



EVENTS
**WORKSHOP ON BBIN
RAIL-BASED CARGO
MOVEMENT STUDY**



EVENTS
**UNLEASHING SOUTH
ASIA'S POTENTIAL
THROUGH GREATER
CONNECTIVITY**



NEWS
**BBIN READY MOTOR
VEHICLES AGREEMENT
PROTOCOL**



PUBLICATIONS
**MACROECONOMIC
UPDATE: NEPAL
(SEPTEMBER 2024)**



SASEC NEWS

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ACTION PLAN FOR SASEC INITIATIVES 2024–2026

DECEMBER 2024



SASEC Releases Action Plan for 2024–2026

May 2025: Mandaluyong, Philippines

The Action Plan For SASEC Initiatives (APSI) (2024–2026) was finalized following extensive discussions during the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) working group meetings on transport, trade facilitation, and energy, as well as the Senior Officials Meeting held in New Delhi, India in late 2023, with additional input from country consultations and SASEC meetings in Thimphu, Bhutan in 2024. A significant enhancement to this iteration is the introduction of a Progress Update Framework, through which the Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide periodic updates on the advancement of APSI projects and knowledge initiatives. Read more or download the **Action Plan For SASEC Initiatives**.

SASEC EVENTS

SASEC Knowledge Event: Unlocking South Asia Potential through Greater Connectivity

6 May 2025: Milan, Italy

SASEC held a panel discussion on 6 May 2025 in Milan, Italy, about improving connectivity to boost integration and economic growth in South Asia. Speakers shared insights and experiences on policy frameworks, successful initiatives, and lessons learned. The event also held discussions on emerging priorities to foster greater regional integration and unlock South Asia's economic potential.

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Workshop on Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Rail-Based Cargo Movement Study

29 April 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

The workshop, organized by ADB, discussed with officials of BBIN countries the findings and recommendations of the BBIN Rail-Based Cargo Movement Study. The study identifies infrastructure, regulatory, and policy challenges needed to shift from road to rail. The shift is expected to save time and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

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SASEC NEWS



- **BBIN Countries Ready Motor Vehicles Agreement Protocol**
- **Bhutan and Thailand Sign Landmark Free Trade Agreement to Boost Bilateral Trade**
- **Assam-Bhutan Railway Project Fast-Tracked to Boost Connectivity**

Adani Group and DGPC Forge Major Hydropower Partnership in Bhutan

8 May 2025: Thimphu, Bhutan

The Adani Group of India and the Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) of Bhutan have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly develop 5,000 MW of hydropower and pumped storage projects in Bhutan. This collaboration leverages Bhutan's vast hydropower potential, supporting domestic energy needs and the export of reliable green energy to India. It will further advance Bhutan's clean energy ambitions while deepening regional energy cooperation.

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India, Nepal Energy Ministers Jointly Visit Arun III Hydropower Project

22 April 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

Mr. Deepak Khadka, Minister for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation of the Government of Nepal, and Mr. Manohar Lal Khattar, Minister for Power, Housing and Urban Affairs of the Government of India, jointly inspected the ongoing Arun III Hydropower Project in Sankhuwasabha, Nepal. The ministers discussed project progress and challenges, reaffirming the importance of its timely completion for mutual benefit.

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BBIN Countries Ready Motor Vehicles Agreement Protocol

13 April 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) finalized the text for the protocol for the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement to ensure smooth transport between the BBIN countries. The BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement aims to improve intraregional trade and connectivity for passengers, cargo, and vehicular traffic by removing barriers and regulations.

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BIMSTEC a Vital Bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia -India PM

13 April 2025: Bangkok, Thailand

"BIMSTEC [Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation] serves as a vital bridge between South and Southeast Asia, and is emerging as a powerful platform for advancing regional connectivity, cooperation, and shared prosperity," said India Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his speech at the BIMSTEC Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand.

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21st India-Nepal Director-General Level Talks on Customs Cooperation

11 April 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Governments of India and Nepal held their 21st Director-General Level Talks on Customs Cooperation in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 10–11 April 2025. Meeting agenda included discussion of updates on the MoU for pre-arrival exchange of customs data, Electronic Origin Data Exchange System, finalization of the Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement, and the extension of the Electronic Cargo Tracking System from rail to road transport.

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Thailand and Sri Lanka Accelerate Free Trade Agreement Implementation

11 April 2025: Bangkok, Thailand, and Colombo, Sri Lanka

Thailand and Sri Lanka aim to expedite the implementation of the Thailand-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (FTA), signed on 3 February 2024. During discussions in Colombo in March 2025, Thai Deputy Minister of Commerce Suchat Chomklin underscored Thailand's proactive FTA strategy, while representatives from the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce expressed optimism that the FTA would lower trade barriers and benefit key exports.

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Bhutan and Thailand Sign Landmark Free Trade Agreement to Boost Bilateral Trade

3 April 2025: Bangkok, Thailand

The Governments of Bhutan and Thailand have signed a landmark FTA that aims to deepen economic ties and expand export markets. The agreement aims to significantly boost bilateral trade, targeting a trade volume of \$120 million. The FTA will help boost Bhutan's access to the Thai market.

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India Approves Key Commodity Exports to Maldives for 2025-2026

1 April 2025: New Delhi, India

The Government of India, through the Directorate General of Foreign Trade has released a notification on export of specific quantities of essential commodities to Maldives, under the 1981 India and Maldives trade agreement. Bilateral trade between India and the Maldives remains strong, growing from \$973.37 million in 2022-2023 to \$978.53 million in 2023-2024. This reflects the importance of trade agreements in bolstering regional cooperation and meeting resource needs.

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Birgunj Dry Port Welcomes First Rail Shipment of Crude Oil

19 March 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

Birgunj Dry Port in Nepal has received a rail consignment of 90 tank containers carrying 20,000 tons of crude soybean oil for the first time. This milestone signifies a major advancement in Nepal's trade logistics. More efficient rail container shipments is expected to reduce transportation costs by about 15%.

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Punatsangchhu-II Unit 3 Bolsters Bhutan-India Hydroelectric Partnership

19 March 2025: Thimphu, Bhutan, and New Delhi, India

Unit 3 (170 MW) of the 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project (HEP) was successfully synchronized with the power grid on 19 March 2025. Synchronization of Unit 3 marks an important milestone in the development of the Punatsangchhu-II HEP. Units 1 and 2, with 170 MW each, of the hydropower project were commissioned in December 2024.

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India, Nepal Discuss Development of Hydropower, Enhancement of Trade

18 March 2025: New Delhi, India, and Kathmandu, Nepal

During her visit to India, Ms. Arzu Rana Deuba, Foreign Minister of the Government of Nepal, engaged in crucial discussions with Mr. S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of the Government of India. Their discussions focused primarily on the joint development of hydropower and enhanced trade relations.

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Nepal, India Discuss Multibillion-Dollar Raxaul-Kathmandu Rail Link

7 March 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

Nepal has sought India's financial and technical assistance to determine the viability of the proposed 141-kilometer Raxaul-Kathmandu railway, which would create the first direct rail connection between India's border and Nepal's capital. Authorities are considering whether the railroad's length and construction costs can be reduced. The railway will also focus on cargo services while offering passenger transport to improve the project's economic feasibility.

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Japan Grants Concessional Loan to Boost Bhutan's Hydropower Development

2 March 2025: Thimphu, Bhutan, and Tokyo, Japan

A landmark Official Development Assistance loan agreement was signed between the Ministry of Finance of Bhutan and the Japan International Cooperation Agency to fund the construction of three small hydropower plants to be completed by May 2029. These new hydropower plants will help Bhutan meet its rising domestic power demand and increase electricity exports during the monsoon season.

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Assam-Bhutan Railway Project Fast-Track to Boost Connectivity and Economic Ties

1 March 2025: Guwahati, India

The new railway project connecting Assam's Kokrajhar and Bhutan's Gelephu has been fast-tracked, according to the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), with the final locational survey completed and the detailed project report submitted to the government for approval.

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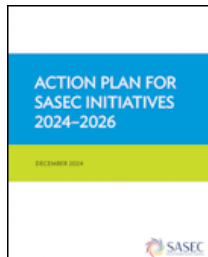
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**BORDERS WITHOUT
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Action Plan for SASEC Initiatives
(2024–2026)



Macroeconomic Update: Nepal
(September 2024)



Asian Development Outlook (ADO)
April 2025



Top Tweets for May 2025

The Action Plan for SASEC Initiatives (APSI) (2024–2026) was finalized following extensive discussions during SASEC working group meetings on transport, trade facilitation, and energy, as well as the Senior Officials Meeting held in New Delhi, India. Dodhara Chandani Dry Port to be the fourth dry port along the India–Nepal border after Raxaul, Rupaidiha and Jogbani [Read more](#)

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