



SASEC EVENTS
**SASEC WORKSHOP ON
 PERFORMANCE
 MEASUREMENT FOR
 TRADE FACILITATION**



SASEC PROJECTS
**MINI DRY PORT
 AWAITING COMPLETION
 OF BYPASS ROAD**



SASEC NEWS
**THAILAND PORT DEAL
 TO BOOST TRADE WITH
 BANGLADESH, INDIA,
 AND SRI LANKA**



PUBLICATIONS
**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
 SURVEY OF ASIA AND
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SASEC NEWS

THE SOUTH ASIA SUBREGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION NEWSLETTER

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Commentary: How South Asia Can Continue as World's Fastest Growing Subregion

2 August 2019: Manila, Philippines

Since 2014, South Asia's eight economies have been collectively growing by 7.0% annually. But in order to continue performing well in the coming years, the region will need reforms and investments. By promoting regional cooperation and integration, for example, South Asia can accelerate economic growth and boost employment.

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September

Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum 2019: Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation for Regional Prosperity

17-18 September 2019: New Delhi, India

SASEC Workshop on Performance Measurement for Trade Facilitation

19 September 2019: New Delhi, India

SASEC PROJECTS



- **Mini Dry Port Awaiting Completion of Bypass Road**
- **Nepal Stakeholders Urge Three-Country Implementation of BBIN MVA**

Mini Dry Port Awaiting Completion of Bypass Road

13 August 2019: Phuentsholing, Bhutan

The mini dry port in Phuentsholing, Bhutan, has been constructed and will begin operation once the northern bypass road is completed. Both are components of the [South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation \(SASEC\) Road Connectivity Project](#).

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Nepal Stakeholders Urge Three-Country Implementation of the BBIN MVA

11 August 2019: Kathmandu, Nepal

An Interaction Workshop on the benefits, impact, and implications for Nepal of the implementation of the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) among Bangladesh, India, and Nepal was organized by SAWTEE and ADB. The workshop arrived at a consensus that Nepal should participate in the three-country implementation. Chief Guest Mr. Puspa Raj Kadel, Vice Chairperson of the National Planning Commission, underscored that the BBIN MVA is crucial for expanding the trade relationship between the member countries. He recommended piloting the MVA along certain routes for a few months.

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- **Thailand Port Deal to Boost Trade with Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka**
- **Addressing Challenges to BBIN MVA to Bring Long-Term Benefits**
- **Bhutan, India PMs Sign Electricity Trade Agreement**

Kathmandu-Siliguri Bus Service Launched

26 August 2019: Kathmandu, Nepal

A bus service between Kathmandu, Nepal, and Siliguri, West Bengal, India, was inaugurated on 26 August 2019. Mr. Raghuraj Mahaseth, Minister for Transport Management of the Government of Nepal, and Mr. Manjeev Singh Puri, Indian Ambassador to Nepal, jointly flagged off the bus service. Mr. Mahaseth emphasized that the bus service will further strengthen the links between the two nations and help to expand trade links.

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India and Nepal Agree to Acknowledge Quality Certificates of Select Food Imports

26 August 2019: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India and the National Food and Feed Reference Laboratory of Nepal will reciprocally acknowledge test analysis or quality certificates issued by each other for food imports. The list of food products includes ginger, cardamom, tea, and coffee—Nepal's top exported items to India. The Nepal Chamber of Commerce noted in a statement that this bilateral agreement is expected to reduce hurdles in border checking.

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17th Bangladesh and India JSC Meeting on Energy Vows to Further Bilateral Cooperation

26 August 2019: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The 17th joint steering committee (JSC) meeting of Bangladesh and India discussed the proposal by Bangladesh to export its surplus electricity to India, as well as the tripartite agreement to enable Bangladesh to import electricity from Bhutan. Speaking to the press after the meeting, the heads of delegations vowed to work together to further develop their bilateral relations.

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India-Nepal Joint Commission Meeting Expresses Satisfaction Over Progress of Projects

21 August 2019: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Fifth Meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Commission reviewed bilateral relations, and areas of cooperation. The delegations expressed satisfaction over progress of ongoing projects. They agreed to expedite the early completion of remaining agreed projects, and pledged to conclude the review of treaties and agreements related to the trade, transit, and rail services early.

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India's External Affairs Minister Visits Bangladesh

20 August 2019: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Mr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of the Government of India, visited Bangladesh 19–21 August 2019. He called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and discussed matters concerning her upcoming visit to India in October. He also met with Mr. AK Abdul Momen, Foreign Minister of the Government of Bangladesh. The two officials discussed ways to strengthen bilateral ties.

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Bhutan, India PMs Sign Electricity Trade Agreement

19 August 2019: Trongsa Dzongkhag, Bhutan

Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering and India Prime Minister Narendra Modi have signed a power purchase agreement between PTC India Limited and Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation Limited for the sale and purchase of electricity from the 720 megawatt Mangdechhu hydropower project. The two prime minister jointly inaugurated the hydropower plant during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Bhutan.

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Thailand Port Deal to Boost Trade with Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka

16 August 2019: Bangkok, Thailand

Thailand and India have signed a memorandum of understanding that will promote a new maritime route between Thailand's Ranong Port and India's Krishnapatnam Port. The deal is part of Thailand's policy to strengthen trade with Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka under the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) framework.

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Addressing Challenges to BBIN MVA to Bring Long-Term Benefits

15 August 2019: New Delhi, India

Infrastructure bottlenecks will need to be removed to effectively implement the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicles Agreement. According to Mr. Bipul Chatterjee, Executive Director, CUTS International, addressing the many short-term challenges would bring long-term benefits and result in a win-win situation for all member countries.

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SDF Supports Bhutan's Drukair in Purchasing ATR Aircraft

14 August 2019: Thimphu, Bhutan

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Development Fund (SDF) and Drukair Corporation signed a \$13 million loan agreement to help DrukAir purchase a new ATR Aircraft. This is SDF's first loan under its economic and infrastructure window. Mr. Sunil Motiwal, Chief Executive Officer of SDF, noted that this assistance will help Bhutan expand its aviation connectivity to Bangladesh, India, and Nepal.

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Bangladesh Mulls Constructing New Pipeline to Import LNG

11 August 2019: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Government of Bangladesh is considering the construction of a new pipeline to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) from India. According to Mr. Nasrul Hamid, State Minister for Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources of the Government of Bangladesh, the country's Gas Transmission Company Limited plans to install the pipeline near the Satkhira border. This will help supply fuel-based power plants and industries in the southeastern region of Bangladesh.

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Bangladesh, Sri Lanka Plan Another Joint Economic Commission Meeting

7 August 2019: Colombo, Sri Lanka

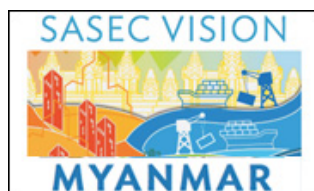
The upcoming meeting will discuss the proposed Bangladesh-Sri Lanka Bilateral Free Trade Agreement. It will also discuss the implementation plan for the Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement between the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority and the Board of Investment of Sri Lanka, and the Memorandum of Understanding on Standards between the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution and the Sri Lanka Standards Institute.

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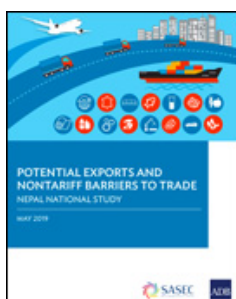
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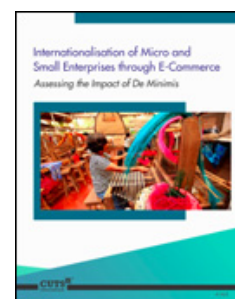
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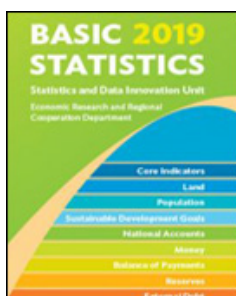
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The SASEC Trade Facilitation Program supports modern customs administration; streamlined and transparent trade procedures and improved services; and information for private sector traders and investors, including women entrepreneurs [Read more](#)

Thailand to press ahead with the development of Ranong Port as a logistics gateway between Thailand and India. Both countries have agreed to promote a new maritime route in the Andaman Sea [Read more](#)

Bangladesh, India discuss tripartite agreement for importing electricity from Bhutan [Read more](#)

First Indian cargo ship from Bhutan arrives in Bangladesh via India [Read more](#)

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