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13th MEETING OF THE SASEC CUSTOMS SUBGROUP

11-13 August 2025; Kathmandu, Nepal



13th Meeting of the SASEC Customs Subgroup

11-13 August 2025; Mandaluyong, Philippines

The 13th South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Customs Subgroup Meeting, held on 11–12 August in Kathmandu, Nepal, brought together senior customs officials of the SASEC countries to discuss progress of subregional initiatives and country projects for trade and transport facilitation.

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- **Bangladesh-Bhutan Preferential Trade Agreement to Undergo Review**
- **Sri Lanka President Dissanayake Urge Maldives Investors to Consider Trade and Tourism**
- **India and Maldives sign 13 MoUs to Enhance Ferry Services**

Planned Railway Lines Connecting Bhutan and India to Strengthen Regional Connectivity

30 September 2025: Hyderabad, India

India will construct two new railway lines to link India and Bhutan. One railway link will connect Banarhat in West Bengal, India, to Samtse, Bhutan, and another will connect Kokrajhar in Assam, India, to Gelephu, Bhutan. The projects will strengthen transport connectivity and economic integration in the region.

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Fully Commissioned: Punatsangchhu-II Hydropower Project

27 August 2025: Thimphu, Bhutan

The sixth and final unit of the Punatsangchhu-II Hydropower Project was successfully synchronized with Bhutan's national grid on 27 August 2025, bringing the 1,020 MW project to full operational capacity. As one of the largest and most significant joint hydropower ventures between Bhutan and India, the project stands as a testament to the strong partnership between Bhutan and India in renewable energy development.

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SAARC Governing Board Meeting Held in Colombo, Sri Lanka

25 August 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Fifteenth Meeting of the Governing Board of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Cultural Centre convened at the Galle Face Hotel, Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 19 to 20 August 2025. The meeting was attended by officials from the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Royal Government of Bhutan, the Republic of Nepal, and the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. Officials from the Republic of India, the Republic of Maldives, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan attended virtually.

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Bangladesh-Bhutan Preferential Trade Agreement to Undergo Review

17 August 2025: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bangladesh and Bhutan delegations agreed to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress and impact of their preferential trade agreement to examine tariff reductions, non-tariff barriers, and trade facilitation measures with a view to further strengthening bilateral trade.

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India's Foreign Secretary Visits Nepal to Further Strengthen Ties

15 August 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

Mr. Vikram Misri, Foreign Secretary of the Government of India, visited Nepal on 17-18 August 2025 and met with leaders including Nepal Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli, Nepal President Ramchandra Paudel, and Mr. Arzu Rana Deuba, Foreign Minister of the Government of Nepal. Their discussions focused on expanding cooperation in socio-economic, technological, and connectivity sectors.

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Nepal to Export Additional 200 MW of Electricity to India

11 August 2025: Kathmandu, Nepal

The Government of India approved the purchase of an additional 200 MW of electricity from Nepal, effective 11 August to 31 October 2025. This raises Nepal's total export capacity to India to 1,010.9 MW. Nepal's overall export capacity now stands at around 1,051 MW, including its 40 MW export to Bangladesh.

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Bhutan Begins Construction of Dorjilung Hydropower Project

8 August 2025: Thimphu, Bhutan

Bhutan has officially initiated construction for the 1,125 MW Dorjilung Hydropower Project. The project, a joint venture between Bhutan's Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC) and India's Tata Power Company Limited, marks a strategic shift from purely government-led initiatives to a partnership model involving private capital and multilateral finance, with the World Bank as the lead financier.

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Bangladesh and Nepal Negotiate a Preferential Trade Agreement

3 August 2025: Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Governments of Bangladesh and Nepal are negotiating a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers and address the widening trade deficit between the two countries. At a roundtable discussion organized by the Centre for Policy Dialogue, Mr. Ghanshyam Bhandari, Nepal's Ambassador to Bangladesh highlighted cooperation potential and the expanding partnership in energy trade.

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Sri Lanka President Dissanayake Urges Maldives Investors to Consider Trade and Tourism

1 August 2025: New Delhi, India

Sri Lanka-Maldives Business Forum was held on 30 July 2025 at the JEN Maldives Malé hotel in Malé, Maldives. Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake addressed the event, urging Maldives investors to consider opportunities in Sri Lanka's tourism, trade, and ICT sectors.

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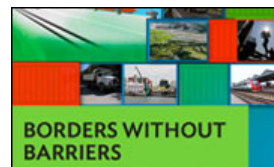
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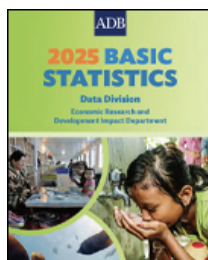
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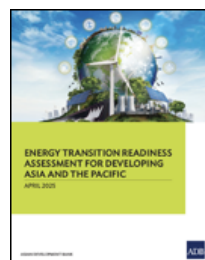
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