



**SASEC EVENTS**  
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# SASEC NEWS

THE SOUTH ASIA SUBREGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION NEWSLETTER

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## BORDERS WITHOUT BARRIERS

FACILITATING TRADE IN SASEC COUNTRIES

### **Borders without Barriers:** **Facilitating Trade in SASEC Countries**

**4 December 2019: Manila, Philippines**

Borders without Barriers presents an analysis of the state of trade facilitation in member countries of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program. The book identifies trade facilitation priorities in SASEC countries: implementation of trade facilitation agreements and other conventions; logistics and infrastructure development and regulatory reforms; coordinated border management; and capacity development.

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- **Workshop on Developing Port Community System and Port Greening Strategies**
- **ADB-NACIN Workshop on Customs Cooperation**
- **Conference on Safe Mobility and Regional Connectivity**

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## Conference on Safe Mobility and Regional Connectivity

**20–22 January 2020: New Delhi, India**

Safe mobility is an integral component in connectivity initiatives. In South Asia, road safety has emerged as a major challenge to transport connectivity. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), Ministry of Road Transport and Highways of the Government of India, and Asian Institute of Transport Development organized the Conference on Safe Mobility and Regional Connectivity on 20–22 January 2020 in New Delhi, India. The conference discussed the current status of connectivity and road safety in the SASEC subregion and came up with proposed areas to be included in a common plan of action to address road safety challenges.

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## ADB-NACIN Workshop on Customs Cooperation

**17–18 December 2019: Faridabad, India**

The National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) of the Government of India held a 2-day training program on customs cooperation at the NACIN training center in Faridabad. The workshop was held in collaboration with ADB. The training program discussed various aspects of customs cooperation, including World Customs Organization conventions and other international tools, their potential usage, and challenges in implementing Customs Mutual Assistance Agreements.

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## Workshop on Developing Port Community System and Port Greening Strategies

**3–5 December 2019: Singapore**

ADB organized an inception workshop on developing a port community system and port greening initiatives on 3–5 December 2019 in Singapore. The workshop was part of the studies on [SASEC Maritime Cooperation](#), and is aligned with ADB's efforts to advance cooperation and integration in the maritime sector and promote globally competitive ports in SASEC member countries. It was funded by the ADB technical assistance [Advancing Cooperation in the Maritime Sector in South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation Program](#).

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# SASEC PROJECTS



- **ADB to Support SASEC Trade Facilitation Project in Bangladesh**

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## ADB to Support SASEC Trade Facilitation Project in Bangladesh

**31 December 2019: Dhaka, Bangladesh**

ADB will support trade facilitation in Bangladesh under the SASEC program. A proposed project aims to ease transborder and regional trade through infrastructure development and regulatory reforms.

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# SASEC NEWS



- **Nepal Airport Development to Benefit the Region**
- **Commentary: Inland Waterways – Positive Impact on Economy**
- **New BIMSTEC Connectivity Plan to Ensure Seamless Movement of Goods and People**

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## Bangladesh, India to Upgrade Ashuganj-Akhaura Road

**23 January 2020: Dhaka, Bangladesh**

The Governments of Bangladesh and India signed an agreement to upgrade the 50.58-kilometer long road between Ashuganj river port and the Akhaura land port in Bangladesh into a four-lane highway. The project will be developed under the \$2 billion line of credit extended by India to Bangladesh in 2016.

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## Second India-Nepal Integrated Check Post Inaugurated

**21 January 2020: Kathmandu, Nepal**

India Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli jointly inaugurated the Integrated Check Post at the Jogbani (India)-Biratnagar (Nepal) border via video conference. The check post was built with Indian assistance of \$19.64 million (around NPR2.24 billion). It houses Customs, Immigration, and Border Security.

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## Commentary: Inland Waterways—Positive Impact on Economy

**20 January 2020: New Delhi, India**

Inland waterways could significantly reduce the cost of transporting goods and transit time, and decongest highways. In this piece, Mr. Debasish Mallick, the former Deputy Managing Director of EXIM Bank of India and Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Industrial Development Bank of India Asset Management Company Ltd, discusses how inland waterways could benefit the Indian economy.

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## Bangladesh, India Commerce Secretaries Discuss CEPA

**16 January 2020: New Delhi, India**

The Governments of Bangladesh and India held a Commerce Secretary-level meeting. They discussed the proposed bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), a free trade agreement to boost trade between Bangladesh and India. The two countries have undertaken a joint study to learn its potential benefits.

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## Akhaura-Agartala Railway Link to be Operational in 2020

**15 January 2020: Agartala, India, and Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Mr. Hasan Mahmud, Information Minister of Bangladesh, and Mr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, underscored in a meeting that completion of the Akhaura (Bangladesh)-Agartala (India) railway link will increase cross border connectivity. The neighboring countries expressed the mutual view to finish this railway at the soonest possible time. People-to-people linkages, business, and tourism are set to benefit once the railway finishes.

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## Nepal Airport Development to Benefit the Region

**29 December 2019: Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Mr. Mukhtor Khamudkhanov, Country Director for ADB in Nepal, is hopeful that Sri Lanka could benefit from construction of the Gautam Buddha International Airport in Lumbini, Nepal. The airport will help promote religious tourism in Nepal. With similar places in Sri Lanka, the two countries could undertake collaborative promotional programs to reap the benefits of the airport for the subregion, recommended the Country Director.

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# Trial Runs from Dhaka to Gangtok and Darjeeling Conducted

**16 December 2019: Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Trial runs on Dhaka (Bangladesh)-Gangtok (Sikkim, India) and Dhaka-Darjeeling (India) for direct bus services were conducted on 12-16 December 2019. Darjeeling and Gangtok in India are popular tourist destinations in Bangladesh. The trial run aimed to assess road conditions and determine feasibility of operationalizing commercial passenger bus services along these routes.

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## New BIMSTEC Connectivity Plan to Ensure Seamless Movement of Goods and People

**13 December 2019: Agartala, India**

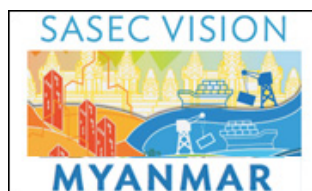
A new Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) connectivity master plan aims to ensure seamless movement of goods and people, improve transport interconnectivity, and promote cultural exchange.

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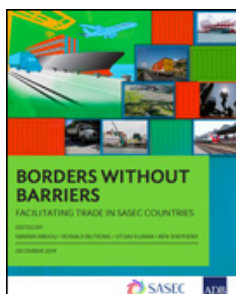
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**SASEC WEBSITE BROCHURE**



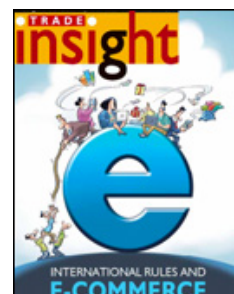
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## Top Tweets for January 2020

The Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Myanmar protocol permitting transshipment of goods through Bangladesh and Myanmar waters gives the necessary Right of Way, enabling quicker shipments and deeper market penetration in India's northeastern region [Read more](#)

Southeast Asia's trans-regional corridor takes shape [Read more](#)

Strong communication network to be instrumental to boost relations between Bangladesh and Nepal [Read more](#)

Bangladesh plans to host more BIMSTEC-related meetings and events to generate momentum in all important areas of cooperation [Read more](#)

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