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# SASEC NEWS

THE SOUTH ASIA SUBREGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION NEWSLETTER

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## Maritime Cooperation in SASEC

**4 October 2019: Manila, Philippines**

South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) countries rely on maritime transport for international trade. Stronger maritime relations are crucial to achieve the economic growth potential for the subregion. This report looks at how countries can strengthen international trade by improving maritime cooperation among the SASEC countries, comprised of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. It gives an overview of the SASEC maritime sector and identifies collaboration initiatives that could address key challenges.

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- **SASEC Customs Subgroup Meeting**
- **Inter-Subregional Knowledge-Sharing Forum for CAREC and SASEC**

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## SASEC Customs Subgroup Meeting

**1 November 2019: Tbilisi, Georgia**

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized the eighth meeting of the SASEC Customs Subgroup (SCS) on 1 November in Tbilisi, Georgia, which brought together senior customs officials of SASEC member countries. The meeting outcomes included trade facilitation projects for possible inclusion in the SASEC Operational Plan; and innovative trade facilitation initiatives, including e-commerce and application of blockchain technology, that the SASEC Customs Subgroup will pursue.

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## Inter-Subregional Knowledge-Sharing Forum for CAREC and SASEC

**31 October—2 November 2019: Tbilisi, Georgia**

Customs officials from Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program and SASEC program gathered in Tbilisi, Georgia, for an inter-subregional knowledge-sharing forum on trade facilitation and customs modernization. This Meeting is the first inter-subregional knowledge sharing between SASEC and CAREC countries. The participants also conducted a study visit to a border facility. The study visit showcased best practices in facility design, operations, and institutional coordination.

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# SASEC PROJECTS



- **Commentary: Adopting Economic Corridors as a Development Strategy**

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## Commentary: Adopting Economic Corridors as a Development Strategy in Bangladesh

**13 September 2019: Manila Philippines**

Economic corridor development is an effective policy that could promote sustainable growth in Bangladesh. It is a tool that enables the proliferation of industry, creates jobs, upgrades infrastructure, and links production centers with global value chains. It also helps create markets in lagging regions.

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# SASEC NEWS



- **Asia and the Pacific Has Made Great Strides in Enhancing Regional Cooperation -Mr. Masatsugu Asakawa**
- **Implementing Transport Deals Key to Bangladesh-India Trade Growth**
- **Rationalizing BIMSTEC's Areas of Cooperation to Help Deliver Results**

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## Asia and the Pacific Has Made Great Strides in Enhancing Regional Cooperation -Mr. Masatsugu Asakawa

**4 November 2019: Manila, Philippines**

Mr. Masatsugu Asakawa, sole nominee for the next ADB president, outlined in his statement that ADB has made great strides in advancing regional cooperation and expanding coverage of cross-border infrastructure. He said ADB will be furthering efforts to advance regional cooperation and integration through such initiatives as the SASEC partnership.

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## **Bangladesh and India Urge Implementation of BBIN MVA, Discuss Strengthening Multimodal Connectivity**

**26 October 2019: New Delhi, India**

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and India Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to operationalize the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement for movement of goods and passengers between “member countries who are willing and ready” during the Bangladesh Prime Minister’s official visit to India on 5 October 2019. The Bangladesh Prime Minister reiterated this call for early implementation of the transit agreement with Nepal Prime Minister KP Oli in Azerbaijan, when they met in late October.

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## **Bangladesh, Nepal Joint Secretary Level Meeting Highlight Trade and Connectivity**

**23 October 2019: Kathmandu, Nepal**

The fourth meeting of Nepal-Bangladesh commerce joint-secretary level technical committee focused on further boosting trade between the two countries and reducing the trade deficit, as well as increasing connectivity. The meeting reached an agreement on providing easy access to agricultural goods of both countries.

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## **ADB: Implementing Transport Agreements Key to Bangladesh-India Trade Growth**

**22 October 2019: Guwahati, India**

The delay in and non-operationalization of bilateral agreements and non-tariff measures are holding back trade between India’s northeastern region and Bangladesh, underscored Mr. Kenichi Yokoyama, ADB Country Director for India, at the Bangladesh-India Stakeholders’ Meeting. He emphasized the need to finalize and speedily implement the agreements to reap better growth and prosperity for the region.

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## **Myanmar and Nepal's Friendly Ties**

**20 October 2019: Naypyidaw, Myanmar**

Myanmar and Nepal are planning to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations in 2020 with various programs and events in the two countries. This upcoming milestone was highlighted in the bilateral talk between Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Myanmar President U Win Myint in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. The two Presidents also reviewed the state of Myanmar-Nepal relations, and discussed how to expand and further strengthen the ties between the two countries.

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## **New Butwal-Gorakhpur Cross-border Transmission Line to be Jointly Built by India and Nepal**

**15 October 2019: Bangalore, India**

India and Nepal held an energy secretary level meeting on 14-15 October 2019 in Bangalore, India. The meeting aimed to finalize details of the New Butwal-Gorakhpur cross-border transmission line and review the energy banking agreement. The meeting decided to build 400 kVA transmission line under 50-50 equity. The delegation from India also agreed to open up energy banking with Nepal, and allow Nepal to enter its power exchange market.

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## **Commentary: Let's Make It Easier for Countries to Trade**

**14 October 2019: Manila Philippines**

Trade is one of the engines of Asia's economic growth. Amid these challenging times for trade, ADB supports trade reforms in Asia and the Pacific. In South Asia, ADB is supporting the SASEC program to simplify trade documentation, promote automation in border agencies, develop a national single window platform, and develop trade-related infrastructure.

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## **Rationalizing BIMSTEC's Areas of Cooperation to Help the Organization Deliver More Results: BPWC Meeting**

**11 October 2019: Colombo, Sri Lanka**

The BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) discussed rationalizing the organization's areas of cooperation and the draft memorandum of understanding to be signed with ADB. Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Foreign Secretary of the Government of Sri Lanka, emphasized that for Sri Lanka, early finalization of the BIMSTEC Charter and rationalization of the sectors are crucial to re-energize the organization. Rationalizing the sectors will help maximize utilization of resources and make BIMSTEC result-oriented organization that delivers tangible results.

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## **Nepal Gets Access to Three Indian Inland Waterway Routes**

**7 October 2019: New Delhi, India, and Kathmandu, Nepal**

The Government of India has, in principle, allowed Nepal access to three inland waterway routes: (i) Kolkata-Kalughat, Raxaul; (ii) Kolkata-Sahebgunj, Biratnagar; and (iii) Kolkata-Varanasi-Raxaul. These new routes will expand Nepal's transit options to the sea. A draft letter for this arrangement was finalized during the Joint Secretary-level meeting between India and Nepal in late September.

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India-Bangladesh stakeholders' meeting to discuss and create awareness on the opportunities made available by the BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement and access to Chattogram and Mongla Ports in #India's northeastern region [Read more](#)

Bangladesh, India to deliberate on ways to further deepen bilateral cooperation, particularly in the areas of #trade and connectivity [Read more](#)

Maritime Cooperation in SASEC: South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation explores how SASEC countries can enhance maritime cooperation to boost international #trade [Read more](#)

Under new 5-year Country Partnership Strategy, ADB to promote Nepal's hydropower development and renewable energy, roads and air transport, logistics, and trade facilitation to strengthen domestic, regional, and international #connectivity [Read more](#)

ADB Unveils New 5-Year Strategy for #Nepal to Promote Stronger, More Inclusive Economy [Read more](#)

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