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2020



SASEC NEWS

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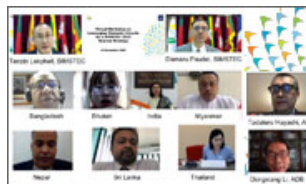
Coping with the Pandemic in South Asia by Making It Easier to Trade

18 November 2020: Manila, Philippines

As national lockdowns begin to ease and supply chains resume operation, difficulties in cargo movement and clearance processes are expected to linger. This piece by Ms. Aileen Pangilinan and Mr. Satish Reddy shows the importance to recovery of effective and modern trade facilitation measures for South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) countries.

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SASEC EVENTS



- **Consultation Workshop with BIMSTEC on Tourism Strategy**
- **Dissemination Workshops on Green Ports Study in India and Bangladesh**
- **Workshop on SASEC Road Safety Study**

3rd Border Meeting of Customs Administration of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal

21 December 2020: Online

The 3rd Border Level Meeting of Customs Administrations of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) was held virtually on 21 December 2020. Participating countries affirmed the need to continue such border meetings to enhance customs-to-customs cooperation at field level.

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3rd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group

8 December 2020: Online

The 3rd Meeting of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Transport Connectivity Working Group was held virtually on 8 December 2020. The workshop endorsed the Master Plan for Transport Connectivity to BIMSTEC.

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SASEC Maritime Cooperation – Virtual Dissemination Workshop on Study on Cruise Tourism

7 December 2020: Online

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized an online dissemination workshop on developing the cruise tourism sector in the SASEC region on 7 December 2020. The workshop underscored the opportunities for regional cooperation in the cruise tourism sector, and the need to integrate proposed strategies with other port development measures, such as port greening initiatives.

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Consultation Workshop with BIMSTEC on Tourism Strategy

25 November 2020: Online

The Consultation Workshop with BIMSTEC on Tourism Strategy was held virtually on 25 November 2020. The workshop, organized by ADB, discussed "Leveraging Thematic Circuits for a BIMSTEC 2030 Strategy," a study formulated to provide guidance for an action plan for advancing tourism in the region.

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Dissemination Workshop on Green Ports Study in India

20 November 2020: Online

ADB organized a dissemination workshop on developing green ports in India. The study is part of the regional SASEC Maritime Cooperation Study. The workshop aimed to share with stakeholders policy recommendations for port greening strategies.

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Dissemination Workshop on the Port Community System Study in Bangladesh

19 November 2020: Online

ADB organized a dissemination workshop on developing a port community system in Bangladesh on 19 November 2020. Sessions were held on assessments of operational efficiency of the Chattogram port, container traffic forecast and expected benefits of a port community system for Chattogram Port, and presentation of a possible port community system and necessary steps for implementation.

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Workshop on SASEC Road Safety Study

18 November 2020: Online

ADB held a Workshop on SASEC Road Safety Study in line with the ongoing work on SASEC Safe Mobility and Regional Transport Connectivity. The workshop discussed the SASEC Road Safety Assessment Framework, as well as presented opportunities for shared regional initiatives that SASEC countries may consider in preparing a regional road safety strategy.

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SASEC PROJECTS



- **Nepal, ADB to Modernize Electricity Grids**
- **ADB Loan to Upgrade Major Airports in Nepal**
- **India, ADB Sign Facility to Help Boost Tripura's Urban Services and Tourism**

Nepal, ADB Ink Electricity Grid Modernization Project

30 December 2020: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Government of Nepal and ADB have signed a loan agreement for a project that will modernize the country's electric grid. The [Electricity Grid Modernization Project](#), a \$156 million concessional loan from ADB, will increase the capacity and reach of Nepal's power distribution networks to meet current and future demands, improve reliability and quality of supply, and reduce losses.

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Nepal, ADB Sign the SASEC Airport Capacity Enhancement Project

24 December 2020: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Government of Nepal and ADB have signed a loan agreement for the SASEC Airport Capacity Enhancement Project on 24 December 2020. The project will improve the capacity of two major airports in Nepal, the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) in Kathmandu and the Gautam Buddha Airport (GBA) in Lumbini. TIA in Kathmandu is the country's only international airport and a major hub for domestic air transport, while GBA in Lumbini will serve as an alternate international air transport facility for Nepal. Both airports help [support tourism in Nepal](#), where tourism generated around \$2.05 billion in 2019.

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India, ADB Sign Facility to Help Boost Tripura's Urban Services and Tourism

18 December 2020: New Delhi, India

The Government of India and ADB signed a project readiness financing facility to support the state government of Tripura in preparing infrastructure development projects that will upgrade the state's urban amenities and boost its tourism infrastructure. Tripura's tourism sector strategy will be considering forms of cooperation with neighboring countries to attract international tourists.

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- **Nepal Gets Connected to the Asian Highway**
- **India-Myanmar 7th Joint Trade Committee Meeting Vows to Strengthen Economic Partnership**
- **Bangladesh-Maldives Shipping Line Proposed to Benefit Bilateral Trade**

Bangladesh and India Inaugurate Restored Railway Link, Agree to Soon Operationalize the BBIN MVA

17 December 2020: Dhaka, Bangladesh, and New Delhi, India

The virtual summit held by Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and India Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 17 December 2020 reviewed various aspects of bilateral relationship of the governments of Bangladesh and India. This includes cooperation in trade, connectivity, energy, and health, amid the challenges brought on by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. They jointly inaugurated the newly restored railway link between Haldibari (India) and Chilahati (Bangladesh) and agreed to soon operationalize the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA).

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India, Nepal Review Progress of Cooperation in Power

10 December 2020: New Delhi, India, and Kathmandu, Nepal

The governments of India and Nepal held the eighth meeting of the Joint Steering Committee on Cooperation in the Power sector on 10 December 2020 online. The meeting generated positive and wide-ranging discussions that are expected to further boost the expansion of power sector cooperation between India and Nepal.

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Amendment of India-Nepal Bilateral Transit Treaty to Ramp Up Trade and Connectivity

7 December 2020: New Delhi, India, and Kathmandu, Nepal

The governments of India and Nepal convened a meeting of the Inter-Governmental Committee on Trade, Transit, and Cooperation to Control Unauthorized Trade virtually on 7 December 2020. The meeting reviewed the transit treaty that covers waterways and railway services between the two countries, and agreed to amend the bilateral transit treaty to further promote trade and connectivity.

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Bangladesh, Bhutan Sign the Preferential Trade Agreement

6 December 2020: Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Thimphu, Bhutan

The governments of Bangladesh and Bhutan have signed a preferential trade agreement (PTA) on 6 December 2020. The PTA aims to further facilitate and promote bilateral trade between the two countries. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Bhutan Prime Minister Lotay Tshering witnessed the signing virtually.

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Foreign Secretaries of India and Nepal Review Bilateral Relations

27 November 2020: Kathmandu, Nepal

Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, and Mr. Bharat Raj Paudyal, Foreign Secretary of the Government of Nepal, held a bilateral meeting in Kathmandu on 26 November 2020. They reviewed various aspects of India-Nepal relations, including trade, transit, connectivity, and infrastructure, and discussed ways to further strengthen ties.

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Nepal Gets Connected to the Asian Highway

26 November 2020: Kakarbhitta, Nepal

India has completed the road widening project in the West Bengal (India)-Kakarbhitta (Nepal) section of the Asian Highway, connecting Nepal to the Asian Highway Network. The West Bengal-Kakarbhitta section begins in Bangkok, Thailand, and passes through Myanmar, Bangladesh, and India.

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Nepal to Resume Regular Flights to Bangladesh and India

25 November 2020: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Government of Nepal will resume regular flights to Bangladesh and India following a decision by its Cabinet on 25 November. The Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation of the Government of Nepal will undertake the diplomatic process with both countries to resume regular flights.

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India-Myanmar 7th Joint Trade Committee Meeting Vows to Strengthen Economic Partnership

24 November 2020: New Delhi, India, and Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

The 7th Joint Trade Committee Meeting between the Governments of India and Myanmar noted that the current level of bilateral trade holds greater potential. Both sides committed to strengthen their economic partnership by enhancing sectoral collaborations and promoting further trade. Additionally, they also reviewed the status of connectivity projects and scaling up of infrastructure at the border, which will further increase trade.

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ICP Construction in Nepalgunj Commences

12 November 2020: Nepalgunj, Nepal

Construction of the integrated check post (ICP) at Nepalgunj (Nepal) has commenced with a groundbreaking ceremony held on 12 November 2020. The Government of India is building ICPs with customs and immigration facilities under one roof on the Indo-Nepal border to systematize the movement of cross-border cargo.

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India Foreign Secretary's Visit to Maldives Highlights Close Cooperation and Bilateral Ties

9 November 2020: Male, Maldives

Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, undertook his first official visit to Maldives. He met with Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, paid a courtesy call to Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Maldives, and held discussions with his counterpart, Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Mohamed, Foreign Secretary of the Government of Maldives. He also witnessed the signing of four memoranda of understanding, which include a \$100 million grant for the Greater Malé Connectivity Project.

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Meeting Explores Potential in Growing India-Maldives Seafood Trade

5 November 2020: Kerala, India

A consultative meeting tackled investment potential in the seafood sector of India and Maldives, and opportunities to synergize their seafood industries. In September, a cargo ferry service was launched connecting Tuticorin and Kochi ports in India with Kulhudhuffushi and Malé ports in Maldives, which has opened the potential for further promotion of seafood trade between the two countries.

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Direct Bangladesh-Maldives Shipping Line Proposed to Benefit Bilateral Trade

2 November 2020: Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Male, Maldives

Mr. AK Abdul Momen, Foreign Minister of the Government of Bangladesh, and Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Foreign Minister of the Government of Maldives, discussed the importance of expanding Bangladesh and Maldives trade and commerce in a phone call. They agreed that there is a need to improve connectivity between the two countries, and a direct shipping line would benefit bilateral ties.

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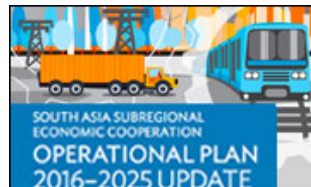
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With the new Mechi bridge across the Nepal-India border, Kakarbitta is now better connected w/ Panitanki in India [Watch](#)

India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission recommends removal of all forms of barriers to trade, harmonization of standards and mutual recognition of certificates Tripura-Bangladesh waterways to open on September 5 [Read more](#)

The Integrated Check Post at Nepalgunj will have export and import cargo handling facilities such as warehousing, refrigerated cargo facilities, medical, plant and animal quarantine areas, and 24/7 power backup [Read more](#)

Coping with the pandemic in South Asia by making it easier to trade [Read more](#)

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