASEC countries attended the meeting.

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SASEC PROJECTS



- **Maldives Launches First Phase of National Single Window**
- **SASEC Electricity Transmission and Distribution Strengthening Project**
- **Operationalizing Regional Cooperation and Integration Under the SASEC Program**

SASEC Electricity Transmission and Distribution Strengthening Project

20 December 2024: Mandaluyong, Philippines

The project will address the limitations of the grid infrastructure in Nepal in meeting the growing domestic electricity demand and green electricity export aspirations. It will finance some of the high-priority components of Nepal's transmission and distribution master plans to improve electricity evacuation from domestic hydropower plants and deliver electricity to domestic demand centers, and to transmission hubs for cross-border electricity trade.

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Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem (Subprogram 2)

20 December 2024: Mandaluyong, Philippines

The Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem (SMILE) program is a two-phase policy-based lending initiative aimed at boosting India's manufacturing sector and supply chain resilience through a policy framework enhancing logistics efficiency. Subprogram 1 introduced critical policy and institutional reforms in the logistics sector, like the Government of India's launch of the Prime Minister Gati Shakti-National Master Plan for Multi-Modal Connectivity (PMGS-NMP) and National Logistics Policy (NLP). Subprogram 2 extends implementation of these policies across central, state, and local governments while scaling reforms to more agencies, states, and municipalities.

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Strengthening Economic Management and Governance Program (Subprogram 1)

8 December 2024: Mandaluyong, Philippines

The program strengthens government capacity to address structural challenges in domestic resource mobilization, investment climate enhancement, trade logistics, and governance transparency. Subprogram 1 focuses on rationalizing tax expenditures, automating and digitalizing tax administration, improving data transparency, enhancing public investment management (PIM) systems, strengthening SOE governance and fiscal risk monitoring, streamlining regulations, and advancing trade facilitation.

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Regional: Operationalizing Regional Cooperation and Integration Under the SASEC Program

2 October 2024: Mandaluyong, Philippines

The technical assistance will support initiatives to operationalize the under the SASEC Program's regional cooperation and integration (RCI) agenda, by continuing to support subregional and national institutional mechanisms. The technical assistance will strengthen the SASEC Secretariat and will also continue to support capacity building and knowledge sharing activities and policy dialogues for the planning and implementation of RCI initiatives of the SASEC partner countries.

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Maldives Launches First Phase of National Single Window

3 September 2024: Male, Maldives

Maldives Vice President Hussain Mohamed Latheef launched Tradian on 3 September 2024 at Jen Hotel in Malé, Maldives. Tradian, the first phase of Maldives's National Single Window project, is a platform that links business owners with government service agencies.

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SASEC NEWS



- **Economic Corridor Development in South Asia**
- **Dodhara Chandani Dry Port to Expand Nepal's Trade Accessibility**
- **Maldives and Sri Lanka Explore Strategic Collaborations to Boost Ties**

Boosting the Logistics Sector in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal

18 February 2025: Mandaluyong: Philippines

Addressing issues in the logistics sector is crucial for economic development, environmental sustainability, and regional integration. An Asian Development Blog article explores the need for Bangladesh, India, and Nepal to adopt strategies, such as enhancing multimodal transport, standardization, and digital integration, to enhance supply chain resilience, reduce costs, and boost export competitiveness, to further boost economic growth and job creation.

[Read More](#)

Bangladesh Urged to Implement Trade Facilitation Roadmap to Prepare for LDC Graduation

5 February 2025: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Mr. Sheikh Bashir Uddin, Advisor to the Ministry of Commerce of Bangladesh, urged the implementation of a trade facilitation roadmap and collaboration among working groups to mitigate the challenges associated with the upcoming transition of Bangladesh from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category to a developing nation by November 2026.

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Economic Corridor Development in South Asia

4 February 2025: Mandaluyong: Philippines

Economic corridors are crucial for stimulating economic growth, creating jobs, and promoting regional integration across SASEC countries—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. An Asian Development Blog article explores the role of economic corridor development in South Asia, highlighting its potential to enhance trade, industrialization, and regional connectivity.

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Dodhara Chandani Dry Port to Expand Nepal's Trade Accessibility

27 January 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

The planned Dodhara Chandani dry port will help boost connectivity of Nepal's far-western region. Set to become Nepal's fourth dry port along the India-Nepal border, the INR2.54-billion (around \$29 million) project will serve as a major logistical hub and expand landlocked Nepal's access to India through the Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai.

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India and Nepal Agree on Five Transmission Lines

26 January 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

India and Nepal have finalized a new agreement for five transmission lines, covering construction, upgrades, and investment modalities. The deal comes as 11,000 megawatts from various hydropower projects are in development.

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Meeting of India-Nepal IGC on Trade, Transit, and Cooperation to Combat Unauthorized Trade

11 January 2025: New Delhi, India

The India-Nepal Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) on Trade, Transit, and Cooperation to Combat Unauthorized Trade conducted a comprehensive review of India–Nepal trade and economic cooperation.

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Maldives and Sri Lanka Explore Strategic Collaborations to Boost Ties

10 January 2025: Colombo, Sri Lanka

Maldives and Sri Lanka are strengthening their economic ties by undertaking a series of strategic collaborations aimed at boosting trade and bilateral relations. Initiatives include the development of the Kuda Fushi Islands port in Maldives and bringing benefits to both countries and promoting medical and wellness services in Sri Lanka to people from Maldives.

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Maldives Foreign Affairs Minister Visits India

4 January 2025: New Delhi, India

Dr. Abdulla Khaleel, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives, conducted an official visit to India on 2-4 January 2025. During bilateral discussions with Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, both sides reviewed progress on understandings reached during President Muizzu's visit and addressed issues requiring further attention.

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Assam to Complement Development of Bhutan's Gelephu Mindfulness City

4 January 2025: Thimphu, Bhutan

Mr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister of Assam, India, discussed plans for Assam's involvement in the development of Bhutan's Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC) at a press conference. Key highlights of Assam's plans are to build transportation links and expand the airport.

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Sri Lanka Accelerates National Single Window Implementation

1 January 2025: Colombo, Sri Lanka

The Government of Sri Lanka is accelerating the implementation of its National Single Window system, enhancing services for exporters and importers to boost efficiency and competitiveness. Sri Lanka's Deputy Finance Minister Dr. Harshana Suriyapperuma highlighted that the Department of Imports and Exports Control began offering online services on 1 January 2025, joining other government agencies in digital service delivery.

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Bhutan Works Toward a More Conducive Business Environment

30 December 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan

The Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) has announced that the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Employment (MoICE) is working to streamline business regulatory processes in Bhutan. This initiative follows a comprehensive review of 235 economy-related policies, supported by the Voice for Green Change Partnership and funded by the European Union.

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India, Sri Lanka Affirm Commitment to Enhance Partnership

16 December 2024: New Delhi, India

India Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Disanayaka held comprehensive discussions on 16 December 2024 in New Delhi, India. Both leaders affirmed their commitment to further enhance the relationship and emphasized cooperation in various areas, including connectivity, energy, trade, and tourism.

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Bhutan, India Review Energy and Cross-border Connectivity Projects, Gelephu Mindfulness City

6 December 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan, and New Delhi, India

The King and Queen of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, and Her Majesty Jetsun Pema Wangchuck, paid an official visit to India. His Majesty the King of Bhutan and India Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed various aspects of cooperation and mutual interest. Bhutan reported on the progress of implementation of the Gelephu Mindfulness City Special Administrative Region. Both countries also expressed satisfaction with the cooperation in the energy sector.

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BIMSTEC Members Discuss Visa Facilitation Scheme

25 November 2024: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) member countries discussed pursuing a visa facilitation scheme on 20-21 November 2024 at the 4th meeting of the BIMSTEC expert group on visa matters. The visa facilitation scheme will help streamline travel procedures and promote easier movement of people within the BIMSTEC region.

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Tata Power Company, Druk Green Power Corporation Partner to Diversify Bhutan's Energy Portfolio

21 November 2024: Mumbai, India

Tata Power Company Ltd and the Druk Green Power Corporation Ltd (DGPC), a subsidiary of Bhutan's Druk Holding and Investments Ltd, will jointly develop Bhutan's clean energy capacity. This collaboration is supported by the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of India to enhance Bhutan's energy security and diversify the country's energy portfolio, promoting regional integration.

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Bangladesh-India-Nepal Power-Sharing Agreement Comes into Effect

16 November 2024: Kathmandu, Nepal

A power-sharing agreement among Bangladesh, India, and Nepal came into effect on 15 November 2024. Through India's electricity grid, Nepal exported 40 MW of electricity to Bangladesh, marking the formal opening of the Nepal-Bangladesh energy trade.

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BIMSTEC to Establish BIMSTEC Energy Center in Bengaluru

10 November 2024: New Delhi, India

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of India and BIMSTEC signed an agreement to establish a BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru, Karnataka, in November 2024. This agreement aims to strengthen energy cooperation and inter-grid connectivity among BIMSTEC member countries.

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Bhutan-India Integrated Check Post Inaugurated at Darranga, Assam

7 November 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan

The inauguration of the Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Darranga, Assam, on the India-Bhutan border on 7 November 2024 marked a significant milestone in enhancing Bhutan-India regional connectivity and trade. Strategically located 700 meters from the Bhutanese border, the new ICP spans 14.5 acres and is equipped with modern facilities, such as a weighbridge, warehouse facilities, and plant quarantine systems.

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OPEC Fund and Bhutan Sign Loan Agreement for 2 Hydropower Plants

23 October 2024: Thimphu, Bhutan, and Vienna, Austria

The OPEC Fund and the Kingdom of Bhutan signed a \$50-million loan agreement to support the development of two hydropower plants to strengthen energy security in Bhutan.

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ADB Loan Project to Support Tourism in Himachal Pradesh, India

2 October 2024: Manila, Philippines

ADB has approved a loan worth \$162 million to support sustainable and inclusive tourism development in Himachal Pradesh, India.

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Bhutan, India Commerce Secretary Level Meeting Highlight Expediting Cross-border Trade Infrastructure

27 September 2024: New Delhi, India

The Bhutan-India Commerce Secretary-Level Meeting held on 27 September 2024 focused on expediting cross-border trade and connectivity infrastructure, including the establishment of an Integrated Check Post in Jaigaon (India)-Phuentsholing (Bhutan) and rail-links between Kokrajhar (India)-Gelephu (Bhutan) and Banarhat (India)-Samtse (Bhutan).

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Commentary: Boosting Regional Integration with Enhanced Multimodal Transport Links

24 September 2024: Manila, Philippines

Roads, rail, waterways, maritime, and aviation can promote connectivity and integration in the SAARC region. This commentary, which appears on the Development Asia website, summarizes updates of the SAARC Regional Multimodal Transport Study, covering all transport subsectors and discusses connectivity between South Asia and Central Asia.

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Bhutan, Nepal Prime Ministers Agree to Expand People-to-people and Trade Relations

23 September 2024: Kathmandu, Nepal

Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli met on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Both Prime Ministers agreed to expand people-to-people and trade relations and highlighted advancing collaborations in bilateral and multilateral forums.

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ADB Launches Country Partnership Strategy 2024-2028 for Bhutan

13 September 2024: Manila, Philippines

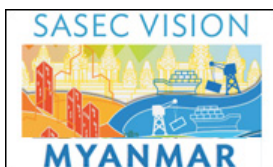
ADB launched on 13 September 2024 a new country partnership strategy for Bhutan to help the country address economic obstacles and enabling inclusive, sustainable, resilient, and job-creating growth.

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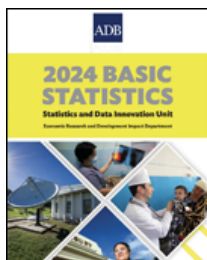
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