

Panel: Connecting for Trade and Development: Issues and Prospects of Land Transport Corridors of South Asia

Connectivity is a common denominator and a quintessential factor to ensure success of any regional development initiative. Lack of adequate, accessible and affordable transport options in South Asia, particularly inland cross-border transport to connect the contiguous regions of the subcontinent, has led to high cost of doing trade and heavy loss of trade-led growth and development opportunities. Estimates show that intra-regional trade in South Asia could potentially be three times larger if cost-effective transport options are provided. Though South Asian countries are in the process of rebuilding and reconnecting the subregion's severed transport routes, the pace of such initiatives remains slow and inadequate.

This panel will discuss the connectivity requirements of South Asia, with special emphasis on overland transport connectivity. The panel will also discuss special challenges faced by the Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) of the subregion. Points for discussions would include:

- Identification of main subregional multimodal corridors and policy priorities for their speedy operationalization.
- Ways to synergise various regional connectivity initiatives at the national level, and those led by subregional organisations such as South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).
- Requirements of infrastructural and procedural reforms to operationalise subregional corridors and ways of investment mobilization.
- Ways to utilise transport policy resources and expertise of UNESCAP, subregional think tanks, transport service providers and operators, and other stakeholders.
- Utilisation of technological advancements to fast-track digitisation of trade and transport procedures and implementation of single window systems.
- Potential solutions to address the specific connectivity needs of LLDCs in the subregion such as Afghanistan, Bhutan and Nepal.

Panel Organisers:

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