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SASEC NEWS

THE SOUTH ASIA SUBREGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION NEWSLETTER

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Ninth Meeting of the SASEC Customs Subgroup

30 September 2020: Online



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The Ninth South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Customs Subgroup Meeting was convened virtually by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on 30 September 2020. It was attended by customs chiefs and other senior customs officials from SASEC member countries. Mr. Ronald Butiong, Director, South Asia Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division, ADB, moderated the meeting.

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SASEC CALENDAR

October

SASEC Transport Sector Working Group Meeting

7 October 2020: Online

SASEC Cross-Border Power Trade Working Group Meeting

14 October 2020: Online

ADB-NACIN Training on Coordinated Border Management

20-21 October 2020: Online

SASEC PROJECTS



- **Bangladesh Approves SASEC Highway Project**

Bangladesh Approves SASEC Highway Project

7 September 2020: Agartala and Gangtok, India

The Bangladesh Executive Committee of the National Economic Council has approved a road expansion program through the SASEC Road Link Project II: Elenga-Hatikamrul-Rangpur Highway Four-Lane Upgradation. The project will be part of a road network connecting Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, which will increase trade and commerce in the subregion.

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- **Bangladesh, India Complete Trial Run on the Daudkandi–Sonamura Waterway Route**
- **Bangladesh, Bhutan Aim to Move Preferential Trade Agreement Forward**
- **India-Maldives Direct Cargo Ferry Service Launched**

India-Maldives Direct Cargo Ferry Service Launched

29 September 2020: New Delhi, India

Mr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Shipping of the Government of India, and Ms. Aishath Nahula, Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation of Maldives, led the online ceremony for the launch of the direct cargo ferry service between India and Maldives. The ferry service aims to provide a cost effective, direct, and alternate means of transportation of goods between India and Maldives.

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India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission Recommends Removal of Trade Barriers

29 September 2020: New Delhi, India

The sixth meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Commission held virtually on 29 September 2020 recommended taking greater measures to mutually enhance trade and investment between the two countries. Recommendations include removal of all forms of barriers to trade, and harmonization of standards and mutual recognition of certificates—important elements of trade facilitation.

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Bangladesh, Bhutan Aim to Move Preferential Trade Agreement Forward

28 September 2020: Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Thimphu, Bhutan

The preferential trade agreement between Bangladesh and Bhutan is expected to be signed in the near future. According to Mr. Loknath Sharma, Economic Affairs Minister of the Government of Bhutan, in a Kuensel report, the two countries have agreed to the draft text of the agreement, which is set to be finalized at a commerce secretary-level meeting.

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India, Sri Lanka Prime Ministers Vow to Further Deepen Bilateral Ties amid the Pandemic

26 September 2020: New Delhi, India

India Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lanka Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa convened a virtual summit. Prime Minister Rajapaksa commended Prime Minister Modi's leadership in the fight against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Prime Minister Modi reaffirmed India's continued commitment to extend full support to Sri Lanka to help cushion the pandemic's impact.

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India Delivers Broad Gauge Railway Trains to Nepal

18 September 2020: Kathmandu, Nepal

Two modern DEMU (Diesel – Electric Multiple Unit) train sets were delivered by India's Konkan Railways to Nepal Railways, and a trial run was conducted on 18 September 2020.

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Fifteenth Informal Meeting of the SAARC Finance Ministers

16 September 2020: Kathmandu, Nepal

Finance Ministers/ Heads of Delegations of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries held their 15th Informal Meeting on 16 September 2020 on the sidelines of the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank. They discussed the huge challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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India's Northeast Region is Gateway to Southeast Asia -India Foreign Secretary

16 September 2020: Agartala and Gangtok, India

India's northeastern states are working to improve infrastructure and connectivity to help reduce the cost of transport and basic commodities. India's northeastern region is the country's gateway to East and Southeast Asia, and India is promoting transport and energy connectivity with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Nepal, explains Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary of the Government of India.

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Odisha Economic Corridor Included in the National Industrial Corridor Development Program

9 September 2020: New Delhi, India

The National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust has approved the inclusion of the Odisha Economic Corridor under the National Industrial Corridor Development Program. It will become part of the East Coast Economic Corridor, India's first coastal economic corridor.

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Bangladesh, India Complete Trial Run on the Daudkandi–Sonamura Waterway Route

5 September 2020: Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Sonamura, India

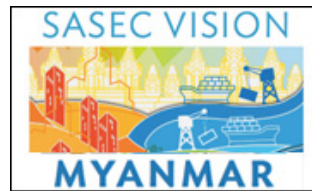
A trial run for the first export consignment from Bangladesh to Tripura, India, through inland waterways was conducted on 3–5 September 2020. The barge traveled 93 kilometers along the Meghna–Gomati river route carrying 50 tonnes of cement.

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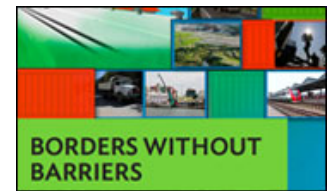
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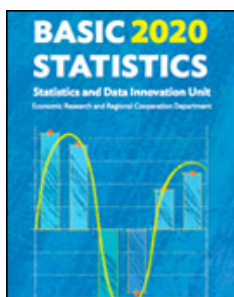
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Newly launched vessel provides direct cargo connectivity between India and Maldives on a predictable and affordable basis [Read more](#)

Tripura-Bangladesh waterways to open on September 5 [Read more](#)

Trade, connectivity in BBIN region for stability stressed [Read more](#)

Myanmar Envoy, India Foreign Secretary discuss ways to boost cooperation in energy, trade and investment, connectivity, agriculture, health, development partnership and person-to-person ties [Read more](#)

Government of Bangladesh finalizes draft of preferential trade agreement with Bhutan [Read more](#)

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