

SASEC EVENTS MEETING OF CROSS-BORDER POWER TRADE WORKING GROUP



SASEC PROJECTS ADB TO HELP UPGRADE INTERNATIONAL TRADE CORRIDOR



SASEC NEWS
INLAND WATERWAYS TO
SPUR BBIN
DEVELOPMENT



PUBLICATIONS ADB COUNTRY FACT SHEETS



ISSUE #50 OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2017

WWW.SASEC.ASIA







# SASEC Holds Meetings on SPS-TBT Studies in Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan

8 November 2017: Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan

In 2013, South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) member countries agreed to develop mutual cooperation processes in the diverse areas of standards and technical regulations to address various trade barriers. As a first step, SASEC member countries are preparing national diagnostic studies on sanitary-phytosanitary measures and technical barriers to trade (SPS-TBT). National Validation Meetings on SPS-TBT were held in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan as drafts of the final reports become available in the respective countries. Meetings are also scheduled to be held in Maldives and India.

# SASEC EVENTS



EVENT
INDIA
Inception Meeting of the
Cross-border Power Trade
Working Group



EVENT SRI LANKA KCS-SASEC Capacitybuilding Workshop on WTO TFA Implementation



EVENT SRI LANKA ADB Presents Colombo-Trincomalee Economic Corridor Study

# October 2017

🔰 @sasecprogram

**Top Tweets** 

Current SAARC chair, Prime Minister of Nepal, emphasizes need to continue deepening regional cooperation and connectivity Read

Freight train service to run for Dhaka-Kolkata Read

.@cutscitee event: Bangladesh-India inland waterways can make freight to Nepal & Bhutan swifter & less costly Read

Oct meetings on Sanitary-Phytosanitary Measures/Technical Barriers to Trade studies in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka Read

World Bank's The Little Green Data Book 2017 looks at development and the environment Read



# KCS-SASEC Capacity-building Workshop on WTO TFA Implementation

21-23 November 2017: Seoul, Republic of Korea

Korea Customs Service (KCS) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) conducted a joint Subregional Workshop on Capacity Building for Implementation of the World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (WTO TFA). The Workshop was the first step in a KCS-SASEC multiyear joint capacity-building initiative designed to assist member countries enhance implementation of the WTO TFA in identified areas.

#### **Read More**

# **Bangladesh Authorized Economic Operator Validation Training**

21 November 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bangladesh's National Board of Revenue organized an Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Validation Training, in preparation for AEO implementation in the country. The Meeting discussed the basic components of the AEO program, and determined the next steps for the planned pilot run.

#### **Read More**

## Nepal Capacity Building Activity on Risk Management and Selectivity

14-17 November 2017: Nagarkot, Nepal

The objective of this WCO Workshop was to help the Nepal Department of Customs introduce an efficient Risk Management system. It provided training on Risk Assessment and Targeting, and discussed Information and Intelligence Gathering with participants from the Nepal Department of Customs.

### **SASEC Knowledge Event on Transport Facilitation**

#### 9-10 November 2017: Bangkok, Thailand

The SASEC Knowledge Event on Transport Facilitation was held to raise awareness on international best practice in transport facilitation and logistics development. The knowledge event discussed electronic cargo and vehicle tracking, arrangements for temporary admission of vehicles, promotion of inter-modal and multi-modal transport, port efficiency improvement, and regional rail transport.

#### **Read More**

# SASEC SPS-TBT Diagnostic Study for Bhutan: National Validation Meeting

#### 8 November 2017: Thimphu, Bhutan

The Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Agency (BAFRA), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, together with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) held a national validation meeting to share the draft final findings and recommendations of a national diagnostic study on sanitary-phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barriers to trade (TBT), launched in August 2016 under the trade facilitation agenda of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program. The Bhutan SPS-TBT national core group and public and private stakeholders participated in the validation meeting on 08 November in Thimphu, Bhutan, providing comments and feedback on the draft for incorporation in the final diagnostic study.

#### **Read More**

# SASEC SPS-TBT Diagnostic Study for Nepal: National Validation Meeting

#### 31 October 2017: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Nepal Ministry of Commerce, together with ADB, held a national validation meeting to share the draft final findings and recommendations of a national diagnostic study on sanitary-phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barriers to trade (TBT), launched in June 2016 under the trade facilitation agenda of the SASEC Program. The Nepal SPS-TBT national core group and public and private stakeholders participated in the validation meeting on 31 October in Kathmandu, Nepal, providing comments and feedback on the draft for incorporation in the final diagnostic study.

#### **Read More**

# SASEC SPS-TBT Diagnostic Study for Bangladesh: National Validation Meeting

#### 26 October 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Ministry of Commerce, together with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) held a national validation meeting to share the draft final findings and recommendations of a national diagnostic study on sanitary-phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barriers to trade (TBT), launched in September 2016 under the trade facilitation agenda of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program.

# SASEC SPS-TBT Diagnostic Study for Sri Lanka: National Validation Meeting

23 October 2017: Colombo, Sri Lanka

The Sri Lanka Ministry of Development Strategies and International Trade, together with ADB held a national validation meeting to share the draft final findings and recommendations of a national diagnostic study on sanitary-phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barriers to trade (TBT). The SPS-TBT national core group for Sri Lanka, and public and private stakeholders participated in the validation meeting and provided comments and feedback on the draft for incorporation in the final diagnostic study.

#### **Read More**

# **Inception Meeting of the SASEC Cross-border Power Trade Working Group**

12-13 October 2017: Delhi, India

This Inception Meeting agreed that the proposed SASEC Cross-border Power Trade Working Group, a platform to realize power trade arrangements in the SASEC subregion, will assist in mobilizing funding for regional projects, and serve as a forum to discuss cross-border electricity trade issues and concerns.

#### **Read More**

### ADB Presents Colombo-Trincomalee Economic Corridor Study to Government of Sri Lanka

10 October 2017: Colombo, Sri Lanka

ADB presented findings of the comprehensive development plan of the Colombo-Trincomalee Economic Corridor to Dr. Harsha De Silva, Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Policy and Economic Affairs.

**Read More** 

# **CALENDAR**

### **December**

SASEC SPS-TBT Diagnostic Study for Maldives: National Validation Meeting 7 December 2017: Male, Maldives

SASEC SPS-TBT Diagnostic Study for India: National Validation Meeting 11 December 2017: New Delhi, India

Southwest Bangladesh Economic Corridor CDP – Final Report Dissemination Seminar

12 December 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Sri Lanka as LPG Transshipment Hub 14-15 December 2017: Colombo, Sri Lanka

SASEC Customs Subgroup: Inception Meeting for Institutionalized Border Meetings

15 December 2017: Siliguri, India

Bangladesh: Train-the-Trainers' Workshop on Systems-based Post-clearance Audit

18-21 December 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

# SASEC PROJECTS



PROJECT
ADB TO HELP UPGRADE
DHAKA-NORTHWEST
INTERNATIONAL TRADE
CORRIDOR



PROJECT NEPAL: REGIONAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



PROJECT WORK STARTS ON PHUENTSHOLING NORTHERN BYPASS



PROJECT
DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FOR BANGLADESH
ECONOMIC CORRIDOR
SUBMITTED TO GOVT.

# **ADB to Help Improve Nepal's Delivery of Urban Services and Facilities**

27 November 2017: Manila, Philippines

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$150 million loan for the Nepal: Regional Urban Development Project, to improve the resilience and delivery of urban services and facilities in eight municipalities in the southern Terai region of Nepal bordering India. Project outcomes will include improvement of a bypass road from Birgunj-Raxaul, Nepal's main border crossing, to the East-West highway, enhancing Nepal's access to a seaport.

**Read More** 

### **Bangladesh NBR to Implement the AEO Program by December**

23 November 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bangladesh's National Board of Revenue (NBR) will conduct a pilot run of its Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) Program by December to fast-track the country's trade processes while maintaining trade security. AEO companies should invest in supply chain security, and comply with Customs requirements, for which benefits will include faster release of goods from ports.

# Bangladesh: SASEC Dhaka-Northwest Corridor Road Project, Phase 2 - Tranche 1

#### 16 November 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The project will improve road connectivity and efficiency of the Dhaka-Northwest international trade corridor, the second busiest artery in Bangladesh, after the Dhaka-Chittagong road. At the northwestern end of the corridor is the Burimari Land Port, which provides a gateway to Bhutan through India. Improving the transport infrastructure is expected to significantly increase trade in the land port.

#### **Read More**

# Comprehensive Development Plan for Bangladesh Economic Corridor Submitted to the Government

#### 30 October 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Asian Development Bank has submitted a Comprehensive Development Plan for the proposed Southwest Bangladesh Economic Corridor to the Government of Bangladesh. This strategic framework document will guide the efficient implementation of economic corridor projects, integrating industry, urban, infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks.

#### **Read More**

# **Groundbreaking Ceremony for Northern Bypass in Phuentsholing**

#### 26 October 2017: Phuentsholing, Bhutan

A groundbreaking ceremony marked the start of the Northern Bypass construction in Phuentsholing, Bhutan, which includes the 2.7-kilometer bypass road and 120-meter bridge over Omchhu. The project is funded by the Asian Development Bank under the SASEC Program to improve Bhutan's regional connectivity, and open up access to better economic opportunities and social services.

#### **Read More**

# ADB to Help Upgrade the Dhaka-Northwest International Trade Corridor

#### 24 October 2017: Manila, Philippines

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved \$1.2 billion financing support for the second phase upgrade of the Dhaka-Northwest international trade corridor, the second busiest artery in Bangladesh. Upgrading this corridor will improve access to the Burimari Land Port, which links Bangladesh to Bhutan through India, potentially increasing trade.

### **Nepal: Regional Urban Development Project**

#### 22 September 2017: Phuentsholing, Bhutan

The project will improve the resilience and delivery of urban services and facilities in eight municipalities in the southern Terai region of Nepal bordering India, including four municipalities from the less-developed Province 7 in far western Nepal. The project will support municipal infrastructure investments, urban planning, and institutional strengthening.

**Read More** 

# SASEC NEWS



NEWS
INLAND WATERWAYS TO
SPUR BBIN
DEVELOPMENT



NEWS SASEC PROGRAM UPGRADES TO MOBILE-FRIENDLY WEBSITE



NEWS BANGLADESH, NEPAL TO REMOVE TRADE BARRIERS



NEWS
SAARC NATIONS CAN
ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS
TOGETHER

### **Commentary: Not Yet Custom-Made**

#### 29 November 2017: Mumbai, India

Trading across borders, a key component of a country's ease of doing business, can be quantified through a time release study (TRS). This commentary discusses the outcomes of a TRS conducted at the Jawaharlal Nehru Custom House (JNCH), which identified practices that will allow India to achieve the average release time of 72 hours, and proposed recommendations that the Customs department can lead going forward.

**Read More** 

# **ADB Holds Regional Cooperation Week; SASEC Team Recognized**

#### 29 November 2017: Manila, Philippines

ADB held a Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI) Week at ADB Headquarters to asses strategic RCI themes and initiatives in Asia and the Pacific and to define ADB implementation of its RCI Operational Plan. ADB also presented RCI Best Performers Awards, recognizing the SASEC Program for putting together the *SASEC Vision: Powering Asia in the 21st Century,* and for leading the the SASEC Road Connectivity Investment Program Multitranche Financing Facility Project.

# Speech: Accelerating RCI in Asia and the Pacific for Economic Growth, Shared Prosperity, and Sustainability

#### 27 November 2017: Manila, Philippines

In his keynote address at the ADB Regional Cooperation and Integration Week, ADB President Takehiko Nakao stated that regional cooperation is critical to securing Asia's economic future. He noted ADB's continued commitment to support regional cooperation as a means to reduce inequality and overcome infrastructure gaps, and cited specific SASEC projects as effective examples. The ADB Regional Cooperation and Integration Week was held on 27-29 November 2017, in Manila, Philippines.

#### **Read More**

# Asia-Pacific Ministers Vow to Advance Regional Cooperation to Support SDG Agenda

#### 24 November 2017: Bangkok, Thailand

At the Second Ministerial Conference on Regional Cooperation and Integration (RECI) organized by UNESCAP and ADB, government ministers and participants committed to support the implementation of the agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The ministers said RECI should be consistent with the SDGs in contributing to social progress and environmental sustainability.

#### **Read More**

# **Bangladesh Should Increase Energy Production to Achieve SDGs**

#### 22 November 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Experts at the launching of UNCTAD's The Least Developed Countries Report 2017 urged the Government of Bangladesh to strengthen the country's electrical system and address electricity governance and finance to ensure affordable power supply to homes and businesses. Despite significant improvements over the past decade, challenges remain, according to the Report.

#### **Read More**

# International North-South Corridor under TIR to Cut Time and Cost of Transit for Indian Exports

#### 20 November 2017: Mumbai, India

Transport and Customs representatives from India and Iran discussed how to activate use of the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) Convention along the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). A planned pilot consignment between India and Iran in early 2018 will highlight how the INSTC could reduce time and trade costs in transporting Indian goods to Russia and Central Asia.

### **BIMSTEC Meeting Emphasizes Transport Connectivity Plan**

#### 14 November 2017: Bangkok, Thailand

The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group discussed the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity. The master plan is envisaged to provide an overarching framework for BIMSTEC in enhancing transport connectivity among its member countries.

#### **Read More**

# India-Bhutan Development Cooperation Talks Review Bhutan's 11th Five-Year Plan

#### 10 November 2017: New Delhi, India

The Governments of Bhutan and India held their 6th India-Bhutan Development Cooperation Talks to review progress in the implementation of ongoing bilateral development projects under Bhutan's 11th Five-Year Plan (2013-2018). The meeting also initiated discussion on the Royal Government of Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan (2018-2023).

#### **Read More**

### Kolkata-Khulna Train Service Launched

#### 9 November 2017: Kolkata, India

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, India Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, jointly flagged off the Bandhan Express on 9 November 2017 via video conference. The new express service will contribute to closer links and mutual development between the two countries.

#### **Read More**

### **Nepal to Join BIMSTEC Energy Grid**

#### 6 November 2017: Kathmandu, Nepal

Nepal has decided to join the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) grid interconnection, a move meant to help facilitate trade in electricity and take full advantage of available energy sources. Nepal is expected to sign an MOU to join the grid interconnection at the Third BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Meeting.

#### **Read More**

# **Amending India's Electricity Act Could Enhance Trade with SAARC Countries**

#### 5 November 2017, New Delhi, India

An Asian Development Bank report suggests that a shift in India's electricity policy could help address the acute electricity shortages faced by SAARC countries, which affects socioeconomic development as well as business operations. Policy amendments could help facilitate cross-border power trade among SAARC countries and give communities better access to electricity.

### Majerhat Terminal for Loading/Unloading of Nepal Cargo

#### 5 November 2017: Birgunj, Nepal

The Majerhat terminal in Kolkata Port has been allocated for Nepal-bound cargo to ease transit of Nepal imports from Kolkata Port to Sirsiya Dry Port in Birgunj. The additional terminal will make loading and unloading easier and faster, thereby reducing delays.

#### **Read More**

### **Report Calls for Speedy Implementation of Paperless Trade**

#### 1 November 2017: Bangkok, Thailand

Implementing paperless trade measures in Asia and the Pacific would reduce trade costs, raise competitiveness, and enable countries in the region to benefit from the digital economy, according to the Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation - Global Report 2017.

#### **Read More**

### **Inland Waterways to Spur BBIN Development**

#### 28 October 2017: Kathmandu, Nepal

Completion of infrastructure to connect inland waterways of India and Bangladesh could ease movement between the two countries, and make transport of freight to Nepal and Bhutan faster and less expensive. Opening inland waterways would make alternative modes of transport viable and could open up livelihood opportunities, helping facilitate trade in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, according to experts attending a forum on subregional inland waterways.

#### **Read More**

# SASEC Program Upgrades to Mobile-Friendly Website with Improved Security

#### 27 October 2017: Manila, Philippines

The new-look SASEC website is fully mobile-friendly and automatically adjusts to fit the screen you are using—computer, tablet, or mobile phone—making it a convenient choice for staying in touch with regional cooperation throughout South Asia. SASEC has also updated to HTTPS for enhanced cybersecurity and user privacy.

#### **Read More**

### SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators Meet

#### 24-25 October 2017: Islamabad, Pakistan

The Second Meeting of the SAARC Council of Experts of Energy Regulators discussed the road map for implementation of the SAARC Framework Agreement on Energy Cooperation (Electricity), issues on power trade, including harmonization of electricity laws. Mr. Tariq Saddozai, Chairman, NEPRA, emphasized the need to increase cross-border electricity trade to help countries overcome energy challenges.

### Fourth India-Bangladesh JCC Meeting Discusses Progress of Key Bilateral Initiatives

#### 23 October 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, India, and Mr. Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, Foreign Minister, Bangladesh, co-chaired the Fourth India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) Meeting, reviewing progress on key initiatives and decisions in areas including trade and investment, security, connectivity, border management, power, energy, shipping, and people-to-people exchange.

#### **Read More**

### **CBEC Pilots Paperless Processing of Documents**

#### 15 October 2017: New Delhi, India

India's Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) piloted paperless processing of documents in Chennai and New Delhi to promote the ease of doing business. CBEC's newest facility enables digitally signed supporting documents to be uploaded to further reduce clearance time.

#### **Read More**

### India, Bangladesh, Nepal in Talks to Implement BBIN MVA

#### 15 October 2017: New Delhi, India

The Government of India has taken steps to implement the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA), coordinating with the Governments of Bangladesh and Nepal through the Ministry of External Affairs to enforce the transport agreement between and among themselves, reported Mr. Nitin Gadkari, Road Transport, Highways, and Shipping Minister, India.

#### **Read More**

### **Bangladesh**, Nepal to Remove Trade Barriers

#### 10 October 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bangladesh and Nepal have agreed to remove non-tariff barriers and para-tariff measures to help increase bilateral trade. At the second Foreign Office Consultation between Bangladesh and Nepal, the foreign secretaries of the two countries agreed to exchange trade delegations, organize trade fairs, and sign the Bilateral Trade Promotion and Protection Agreement.

### **SAARC Nations Can Achieve SDGs Together**

#### 5 October 2017: Colombo, Sri Lanka

Ms. Sumitra Mahajan, Speaker, Lok Sabha, India, said South Asian countries need to present a collective front to help the world achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Speaking at the Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers and Parliamentarians, Ms. Majahan stressed the importance of interaction among the parliaments of SAARC countries and said that national parliaments should focus on the SDGs.

#### **Read More**

### Bangladesh, India Finance Ministers Sign Third LoC, Note Good Relations

#### 5 October 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Mr. Abul Maal A. Muhith, Finance Minister, Bangladesh, and Mr. Arun Jaitley, Finance Minister, India, signed the Third Line of Credit (LoC) from India to Bangladesh worth \$4.5 billion, to be used for implementation of projects in connectivity. Mr. Jaitley lauded the outstanding relations between the two neighbors after a meeting with Mr. Muhith.

#### **Read More**

# **India Foreign Secretary Discusses Trade and Energy Cooperation with Bhutan Leaders**

#### 4 October 2017: Thimphu, Bhutan

Mr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, India, met with Bhutan top leaders to discuss trade and economic ties, energy cooperation, and the implementation of India-assisted projects in Bhutan.

#### **Read More**

### **Bangladesh-India Business Meet Emphasizes Trade Potential**

#### 4 October 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Bangladesh-India Business Meeting emphasized the immense prospects for bilateral investment and growth between Bangladesh and India. Mr. Tofail Ahmed, Commerce Minister, Bangladesh, urged India to take steps to reduce the trade deficit through removal of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers, improvement in facilities, mutual recognition of certificates and standards, and better connectivity.

#### **Read More**

# **Chamber of Commerce Formed to Increase Trade between India and Myanmar**

#### 27 September 2017: Yangon, Myanmar

India has formed the India-Myanmar Chamber of Commerce (IMCC) in Yangon to increase trade between the two countries, which currently stands at around \$2 billion. IMCC will focus on helping Indian business invest in Myanmar and vice versa.

### Joint Steering Committee Discusses Additional Electricity Import from India to Bangladesh

#### 27 September 2017: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The 13th Joint Steering Committee Meeting between Bangladesh and India, held on 27-28 September 2017 in New Delhi, India, reviewed Bangladesh-India power sector cooperation, and explored new areas and opportunities, including the possible 840 megawatt (MW) additional electricity import from India to Bangladesh, and planned Bangladesh hydropower imports from Nepal and Bhutan.

**Read More** 

# RELATED PUBLICATIONS



**SASEC BROCHURE** 



SASEC TRADE FACILITATION STRATEGY



SASEC WEBSITE BROCHURE



SASEC OPERATIONAL PLAN 2016-2025



World Trade Organization: Trade Profiles 2017



Measuring and Analyzing the Impact of GVCs on Economic Development



World Bank: Transport Policies and Development



Asian Development Bank and Bhutan: Fact Sheet



Asian Development Bank and India: Fact Sheet



Asian Development Bank and Maldives: Fact Sheet



Asian Development Bank and Myanmar: Fact Sheet



Asian Development Bank and Nepal: Fact Sheet



Asian Development Bank and Sri Lanka: Fact Sheet





#### **ABOUT THIS EMAIL**

Your received this message because you signed up for the SASEC Newsletter.

Subscribe | Unsubscribe | Contact Us

© South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation 2012