

July 2021



SOUTH ASIA
SDG
UPDATE



Announcement

Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP SSWA Office moves on to a new position



After 12 years of dedicated service at the UNESCAP, Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director and Head of UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, based in New Delhi has decided to take an early retirement from United Nations to head the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), a New Delhi based public-funded think-tank.



With the retirement of Mr. Nagesh Kumar on 30 April 2021, Mr. Adnan Aliani, Director, Strategy and Programme Management Division, UNESCAP, Bangkok has been designated with additional responsibility as the Officer-in-Charge of UNESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi with effect from 1 May 2021.



I. Key Activities during April-June 2021



1. South Asian Countries participate in the 77th session of the UNESCAP



Bangkok, Thailand, 29 April 2021. Policymakers from more than 50 Asia and the Pacific countries participated in the 77th Commission Session of the UNESCAP (26-29 April 2021) under the theme “Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.” Governments called for a “whole-of-society” response to COVID-19 and encouraged coordinated action across the region to mitigate the economic and social devastation brought on by the pandemic. Delegates underlined the importance of ensuring universal and equitable access to vaccines, investing in social protection systems that promote access to essential services and decent jobs, particularly to meet the health and social care needs of the most vulnerable populations, and promoting the continued flow of essential goods and services. Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, in her closing remarks to the Commission’s 77th session stated that “we are committed to supporting governments to building back

better from the COVID-19 pandemic through inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery strategies. It is my utmost hope that the resolution on regional cooperation to build back better from crises in Asia and the Pacific will further mainstream our response to COVID-19.”

During the general debate, special statements were delivered by many prominent leaders from South Asia, which included statements by H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; H.E. Ms. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh; H.E. Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan; H.E. Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; and H.E. Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. More than 500 delegates from 52 of the Commission’s 62 members and associate members attended the session via a virtual platform.

Read more [here](#) and read the [theme study](#)



2. Subregional Event on “Sustainable Graduation in the Challenging Time: Perspectives from Bangladesh and the Region” held during 77th session of UNESCAP

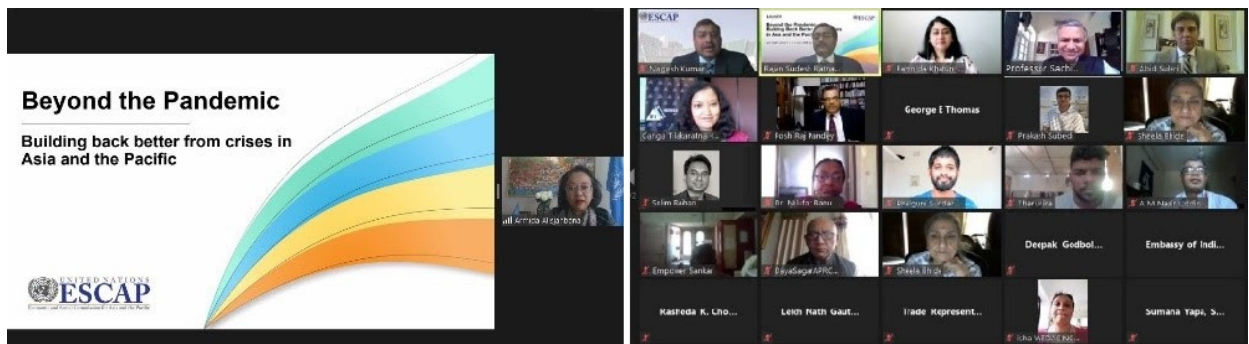
Bangkok, Thailand, 27 April 2021. A strategic dialogue on “Sustainable Graduation in the Challenging Time: Perspectives from Bangladesh and the Region” was hosted by the Government of Bangladesh in association with UNESCAP, UNOHRLLS and WTO on the sidelines of the 77th Session of UNESCAP. The focus of discussion was to discuss International Support Measures (ISMs) needed for the countries in the region for their sustainable development amidst this unprecedented challenging time. The welcome remarks to the virtual session were given by Ambassador H. E. Mr. Mohammed Abdul Hye, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to ESCAP, followed by a statement by Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN under Secretary General & ESCAP Executive Secretary and a keynote presentation by Ms. Zuenaz Aziz, Principal Coordinator (SDG Affairs), Prime Minister’s Office, Bangladesh. The panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director of UNESCAP-SSWA Office and had active participation of high-level representatives and officials from different countries, development partners, senior officials from the UN, major institutional stakeholders, and other international organizations, private sector and civil society organizations. The panelists explored various perspectives on sustainable LDC graduation in the challenging times of COVID-19. They also focused on international support measures that are needed for these countries to advance their sustainable development.

Read more [here](#) and [concept note](#)



3. Launch of the Theme Study “Beyond the Pandemic: Building Back Better from Crises in Asia and the Pacific” during the 77th session of UNESCAP





Bangkok, Thailand, 20 April 2021. UNESCAP launched the Theme Study for the 77th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which analyses the socio-economic effects of the pandemic, takes stock of action taken so far, and sets out a policy agenda for building back better. Dr Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP in her opening remarks stated that “the commitment to build back better has become even more urgent given the scale of the task ahead. The 77th Commission session Beyond the Pandemic report identifies fault lines in the region’s societies and economies that COVID-19 was quick to expose”. This was followed by a breakout session of South and South-West Asia region where a subregional perspective was presented by Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi. Leading think tank representatives from South Asia expressed their views in a panel discussion highlighting priority areas and perspectives for building back better with focus on sub-regional cooperation. The panelists included Dr. Abid Suleri, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan; Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director-General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India; Dr. Fahmida Khatun, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh; Dr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics, and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal; and Dr. Ganga Tilakaratna, Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) of Sri Lanka.

Read more [here](#) and read the [theme study](#).



4. South Asia Policy Dialogue on Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2021: Towards post-COVID-19 resilient economies



Bangkok, Thailand, 12 April 2021. UNESCAP organized a virtual South Asia Policy Dialogue on recently launched flagship publication “Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2021: Towards post-COVID-19 resilient economies”. The Policy Dialogue provided a forum for discussion of the key messages of the 2021 Survey especially relating to the major challenges including those created by COVID-19 that South Asia is facing and policy options to address them while building post COVID-19 resilient economies. The opening statement was given by Dr Nagesh Kumar, Director UNESCAP South and South-West Asia Office, New Delhi, which

was followed by a presentation by Mr. Zheng Jian, Economics Affairs Officer, UNESCAP, who highlighted the Survey findings focussing on South Asia subregion. The panel discussion included comments from Dr. N.R. Bhanumurthy, Vice-Chancellor, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar School of Economics, Bengaluru; Dr. Selim Raihan, Executive Director, SANEM, Bangladesh; Dr. Nisha Arunatilake, Director of Research, Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka; Dr. Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) ; Dr. Omar Joya, Executive Director, Biruni Institute, Afghanistan; Dr. Puspa Sharma, Executive Director, SAWTEE, Nepal.

Read more [here](#).



5. Online training courses on e-commerce and digital marketing conducted for women entrepreneurs of South Asia under the UNESCAP-EIF project



New Delhi, India, 9 April 2021. UNESCAP, in partnership with Enhanced Integrated Framework, Geneva, South Asian Network on SDGs (SANS) and South Asia Women Development Forum (SAWDF) held two online training courses out of the series of trainings on e-commerce planned for women entrepreneurs in April and June 21. The trainings were conducted with an aim of enhancing the knowledge and capacity of MSME-led women entrepreneurs from 10 countries of South and South-West Asia to use digital marketing tools and e-commerce platforms to expand their business exports and participate in local, regional and global supply chains. The sessions covered topics on how to use social media platforms, use e-commerce and digital marketing to promote business, registering with varied marketplaces, online rural marketing, along with a dedicated hands-on sessions on registering and creating products and services catalogues as well as uploading the profile as an entrepreneur at e-market place including at training platform <https://www.unescap.wesellonline.org/>. A total of more than 500 women entrepreneurs joined these trainings online. The training also facilitated how to market the products and services as dedicated sessions were also allocated for participants to speak and displayed their products and services during the networking sessions.

Read more [April training](#) and [June training](#).



6. Subregional launch of the midterm Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Report highlights the challenges faced in South and South-West Asia region



New Delhi, India, 29 June 2021. The Asia-Pacific region has reached the midpoint of the Asian and Pacific Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Decade (2015-2024) and a regional level launch of the midterm CRVS report was done on 28 July 2020. This was followed by a virtual subregional launch of the midterm Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) report on 29 May 2021 which highlighted the challenges faced in South and South-West Asia, presented key findings and sharing of experiences on country progress towards establishing universal CRVS systems. The virtual launch had participation from national statistical organizations, partner agencies, development partners, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders from South and South-West Asian subregion. In her opening remarks, Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, highlighted that to ensure no one is left behind and to reach the furthest behind, robust CRVS systems are fundamental to advance the achievement of SDGs across Asia-Pacific. Mr. Hasibullah Mowahed, Deputy Director General for Statistics of National Statistics and Information Authority of Afghanistan and Vice-Chair of the Regional Steering Group for CRVS in Asia-Pacific delivered the welcome remarks. In their opening remarks, Mr. George Laryea-Adjei, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia, Dr. Pem Namgyal, Director Programme Management, WHO, South-East Asia Regional Office, and Dr. Arash Rashidian, Director of Science, Information, and Dissemination, Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office, WHO, highlighted the urgent need for universal civil registration of births, deaths and causes of death in South and South-West Asian countries. A youth representative, Ms. Nimmu from Sri Lanka shared her experiences on consultations with youth and children on CRVS. Following this, Mr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Economics Officer, ESCAP subregional office of South and South-West Asia,

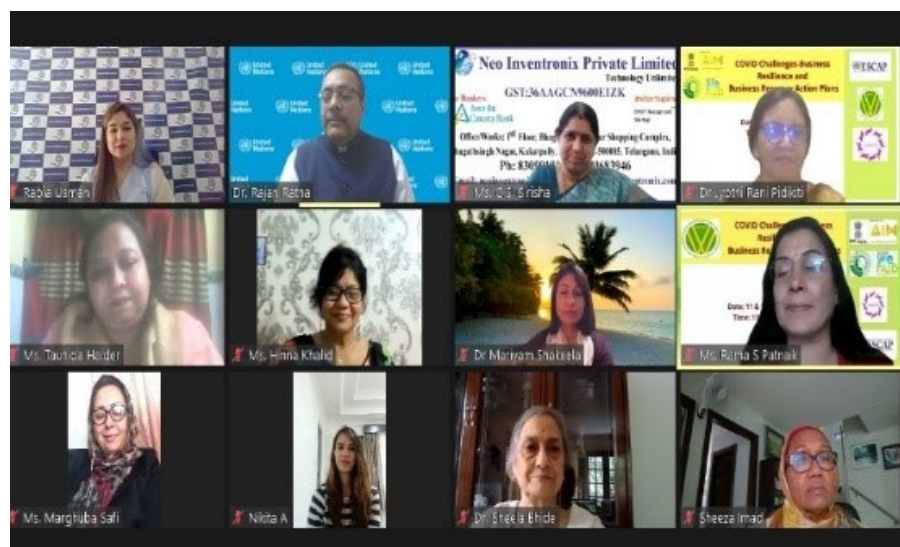
presented the key findings of the report as well as the subregional perspectives and country insights. He highlighted the criticality of universal and robust CRVS systems in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and for monitoring the SDGs in the subregion. Dr. Pandup Tshering, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of Health, Bhutan and Ms. Sandhya Singh, Deputy Registrar General, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India shared their country progress in civil registration systems.

Read more [here](#)



7. Virtual dialogue on COVID -19 challenges for women entrepreneurs - business resilience and business recovery action plans

Kathmandu, Nepal, 12 May 2021. South Asian Women Development Forum (SAWDF) in partnership with UNESCAP organized a virtual dialogue with focus on women entrepreneurs in the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic. Over the two-day program, the expert speakers shared their thoughts on the various risks faced by female entrepreneurs, ways to manage these risks along with the preparedness to meet the challenges faced in a COVID economic scenario. The first day of the program saw Ms. Neeza Imad Hon'ble Minister of State for Economic Development, Maldives; Ms. Sita Sumrit Head of Poverty Eradication and Gender Division, ASEAN Secretariat, Indonesia; Dr.



Srinivas Tata, Director, Social Development Division, UNESCAP, Bangkok and Ms. Pacita Juan, Past Chairperson, ASEAN Women Entrepreneurs Network (AWEN), Philippines. The speakers spoke on the topic of women entrepreneurship and their organization's responses towards managing the various risk faced by women entrepreneurs including the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. On the second day, Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Economics Officer, ESCAP sub regional office for South and South-West Asia moderated a panel discussion on the challenges faced during COVID crisis and what innovative or new approaches were adopted by them to be successful. The women entrepreneurs shared their experiences and emphasized on building the businesses on the 3Rs- resilience, response, and reliability.

Read more [here](#).



II. Select Outreach Activities



1. Dialogue on leveraging PLI scheme to push large scale manufacturing in India

New Delhi, India, 17 June 2021. Trade Promotion Council of India organized a webinar on "Leveraging PLI scheme to push large scale manufacturing in India" in reference to the Government of India's announcement of an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore for the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for 13 identified sectors in their 2021-2022 budget speech. The scheme that aims to boost domestic manufacturing under the government's Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, was introduced in March last year and is expected to result in a minimum production worth more than \$500 billion in five years, according to Indian Commerce Ministry. The scheme provides incentives to companies for enhancing their domestic manufacturing apart from focusing on reducing import bills and improving the cost competitiveness of local goods. Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Economics Officer, ESCAP sub regional office for South and South-West Asia was one of the panelists to the discussion. Dr. Ratna in his remarks shared his perspectives on how the PLI scheme can help Indian industry to integrate with the global standards. He also highlighted the significance of adopting to the international standards in getting into international markets as well as regional or global supply



chains. He also shared the experiences of ASEAN and SAARC in harmonizing standards and promoting the intra-regional and global trade and investment flows.

Read more [here](#)



III. Knowledge products issued by UNESCAP-SSWA in the year 2021 and 2020

- [Flagship – Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2021: Towards post COVID-19 resilient economies](#) (March 2021)
- [Flagship – Beyond the Pandemic: Building Back Better from crises in Asia and the Pacific](#) (March 2021)
- [SSWA Development Paper 21-01- Evolving Indian Strategy on SDGs](#) (March 2021)
- [Policy Brief – Weaving a Stronger Fabric: Managing Cascading Risks for the Climate Resilience](#) (January 2021)
- [Report – Fourth South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals](#) (January 2021)
- [UNESCAP SSWA Policy Briefs 7 – Marine Plastic Pollution in South Asia](#) (November 2020)
- [Report on Virtual High-Level Forum on Empowering Women to Join Global Value Chains Through E-Commerce: Experiences in South Asia in COVID-19 Context](#) (October 2020)
- [Policy Brief – Towards Sustainable Graduation of South Asian LDC in the Aftermath of COVID-19: Challenges, Prospects and Policy Lessons](#) (October 2020)
- [Policy Brief – Scenario-Based Risk Analytics for Managing Cascading Disasters](#) (November 2020)
- [SSWA Development Paper 2003 – Asia's Paths to Industrialization and Prosperity](#) (October 2020)
- [Policy Study Series – Pathways to Manage Cascading Risks and Protect People in South Asia: Key Takeaways for Stakeholders](#) (September 2020)
- [Report of the Virtual Policy Dialogue on South Asian Cooperation for Accelerating Recovery from COVID-19 and Building Back Better](#) (September 2020)
- [Policy Study Series – Investing in Innovative Solutions to manage Cascading Disaster Risks in South Asia: Key Takeaways for Stakeholders](#) (August 2020)
- [Report of High-Level Policy Dialogue on COVID-19 and South Asia: Socio-Economic Impacts, National Strategies and Subregional Cooperation for Building Back Better](#) (August 2020)
- [Policy Study Series – Asia-Pacific Disaster Resilience Network: Protecting the Most Vulnerable to Cascading Risks from Climate Extremes and the COVID-19 in South Asia](#) (June 2020)
- [Policy Brief: COVID-19 and South Asia: National Strategies and Subregional Cooperation for Accelerating Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Recovery](#) (June 2020)
- [SSWA Development Paper 2002 – Marine Plastic Pollution in South Asia](#) (May 2020)
- [UNESCAP SSWA Policy Briefs 6- Strengthening Freight Transport Corridors of South Asia in the Aftermath of COVID-19](#) (May 2020)
- [Report on the Third South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals](#) (April 2020)
- [Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Food Security in South Asia](#), London, New York and New Delhi: Routledge for the United Nations (March 2020)
- [SSWA Development Paper 2001 – Interpreting SDGs For South Asia: In Search of A Regional Framework – The Experience Of Bhutan](#) (January 2020)



IV. Highlights of the 77th Commission Session - Country Statements



Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

In his video message, H.E. Mr. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and exposed structural weaknesses in our global system and therefore the interrelated challenges relating to social protection, stimulation of sustainable recovery, strengthening of connectivity and supply chains and focus on climate change must be addressed. To build back better, greener, and more equal, robust, and connected, including by ensuring universal and equitable access to vaccines as a global public good is essential; without which the SDGs cannot be met. He stressed that regional connectivity and integration is essential for recovery and highlighted the support that Afghanistan got from various donors and countries which helped control the effect of pandemic. Highlighting the efforts of Afghanistan through investing on people, expanding social protection systems, climate change adaptation and resilient programmes, digitalization, promotion of education, he stated that government is committed to resolving armed conflicts and working for a peace process to a political settlement. He expressed the willingness of government towards stakeholder governance and stakeholder economic development that would result in integration of systems of state-building, market building, peace-building, and regional connectivity and prosperity.

In the country statement, Afghanistan highlighted that due to COVID-19 pandemic, the education sector suffered due to lack of access to digital technology and that the prices of basic necessities saw a rise depriving its citizens. A whole-of-society and whole-of-planet approach was prescribed to address the current challenge; with greater emphasis on health care, facilitating trade and more effective use of technology and digitalization. It was stated that the government is working hard to establish a system of e-governance and making efforts to administer vaccines to all the citizens.



Bangladesh

In a video message, Her Excellency Ms. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, noted the devastating effect of COVID-19 and informed that Bangladesh had also announced a stimulus package of USD 14.6 billion, which is around 4.4% of GDP, for widening social protection, retaining jobs and bolstering the economy. She stated that the latest Five Year Plan has included strategies for recovery from COVID-19 as well as smooth and sustainable graduation from LDC. She opined that regional cooperation is the most viable option for shared prosperity and highlighted that Bangladesh is participating in many connectivity related work including those initiated by UNESCAP. She recommended that in order to build back better, development approach should be more inclusive, resilient and environment friendly, and that a seamless connectivity covering trade, transport, energy and ICT, and science and technology need to be established.

In the country statement Bangladesh noted that the present pandemic cannot be controlled without a more resilient regional public health system and thus establishing and strengthening regional integrated disease surveillance networks, establishing coordinated mechanisms to slow the spread of viruses across borders, harmonizing health protocols and standards among countries would be essential. He also suggested for exploring pooled procurement mechanisms for vaccines can make a lot of difference in pandemic management.

Bangladesh informed that it is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of its independence as well as the birth anniversary of the father of the nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman this year. Bangladesh was one of the fastest growing economy in the Asia-Pacific region, but COVID-19 put a negative impact on employment, income, business, investment, international trade and on almost all other aspects of life in their country. To combat the adversities of COVID-19, the Government of Bangladesh has dispersed additional allowances to persons under social safety net and disability identification survey. Further, Bangladesh has revoked the loan repay-ability under rural social service programme and provided initial assistance with the same.



Bhutan

His Excellency Dr. Lotay Tshering, MBBS, MD, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan in his video message acknowledged the support given to Bhutan by UNESCAP. He pointed out various challenges faced by Bhutan, including the lack of capacity to build simple items for protection from COVID and their shortages whenever the global need is acute. He informed that almost 95% of the eligible population has been vaccinated and since Government has been investing in the social sector, it does not require to bother about expenses in health and education. He highlighted that the concept of “development with values” could be an integral component of the “new normal” as falling back on basic human values is equally important as advancement in technology.

Bhutan stated in another session that its GDP is expected to see a negative growth of -6.1%. Bhutan has undertaken several measures to control the pandemic which includes social and welfare protection plans, health infrastructure and first dose of vaccination to entire eligible population which has been done with support of Government of India. Bhutan highlighted that it is working towards smooth and sustainable graduation, despite the fact that it has not met the threshold for the critical economic vulnerability index. Its current twelfth five-year plan will address last mile challenges in all the sectors and ensure that Bhutan's graduation is sustainable and irreversible. However, he noted that countries need to look how the LDCs, LLDCs and Pacific Island Countries can be better prepared to absorb such shocks in future. Bhutan also stressed the need to review smooth transition strategy to ensure that countries graduating from LDC category do not fall back.



India

Recalling the crisis created by the COVID-10, India highlighted the vulnerability it brought to global trade and supply chains and suggested that an inclusive and equitable development through regional cooperation can be useful to build back better. India stated that the Government has announced a series of reforms including a stimulus package of more than 13% of GDP to strengthen the investment climate and to boost its manufacturing activities. India has supplied critical medicines to over 150 countries and providing vaccines to 80 countries and 200,000 doses to UN peacekeepers under its vaccine friendship initiative. To ensure expedition and equitable distribution of vaccines globally, India has called for suspension of IPRs related to COVID-19 vaccines for a period. Further, India has taken a slew of trade facilitation measures that have been instrumental in reducing time and cost of various procedures and compliances. India has encouraged global initiatives including the International Solar Alliance and set up an ambitious renewable energy target of 450 GW by 2030 for SDG on Climate Change and Action.

During the pandemic, a series of steps were taken by the Indian government to protect the disadvantaged sections and to provide support to them. Indian Sign Language Research and Training Centre developed accessible format of important government instructions and guidelines relating to COVID-19 as well as accessible videos which are available on its website and YouTube. A dedicated helpline “Kiran” was also started to provide first line of counselling in response to the increasing mental health issues among people due to the pandemic. India has taken two big steps- Bangladesh Bhutan India motor vehicle agreement and India Myanmar Thailand Tri Lateral highways to improve the regional transport connectivity within neighboring countries.

India emphasized on importance of scaling up investments in science, technology and innovation to mitigate the impact of natural disasters and there is a need to build hazard and risk scenarios for such events. It has set up the BIMSTEC Center for Weather and Climate which chairs the regional integrated multi hazard early warning systems council and hosts the SAARC disaster management center. Indian government has also instituted an annual national award in the name of their illustrious freedom fighter” Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose” and is focusing on fulfilling the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction commitments

The South Asian subregion from the very beginning has taken several steps to join forces in the fight against COVID-19. The SAARC leaders met on 15th March 2020 to chalk out a strategy to fight the pandemic and set up COVID-19 Emergency Fund in which India has also contributed. India also shared its resources, medicines, PPE, testing equipment and its national experience and best practices through webinars and online courses and IT portals. Under the auspices of BIMSTEC met in June 2020 member states resolved to work together to combat the impact of the pandemic. India appreciated ESCAP's SRO New Delhi for effective collaboration with SAARC and BIMSTEC for providing a platform for exchanging best practices and development experiences. India strongly believes that collective action and strong collaboration principles based on equity and inclusivity will catapult the Asia- Pacific region on the trajectory of rapid and sustainable economic growth and well-being.



Islamic Republic of Iran

The Islamic Republic of Iran highlighted that unified action from all government and nations, in the region and beyond, is needed to overcome the pandemic. Iran stated that for achieving the SDGs and ensure an inclusive and connectivity well established principles of cooperation and multilateralism in international relations is a pre-requisite. Iran shared the challenges it faced in implementing sustainable plans and programmes, development programmes, financing national health programmes including transfers for vaccine purchases and production and other medical equipment. Iran reiterated its commitment to multilateral,

regional and international cooperation aimed at enhancing capacities and building resilience of country and people against disaster and crisis including support to the programmes, activities, and a financial contribution of US \$ 5 million to the Asia and the Pacific Centre for Development of Disaster Information Management (APDIM) as a regional institution of ESCAP. Iran stated that it is actively engaged with ESCAP and its member States covering a range of areas including paperless trade framework, road safety, dry port and triple Asian highways (road, rail and information).



Republic of Maldives

The economy of the Maldives, largely dependent on tourism, came to a grinding halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic leading to a decline of GDP by 29.3%. Many development projects and progress in achieving many SDGs were severely disrupted as attention was diverted to tackling health and social crisis due to the pandemic. The pandemic also brought further marginalization of vulnerable sections of society, including the migrant workers. Government took several steps to help relocate the migrant workers to better housing including free repatriation of those who wanted. Concessional loan schemes to assist businesses and moratoriums on student and housing loan repayment were also introduced.

With school closures, a significant portion of children were left without access to education due to a lack of access to functioning internet and television, which will have long term implications for these children. Due to the heavy dependence on the tourism sector, Maldives' economy showed highly vulnerability to external shocks. Diversification of the economy is crucial to be more resilient and to build back better. Maldives has opened up the tourism and tourist arrivals are increasing, yet the economy will take long to revive. Maldives is among the top countries in the administration of vaccines. Maldives recognised that regional cooperation is an essential element for building back better. Gaps in health, education, and other social sectors highlighted by the pandemic must be plugged and that lower carbon emissions and structural transformation must be promoted to build a sustainable and resilient economy.



Nepal

In country statement, Nepal pointed out how the disruption of the public health, education, social security system were impacted due to COVID-19 globally, which further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of the poor and the marginalized societies. Due to the multi-dimensional impact of the pandemic, sectors like trade, tourism and transport have been hit the hardest in Nepal while sectors like education, construction, agriculture, manufacturing supply chain, and service desk were severely disrupted. This led to a negative growth in GDP by two percentage points, fall in revenue collection and reduction in capital expenditure. The pandemic has reversed the gains made by Nepal in social development and progress on SDGs and thus has posed challenge to the goal of 'Prosperous Nepal, happy Nepali'. To control the impact of pandemic the Government had to announce nationwide lockdown from March 2020 and impose a ban on domestic and international flights as well as, closure of land border crossing etc. The government joined hands with social organizations to increase public awareness on health protocols, safety, and sanitization. Measures were taken to create infrastructure, financial resources and medical equipment's to strengthen the health system at all levels. Spending on health was increased by government to provide additional insurance coverage, medical supplies and setting up temporary hospitals and quarantine centres. The government facilitated creation of more employment opportunities within the country, particularly, in the agriculture sector and extra funding was provided for the repatriation of Nepali migrant workers abroad facing serious health risks, job loss, and other legal complications. The government also introduced economic relief packages to revive industrial and commercial sectors and widened the scope of social security.



Islamic Republic of Pakistan

His Excellency Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in his video message stated that the COVID-19 has unleashed an unprecedented global crisis, leading to increased vulnerability and inequality and forcing countries to lag behind in achieving SDGs. He opined that reaching pre-COVID income levels may now take years as well as uneven recovery among the countries and region. International solidarity is needed to ensure no one is left behind and a right mix of national actions, regional and multilateral collaborations need to be taken. He prescribed four key areas to focus: (i) adopt pro poor inclusive policies (ii) anchor peace and development in human rights (iii) model economies on resilient and sustainable grounds

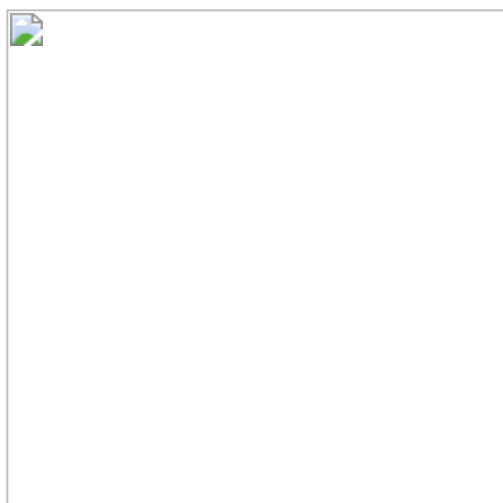
for green growth(iv) mobilise financing for development and address debt issues for developing countries. He informed that Pakistan has shifted its focus from geo-politics to geo-economics and for any win-win outcome multilateralism cooperation and partnerships are important.



Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, Prime Minister of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, in his video message shared how the country successfully controlled the spread of COVID-19, with a low death rate and high recovery rate through early detection, contact tracing, quarantine and patient treatment. Sri Lanka provided free access to health to the people through public healthcare system. The government repatriated nearly 100,000 Sri Lankans and started the vaccination program in February 2021. The government took immediate measures to promote resilience, building an inclusive recovery from the pandemic through financial support for households and businesses. The Central Bank reduced policy rates and implemented several concessionary refinancing programs.

The Sri Lankan government is committed to achieve its SDG target and formed Inter-ministerial steering for this purpose. Focusing on youth, the decade "2021 to 2030" has been declared as the decade of skill development in the country. Sri Lanka expressed its interest in strengthening regional ties and the need to accelerate South-South cooperation. It believes that UNESCAP should commit itself to bring relevant and responsive and takes measures relating to, assisting small countries with pandemic recovery and vaccination program, encouraging the growth of foreign employment opportunities, promoting eco-tourism and health tourism, and encouraging investments into finding markets for emerging nation. Sri Lanka emphasized regional cooperation to build back better from the crisis.



V. SDGs IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

a. SGDs: priorities, actions and means of implementation

New World Bank grant to improve primary, secondary education in Afghanistan 1 April 2021 The World Bank approved the allocation of an additional \$25 million in financing from the Global Partnership for Education to Afghanistan to increase equitable access to primary and secondary education, particularly for girls Read more [here](#)

Pakistan's Prime Minister lauds Federal Board of Revenue for achieving historic growth 1 April 2021

Pakistan's service trade deficit shrinks 41.8% in 8 months 6 April 2021 The services trade deficit during July-February (2020-21) was recorded at \$1338.58 million. Read more [here](#)

Spending on public servants remuneration to witness up stick in Bangladesh 7 April 2021 The allocation of money for salaries and allowances in public sector will rise from next fiscal year after 4 years. Read more [here](#)

Imran Khan said during July 2020 to March 2021 revenue collections reached 3380 billion rupees which is 10% higher than the same period last year. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan's Exports cross US\$ 2.3 billion mark in March 1 April 2021 This is also the first time since 2011 that exports have crossed the US\$ 2 billion mark for six consecutive months. Read more [here](#)

March marks all-time high for 4th straight month for Turkish exports 1 April 2021 Turkish exports have hit an all-time monthly high for the fourth consecutive month in March with sales soared by 42.2% year-on-year in the month to \$18.98 billion. Read more [here](#)

Turkey committed to economic reforms 2 April 2021 President Erdogan outlined a series of measures that he said would boost the country's economy, as he pledged to bring inflation back down to single digits. Read more [here](#)

Nepal's Prime Minister sets in motion construction of 165 roads across country 3 April 2021 The Prime Minister of Nepal virtually kick-started the construction of roads, one in each of the 165 electoral constituencies. Read more [here](#)

Indian government amends insolvency law 5 April 2021 The government has amended the insolvency law to provide a pre-packaged resolution process for micro, small and medium enterprises. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government releases Rs 1,686.644 million for petroleum sector projects in nine months 5 April 2021 An amount of Rs1686.644 million had been released during the first nine months of the current fiscal year to execute the petroleum sector projects under the Public Sector Development Programme. Read more [here](#)

Nobakht vows for opening Zahedan-Khash railway in next month in Iran 5 April 2021 Vice President and Head of the Budget and Planning Organisation Mohammad Baqer Nobakht said, about 46 projects are under construction with spending equal to 570 billion tomans. Read more [here](#)

Turkey's annual inflation surges above 16% in March 5 April 2021 The figure was up from 15.61% in February and marked the highest level since mid-2019. Read more [here](#)

Afghanistan's Economic Growth Predicted at 1% in 2021 6 April 2021 Growth is expected to reach 1% in 2021 and top around 3% in 2022, according to the World Bank. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh export earnings see 12.6% growth in March 6 April 2021 Bangladesh had earned \$2.73 billion from exports in March last year. Read more [here](#)

Reserve Bank of India to keep inflation under close watch 6 April 2021 It will present its first bi-monthly policy, which will set the direction for the monetary policy for the new financial year, on April 7. Read more [here](#)

Turkey's central bank holds key policy rate steady at 19% 15 April 2021 They are decisively maintaining a tight monetary policy for an extended period to address inflation. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh Prime Minister announces to provides cash support to families 18 April 2021 Sheikh Hasina stated that government will provide financial assistance to 36 lakh low income families and farmers hit by covid and natural disasters. Read more [here](#)

10-year strategic plan for responsive public administration formulated in Nepal 18 April 2021 A ten year strategic Plan was formulated with a vision of strong federalism, capable, efficient and people-responsive public administration. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan committed to early start of North-South gas pipeline project 7 April 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to expeditiously conclude the requisite legal process for the North-South Gas Pipeline project. Read more [here](#)

Prime Minister Hasina for harnessing potential of youth in Bangladesh 8 April 2021 She put emphasis on establishing cooperation in harnessing power of youth and said it could be done through skill development. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan pursuing multiple program's to harness potential of youth: Prime Minister 8 April 2021 Imran Khan said harnessing technology, promoting innovation, skills and training was an urgent imperative. Read more [here](#)

European recovery powers Turkish exports in May 2 June 2021 Turkey's foreign sales powered ahead as exporters achieved their second-best May ever. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh's new budget unveiled with focus on protecting lives and livelihood 3 June 2021 A bold target has been setup to achieve 7.2 percent Gross Domestic Product growth. Read more [here](#)

5 key things to look for in Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy 3 June 2021 Monetary Policy Committee expected to hold rates and continue with an accommodative stance to encourage growth. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan is proud to take lead in conservation of ecological systems: Prime Minister 3 June 2021 Pakistan is committed to spearheading innovative nature preservation and biodiversity initiatives and the green stimulus package. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh's Supplementary Budget passed 7 June 2021 The supplementary budget was passed to meet the increased expenditures under 19 different ministries and divisions. Read more [here](#)

World Bank approves \$500 million program for India 7 June 2021 The loan, to help boost India's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise sector, has a maturity of 18.5 years including a 5.5-year grace period. Read more [here](#)

Small and Medium Enterprise entrepreneurs in Bangladesh eye opportunity to boost local industries 7 June 2021 They are encouraged by the tax breaks and support in the proposed budget for 2021-22. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lankan President invites the world to join Sri Lanka's transformative journey 8 June 2021 Global companies are invited to join this journey by investing in the country. Read more [here](#)

Cabinet Committee of Bangladesh approves proposal on broadband connectivity in hill districts 9 June 2021 A proposal on establishing a permanent network in remote areas, under the project "Broadband Connectivity of Telecommunication in Disadvantaged Areas was approved. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government making efforts to reduce fiscal deficit in power sector: Hammad 9 June 2021 He said all efforts are being made to reduce the fiscal deficit in the power sector from 450 billion rupees to 200 billion rupees. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2021 launched 9 June 2021 The foreign minister said the government was striving to ensure an effective

Afghanistan's Culture Ministry plans to boost tourism in the country 9 April 2021 It has ordered the Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management to help boost the tourism sector in Afghanistan. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan's Prime Minister announces expansion of Ehsas food charity program 11 April 2021 He

Bangladesh government's focus on agriculture to tap its full potential: Hasina 19 April 2021 She mentioned great importance is being given to the agriculture industry as agro-based economy is the way forward. Read more [here](#)

Turkey holds 75 gigawatts of offshore wind energy potential 19 April 2021 The Chairman of Offshore Wind Energy Association (DURED) said DURED was established to bring the energy and maritime sector together and drive investments in offshore wind energy plants. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh's railway projects falling behind 20 April 2021 Deadlines of 24 out of 39 projects to pass in June. Read more [here](#)

Nepal's central bank asks Nepalis to exchange old Qatari banknotes by May 10 20 April 2021 The fourth series of Qatari bills won't remain legal tender after July 1. Read more [here](#)

Foreign direct investment in Pakistan falls by 35 percent in nine months 20 April 2021 This reflects no improvement in the situation for Pakistan's investors. Read more [here](#)

Turkish exporters more than double their sales to European Union in April 6 May 2021 Turkey saw its sales to EU countries more than double in April as it continues to rebound from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Sales surged by 109% in April alone coming to \$18.8 billion. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government focuses on housing sector to achieve higher growth: Prime Minister 6 May 2021 The Prime Minister said the government has given incentives to the construction industry and seen a record sale of cement. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan's federal government to boost development expenditure 8 May 2021 Finance Minister said Pakistan planned to boost spending on large infrastructure projects by as much as 40 percent to create jobs and foster productivity. Read more [here](#)

Will build planned cities in all districts of Bangladesh: Sheikh Hasina 9 May 2021 Bangladesh Prime Minister said this while addressing a function marking the handover of plot documents to 1,440 original residents and affected people of Purbachal New Town Project.. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lankan government to seek concessionary donor funds for tourism sector 10 May 2021 The government is working on securing concessionary multilateral funding for the tourism sector which is most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Read more [here](#)

Self-sufficiency in rice production may take 3-5 years: Agricultural Minister of Bangladesh 11 May 2021 Bangladesh Rice Research Institute has invented a new type of rice which is more high-yielding than the existing kinds. Read more [here](#)

Public-private partnership is need of the hour for Pakistan's progress: Prime Minister 11 May 2021 Imran Khan says the Board of Investment is being fully activated to provide facilities to the foreign and local investors. Read more [here](#)

Renewables account for over 50% of Turkey's installed power capacity 12 May 2021 Turkey's installed power capacity has reached almost 100,000 megawatts, more than half of which comes from renewable resources. Read more [here](#)

India's central bank tells lenders to re-consider ties with crypto exchanges 13 May 2021 India's central bank is informally urging lenders to cut ties with cryptocurrency exchanges and traders as the highly speculative market booms, despite a Supreme Court ruling that bank can work with the industry, three sources told Reuters. Read more [here](#)

Indian inflation eases, but COVID-19 curbs risk stoking prices 13 May 2021 Indian inflation eased to a three-month low in April as food costs rose more

said hte aim of the scheme is to facilitate the daily wage earners and poor people and ensure they don't sleep on empty stomachs. Read more [here](#)

Government aimed towards making Pakistan leading Information Technology exporter in the region: Prime Minister 13 April 2021 The PM said main purpose of establishing special technology zones is to facilitate companies associated with information technology industry. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan proposes establishment of sustainable infrastructure investment facility under United Nations 14 April 2021 Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations made this proposal under United Nations to act as a facilitator in promoting sustainable infrastructure investment. Read more [here](#)

Fiscal stimulus improves Pakistan's economy 14 April 2021 The Pakistan government's fiscal stimulus has succeeded in improving social outlook, strengthening the prospects of the country's economic recovery. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh government bans fishing in the Bay of Bengal 15 April 2021 The government has imposed a 65-day ban on fishing off the Bay of Bengal to try and preserve the fish stock and boost their breeding. Read more [here](#)

Imran Khan launches Rehmatul-Lil Alameen scholarship program in Pakistan 15 April 2021 It was launched to help students of underprivileged segments of society get access to undergraduate education. Read more [here](#)

Ensure \$100 billion annual fund: Sheikh Hasina 22 April 2021 Bangladesh Prime Minister has called for ensuring the annual target of \$100 billion which should be balanced between adaptation and mitigation with special attention to the vulnerable communities. Read more [here](#)

Reforms in tax system Pakistan governments top priority: Imran Khan 22 April 2021 He has directed the Economic Advisory Council to present a road-map envisaging short, medium and long-term measures for economic stability and sustainable growth. Read more [here](#)

Kisan Card to transform agriculture sector in Pakistan 26 April 2021 The farmers, through this card, will get subsidized fertilizers and seeds besides low-interest loans and compensation for damaged crops amidst natural calamity. Read more [here](#)

Future of Railways in Pakistan linked with ML-1 project 29 April 2021 The project will create numerous employment opportunities in the country. Read more [here](#)

Inflation in Pakistan is in double digits again after 12 months 2 May 2021 April saw a double-digit increase in prices of consumer items as inflation edged up to 11.1 per cent from 9.1per cent in March. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan president for establishing telemedicine clinics to improve healthcare 3 May 2021 Dr Arif Alvi emphasized the need for establishing primary healthcare telemedicine clinics to provide free advice to the people. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lanka's Fiscal deficit swells to record high of 11.1% in 2020 3 May 2021 The previous highest budget deficit in recent history was 10.8% in 2001 whilst in 2009, which saw the end of the 30-year conflict, the figure was 9.9%. Read more [here](#)

Development of agricultural sector Pakistan government's top priority: Prime Minister 4 May 2021 Imran Khan directed to formulate a roadmap to ensure provision of more facilities and conducive environment to the farmers. Read more [here](#)

\$61 million worth of goods exported from Iran's Arvand free zone 6 May 2021 Building material, clinker, mineral products, asphalt, industrial oils, food,

slowly, but lockdowns to contain the country's raging coronavirus epidemic risk. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh government is modernizing postal services: Prime Minister 27 May 2021 Sheikh Hasina said this is being done so they can even transport perishable goods to the doorsteps of the people amid growing online business. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan committed to beat climate change, reverse its effects: Prime Minister Imran 27 May 2021 Imran Khan said Pakistan will be hosting the "World Environment Day" on June 5 which shows the government's dedication to addressing the challenges of climate change. Read more [here](#)

Fortify action oriented approach to attain green growth in Bangladesh: Prime Minister 30 May 2021 Sheikh Hasina put forward three suggestions before the Partnering for Green Growth and Global Goals 2030. Read more [here](#)

Rapid economic growth will help overcome inflation, unemployment in Pakistan: Prime Minister 30 May 2021 Imran Khan said that country's economy has been put on right track with economic indicators showing positive trends. Read more [here](#)

Turkey prepares infrastructure for civil Unmanned Aerial Vehicle cargo transport 30 May 2021 In a test flight, light medicine will be carried by a drone from one hospital to another. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh okays draft 'Finance Company Act' to mandate central bank license 31 May 2021 The government is set to pass a new law mandating licenses from the Bangladesh Bank to run financing businesses. Read more [here](#)

India's fiscal deficit settles at 9.2% of GDP versus target of 9.5% 31 May 2021 This was on the back of better-than-expected revenue receipts with expenditure staying broadly at the level targeted in the revised estimates of the Budget. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh government to prioritize mega projects in upcoming budget 1 June 2021 The mega projects along with all development programs suffered hugely in the outgoing fiscal year due to the ongoing pandemic and the government has set a goal to complete a maximum of those before December 2023. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government focusing on less developed areas of country: Prime Minister 1 June 2021 Imran Khan says the government is pursuing a policy of inclusive development of less developed areas to bring them at par with other parts of the country. Read more [here](#)

Utility Store Corporation of Pakistan to ensure availability of essential items at affordable prices: Tarin 1 June 2021 The Ministry of National Food Security and Research also reaffirmed its resolve to build reserves of essential food items in partnership with provinces. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lankan government to modernize 100 cities as per sustainable development model 9 June 2021 The Cabinet of Ministers approved a resolution tabled by the Prime Minister as the Minister of Urban Development and Housing for the implementation of a program called 'Hundred Cities'. Read more [here](#)

Turkey's Black Sea natural gas to open for future trading 9 June 2021 The natural gas deposits discovered in the Black Sea by Turkey will be available for trading in the future gas market, set to be launched within a few months. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh government is engaged in economic solvency of grassroots people: Prime Minister 10 June 2021 Sheikh Hasina said her government has been working to uplift the grassroots people in the relentless effort to make Bangladesh as a poverty-free country. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan beats projections, targets higher

and dairy were among exported goods. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government committed to empower underprivileged women: Tarin 6 May 2021 Pakistan's Finance Minister says the government is firmly committed to pro-poor agenda and supports economic empowerment of the under-privileged women. Read more [here](#)

World Bank recognizes Pakistan's Ehsaas Emergency Cash program among world's largest in terms of coverage 15 May 2021 The World Bank report stated that Pakistan was also among the top 5 lower-middle-income countries by level of social protection spending. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh government sets ambitious development target 18 May 2021 A total of 596 unapproved new projects have been incorporated in the new Annual Development Program without any allocation. Read more [here](#)

Stress on Bangladesh tax reforms to boost investment in cement sector 19 May 2021 The government should reform the tax structure to boost investment in the cement sector as local manufacturers are burdened with taxes. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government aims to construct 10 dams across the country by 2028 19 May 2021 Imran Khan said that the government is initiating the Decade of Dams project and the Mohamand Dam will solve the water and electricity woes of the people in the region. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan Prime Minister performs groundbreaking of 103 km-long road 20 May 2021 Imran Khan said the project will be a great facility to the scattered population of Baluchistan. Read more [here](#)

Take up fish farming, Bangladesh Prime Minister tells youth 22 May 2021 Sheikh Hasina urged the youth to take up fish farming as their livelihood to exploit huge scope of employment in this sector. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government to expand social protection programs: Hammad Azhar 22 May 2021 The Minister for Energy said this is the outcome of prudent economic policies despite the negative impact of Covid-19. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan Prime Minister announces special incentives for youth to end unemployment 25 May 2021 Prime Minister Imran Khan announced allocation of Rs 100 billion for startup loans and 170,000 Skilled Education Scholarships to overcome the challenge of unemployment. Read more [here](#)

87.19 percent of Nepal population have access to internet: Nepal Telecommunication Authority 26 May 2021. The report was based on the population projection (2011-2030) and assumes the current total population of Nepal to be 29.87 million. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan Prime Minister announces universal health coverage through Insaf Health Card 26 May Imran Khan said all families of Dera Ghazi Khan and Sahiwal Divisions will be able to get medical treatment up to 720,000 rupees through the Insaf Health Card. Read more [here](#)

European recovery powers Turkish exports in May 2 June 2021 Turkey's foreign sales powered ahead as exporters achieved their second-best May ever. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh's new budget unveiled with focus on protecting lives and livelihood 3 June 2021 A bold target has been setup to achieve 7.2 percent Gross Domestic Product growth. Read more [here](#)

5 key things to look for in Reserve Bank of India's monetary policy 3 June 2021 Monetary Policy Committee expected to hold rates and continue with an accommodative stance to encourage growth. Read

growth 10 June 2021 . Pakistan will end this fiscal year with a surprise growth of 3.9 percent ,beating several earlier projections in the range of 1-2 percent. Read more [here](#)

Free phone consultation service for livestock farmers and pet owners in Nepal 10 June 2021 Nepal Veterinary Association has started a free round-the-clock phone consultation service for poultry and animals owners across the country amidst the pandemic. Read more [here](#)

World Bank revises Turkey growth forecast upwards 10 June 2021 The World Bank has raised its growth projection for the Turkish economy by 0.5 percent to 5 percent for 2021. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan releases Inclusive growth-oriented budget: Tarin 12 June 2021 The main focus of the federal budget for 2021-22 was to uplift the poor so that they would not have to wait for trickle-down effect of economic progress. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan doing more to fight climate change:Prime Minister 12 June 2021 The government had allocated a record Rs14500 million budget in the fiscal year 2021-22 in this regard. Read more [here](#)

World Bank approves \$40 million for Sri Lanka to expand water supply 12 June 2021 \$40 million additional finance was approved for Sri Lanka to expand water supply, sanitation and hygiene services in 7 districts through the Water Supply and Sanitation Improvement Project. Read more [here](#)

World Bank approves \$60 million to strengthen Nepal's higher education 13 June 2021 The World Bank Directors approved \$60 million to improve the quality of Nepal's higher education, scale up online learning and expand access to academic institutions for underprivileged and vulnerable students.. Read more [here](#)

Sustainable supply of digital transactions to be ensured by transfer charges in Pakistan 21 June 2021 Central bank says the objective of this decision is to ensure sustainable supply of digital services without discouraging digital transactions by the public. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lanka's Labor Chief issues directive on pay relief 21 June 2021 A fresh directive on relief to pay the minimum monthly salary for employees of private institutions impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic was issued. Read more [here](#)

President Rouhani inaugurates national plans in free zones in Iran 21 June 2021 The inauguration ceremony of national plans in free economic zones and free trade zone worth 70,065 billion toman started. Read more [here](#)

Turkey launches new green power certification market 21 June 2021 Turkey initiated a new certification system that looks to support and increase the country's clean energy power. Read more [here](#)

Planned measures helped Bangladesh be in top 3 Sustainable Development Goal performers: Prime Minister 22 June 2021 Bangladesh Prime Minister, Ms. Sheikh Hasina said her government has included the planned measures for SDGs in the five year plan keeping the country's development in mind. Read more [here](#)

Ease of doing business reform particularly helps Medium and Small Enterprises: Modi 22 June 2021. The Indian Prime Minister said that the ease of doing business reform, which included automatic renewal of business related licenses and implementation of computerized random inspection system is of particular help to micro and small enterprises. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lanka attracts \$1 billion in tourism investment proposals 22 June 2021 There had been 61 projects proposed in the tourism sector with an envisaged investment of \$ 914 million said Tourism Minister.

more [here](#)

Pakistan is proud to take lead in conservation of ecological systems: Prime Minister 3 June 2021 Pakistan is committed to spearheading innovative nature preservation and biodiversity initiatives and the green stimulus package. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh's Supplementary Budget passed 7 June 2021 The supplementary budget was passed to meet the increased expenditures under 19 different ministries and divisions. Read more [here](#)

World Bank approves \$500 million program for India 7 June 2021 The loan, to help boost India's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise sector, has a maturity of 18.5 years including a 5.5-year grace period. Read more [here](#)

Small and Medium Enterprise entrepreneurs in Bangladesh eye opportunity to boost local industries 7 June 2021 They are encouraged by the tax breaks and support in the proposed budget for 2021-22. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lankan President invites the world to join Sri Lanka's transformative journey 8 June 2021 Global companies are invited to join this journey by investing in the country. Read more [here](#)

Cabinet Committee of Bangladesh approves proposal on broadband connectivity in hill districts 9 June 2021 A proposal on establishing a permanent network in remote areas, under the project "Broadband Connectivity of Telecommunication in Disadvantaged Areas was approved. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government making efforts to reduce fiscal deficit in power sector: Hammad 9 June 2021 He said all efforts are being made to reduce the fiscal deficit in the power sector from 450 billion rupees to 200 billion rupees. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2021 launched 9 June 2021 The foreign minister said the government was striving to ensure an effective response to humanitarian situations. Read more [here](#)

Green Bonds testament to Pakistan's economic stability: Amin 13 June 2021 The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change said the successful launch of first-ever Green Bonds is testament to Pakistan's economic stability and green credibility at the global level. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh Bank tightens rules to restore discipline in import financing 14 June 2021 The central bank drew up a detailed guideline on post-import financing to end the misuse of loans. Read more [here](#)

Wholesale Price Index inflation hits all-time high in India 14 June 2021 This is the fifth straight month of uptick seen in the wholesale price index. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan President urges varsities to equip youth for 4th industrial revolution 14 June 2021 Dr. Arif Alvi called for promoting research-oriented and innovation-based quality education in universities to overcome the scientific and technological challenges faced by the country. Read more [here](#)

Alternative proposal to recycle 750ml plastic bottles in Sri Lanka : Environment Minister 14 June 2021. A proposal was made to tender a deposit, when purchasing plastic bottles, for recycling. Read more [here](#)

Indian government plans Rs 50,000 crore program to boost health infrastructure 16 June 2021 Program will reportedly allow companies to access funds for ramping up hospital capacity. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh Prime Minister to gift 53,340 more houses to homeless families 17 June 2021 This will be done as part of Prime Minister Sheikh

Read more [here](#)

Turkey after greater share of foreign investments 22 June 2021 Turkey's strategy on foreign direct investment will serve as a road map to securing value-added funding said their President. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lankan government's cabinet approves move for new Fertilizer Act 23 June 2021 The Cabinet of Ministers approved a proposal to introduce a new Fertilizer Act replacing the existing legislation enacted in 1988 after indentifying various issues in it relating to fertilizer production, importation packaging and distribution.. Read more [here](#)

Focus on toyconomy: Indian Prime Minister 24 June 2021 Modi stressed to focus on "toyconomy" advising country's gaming and toy industry to play a big role in this sector. Read more [here](#)

Prime Minister reaffirms commitment to achieve goal of polio-free Pakistan 24 June 2021 Imran Khan reaffirmed that polio eradication remains a key national priority for the government. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lankan government preparing to face Generalized Scheme of Preferences loss eventuality 24 June 2021 While diplomatic efforts are underway, Government is preparing risk assessment for the loss of European Union withdrawing GSP+ tariff concessions from Sri Lanka. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan's Ministry of Economic Affairs signs financing agreement with the World Bank 26 June 2021 A financing agreement of "Punjab Rural Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation Project" worth 442.4 million dollars was signed, aimed at providing equitable and sustainable access to clean drinking water. Read more [here](#)

Imran Khan urges Pakistan's youth to gear up for biggest tree planting campaign 27 June 2021 The program was launched for the revival of forest and wildlife resources in Pakistan. Read more [here](#)

Rs 50,000 crore loan guarantee scheme for health infrastructure announced in India 28 June 2021 Additional Rs 23,220 crore was allocated with a primary focus on pediatric care. Read more [here](#)

Hasina's government campaign to bring all such destitute families under housing scheme. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh government seeks higher growth for lower poverty 20 June 2021 A higher economic growth remains high on Bangladesh government's agenda leading to improved living standards of low income people. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government's efforts coming to fruition: Prime Minister 20 June 2021 Imran Khan said the government's water conservation policies were showing results as Punjab government had stopped depletion of Lahore's groundwater for the first time during last four decades. Read more [here](#)

Iran's sole nuclear power plant undergoes emergency shutdown 20 June 2021 An official from the state electric company said that power outages could result. Read more [here](#)

Several economic relief measures announced by Sitharaman for badly affected sectors of India 28 June 2021 The package announced is worth Rs 6.3 trillion, and focuses on public health and tourism. Read more [here](#)

Deal signed with World Bank for \$300 million to boost rural economy of Bangladesh 29 June 2021 This financing agreement will help about 750,000 poor and extreme poor rural people across 20 districts of Bangladesh. Read more [here](#)

World Bank approves \$800 million loan for Pakistan 29 June 2021 Funds will be used to finance the Pakistan Program for Affordable and Clean Energy and the Second Securing Human Investments to Foster Transformation. Read more [here](#)

Indian Railways to become future-ready 30 June 2021 They plan to deliver 58 super critical as well as 68 critical projects worth more than Rs 1,15,000 crore in the next few years. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan government to provide interest free business loan: Gill 30 June 2021 500,000 rupees to 60,000 families will be provided to ensure economic growth and development across the country. Read more [here](#)

b. Regional cooperation and other means of implementation

Iran can serve Uzbekistan with transit road to global markets: Zarif 5 April 2021 They are exploring ways to promote different economic, political and cultural relations and discussed regional cooperation. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh offers support to Afghanistan for development 5 April 2021 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offered help to Afghanistan in their efforts for development. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan, Russia bilateral ties taking new turn 6 April 2021 The Foreign Minister said both the countries want to take forward the North South Gas pipeline project. Read more [here](#)

Zarif, Kyrgyz president discuss issues of mutual interest 6 April 2021 The talks referred to the capacities for expansion of cooperation in different fields and paying attention to bilateral relations between Iran and Kyrgyzstan. Read more [here](#)

Biden "committed to strengthening" ties with Bangladesh 7 April 2021 United States of America and Bangladesh are committed to address some of the most pressing regional and global challenges together stated a senior US official. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan, China agree to work together 11 April 2021 They have agreed to strengthen their cooperation and support each other on core and major interests of each side. Read more [here](#)

Two new border crossings to open along Pakistan-Iran border 26 April 2021 The border crossings will not only help boost bilateral trade but also promote tourism in the area. Read more [here](#)

Paris Deal only way to check global warming: Hasina 28 April 2021 The Bangladesh Prime Minister laid strict emphasis on implementation of Paris Agreement to check global emissions and thereby global warming in her message at the Foreign Policy Virtual Climate Summit.. Read more [here](#)

United Kingdom, India to start formal Free Trade Agreement talks within months 4 May 2021 Britain and India will begin formal free trade deal talks later this year, after they agreed an initial package to boost bilateral trade and investment. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan, Turkmenistan agree to enhance bilateral economic, trade cooperation 6 May 2021 The agreement came in the second meeting of Pakistan-Turkmenistan Joint Working Group on Trade held virtually in Islamabad. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan, China to have 350 kilometer shorter road connectivity 19 May 2021 This is an alternative to China Pakistan Economic Corridor which would be constructed by Pakistan at the cost of Rs 50 billion. Read more [here](#)

Turkey opens last section of new highway connecting Asia to Europe 21 May 2021 Turkey witnessed the opening ceremony of the seventh and

China and Sri Lanka sign USD 500 million loan agreement 12 April 2021 This will infuse the required foreign exchange into the Sri Lanka economy. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan, Uzbekistan review level of progress on Trans-Afghan Railway Line Project 15 April 2021 Imran Khan discussed the bilateral cooperation and the regional issues with Uzbekistan President. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lankan Government keen to renegotiate Hambantota Port deal with China 24 April 2021 The agreement reached between the former Government and China allows the lease of the port to be extended to 198 years. As a result, the Sri Lankan government will look to renegotiate "at the right time", stated the Sri Lankan State Minister of Money, Capital Markets and State Enterprise Reforms, Ajith Nivard Cabraal. Read more [here](#)

Agriculture sector being linked to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to facilitate farming community 26 April 2021 Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan stated that the government is taking help from the private sector to facilitate the farming community and carry out experiments to boost agriculture and has sought support from China in the field of agriculture. Read more [here](#)

Turkey-US relations turn a new page 21 June 2021 The U.S. and Turkey have agreed that our close partnership shall benefit both nations said President Erdoğan at the NATO summit. Read more [here](#)

c. Gender equality and empowerment

Bangladesh seeks \$500 million from World Bank to implement budget 6 April 2021 The assistance will be used to educate female students with science and ICT knowledge and in educational projects for their stipend as part of efforts to increase women's participation in the workforce. Read more [here](#)

d. Environmental sustainability and disaster resilience

India scours sea after barge sinks, 2nd adrift after cyclone 18 May 2021 The Indian Navy is working to rescue crew members from a sunken barge after a deadly cyclone struck the western coast. Read more [here](#)

Cyclone Yaas batters eastern India 26 May 2021 Heavy rains and howling winds lashed eastern India as the COVID-19 stricken country's second cyclone in as many weeks battered the coast. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lanka's beaches swamped with burning ship debris 30 May 2021 Authorities in Sri Lanka have said debris from a burning container ship has caused "probably the worst beach pollution in our history." Read more [here](#)

e) Health & Covid-19 Related

Maharashtra state in India to see curfew and weekend lockdown 4 April 2021 A nighttime curfew will be enforced and the state will be under a full lockdown on weekends. Read more [here](#)

2nd dose to be administered from April 8 in Bangladesh: Cabinet Secretary 5 April 2021 Bangladesh's prime minister made it clear that vaccination [second dose] will begin on scheduled time. Read more [here](#)

Health workers deprived of risk allowance in Baglung, Nepal 5 April 2021 The government of

last section of a major highway that will connect Istanbul's Asian and European sides via the third bridge across the Bosphorus. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh Bank approves \$200-million currency swap deal with Sri Lanka 24 May 2021 A draft of \$200-million currency swap deal with Sri Lanka was approved to maintain a moderate foreign exchange reserve in Sri Lanka. Read more [here](#)

Swap transaction limit with China rises 14 June 2021 Turkey will soon sign a new swap transaction agreement with China, raising the limit by \$3.4 billion to a total of \$6 billion. Read more [here](#)

India and Sri Lanka sign US\$ 100 million Line of Credit deal 16 June 2021 The Line of Credit will help Sri Lanka enhance solar power generation in the country. Read more [here](#)

Turkish, European Union top diplomats discuss bilateral ties, issues 18 June 2021 Turkey's Foreign Minister and European Union foreign policy chief discussed ties, including updating the Customs Union deal, migration issue and the visa liberalization. Read more [here](#)

European Union provides Sri Lanka with over Rs 48 million humanitarian funding 23 June 2021 The funding to provide crucial assistance in response to serious oil and hazardous chemical spills. Read more [here](#)

Iran navy vessel sinks after fire in Gulf of Oman 2 June 2021 Officials said it was an accident as a leak in a liquefied gas line that triggered an explosion. Read more [here](#)

Landslide and flood warning issued for several areas in Sri Lanka 3 June 2021 The public has been requested to remain vigilant of landslides due to heavy showers in Sri Lanka. Read more [here](#)

Fears of environmental disaster as oil-laden ship sinks off Sri Lanka 3 June 2021 A chemical-laden cargo ship is sinking off the coast of Sri Lanka, sparking fears of an environmental disaster. Read more [here](#)

World Bank to provide \$150 million to support Nepal's pandemic response 17 June 2021 The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors today approved a \$150 million development policy credit protect the most vulnerable, and support sustainable growth amidst the pandemic. Read more [here](#)

In India, Delhi unlocks: Bars, public parks, gardens allowed to open 20 June 2021 Bars with 50% seating capacity, public parks, gardens, golf clubs, and outdoor yoga activities have been allowed. Read more [here](#)

Nepal had declared to provide a cent percent Covid-19 risk allowance to frontline health workers. Read more [here](#)

India's central government asks its employees of 45 years and above to get vaccinated 6 April 2021 The Centre directed all its employees who are 45 or above to get a shot of the Covid-19 vaccine to ensure that the spread of the infection is contained. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lanka to purchase another 6 million vaccines from Russia 6 April 2021 The Government had placed an order to purchase 7 million doses of the 'Sputnik V' vaccine. Read more [here](#)

Covid-19 Shot in the arm for Turkish e-commerce 6 April 2021 Turkey's e-commerce volume surged by 66% year-on-year throughout 2020 as the pandemic kept consumers at home. Read more [here](#)

Russia assures Pakistan of full support in energy, security & vaccine needs 7 April 2021 The Russian foreign minister expressed readiness to "further strengthen economic relations". Read more [here](#)

Sinopharm will not be used in Sri Lanka until World Health Organization approves 8 April 2021 Health Minister said that the safety of the vaccine will be decided by the Committee on Communicable Diseases. Read more [here](#)

Centre says 43 million Covid vaccine doses in stock after shortage alarm in India 9 April 2021 Some states complained that they are facing a shortage of vaccines, while several mentioned that vaccine centers were shutting early due to supplies running out. Read more [here](#)

Air bubble finalised between Sri Lanka and India 10 April 2021 Under the air bubble agreement, special international passenger flights can be operated under restrictive conditions. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh's aviation sector braces for impact as international flights cancelled again 11 April 2021 Chartered flights, cargo planes, and special flights for diplomats, foreigners are exempted from this suspension. Read more [here](#)

Government to halt administering first dose of covid vaccine in Bangladesh 25 April 2021 The decision was taken amid uncertainty over the next shipment of the Covid-19 vaccine from India. Read more [here](#)

Nepal Health Ministry prohibits testing of foreigners in transit 25 April 2021 All health facilities that provide Polymerase Chain Reaction test services, are to stop testing foreigners that are en route to third countries. Read more [here](#)

Iran begins coronavirus vaccine mass production 25 April 2021 The third phase of clinical test for the vaccine mass production began. Read more [here](#)

Vaccine registration for people over 40 years to open on 27th April in Pakistan 26 April 2021 It has been decided to allow walk-in vaccination of all registered citizens of 50 plus age group. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh border with India to remain shut for 14 days 26 April 2021 Bangladesh decided to close its border for any movement except cargo for the next 14 days to curb the spread of virus. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh approves emergency use of Sputnik V vaccine 27 April 2021 The approval was given at a meeting of the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) where the Director of DGDA said now there is no bar to import or use this vaccine. Read more [here](#)

Delhi builds makeshift funeral pyres as deaths climb in India 27 April 2021 The city has run out of space to cremate its dead and staff is working round

Sri Lanka opens up 21 June 2021 The restrictions which started on 7 April are starting to relax with the public being urged to act responsibly. Read more [here](#)

Central government of India halts exports of Remdesivir 11 April 2021 The department of pharmaceuticals has been in contact with the domestic manufacturers to ramp up the production of Remdesivir. Read more [here](#)

Iran places virus-related travel ban on 39 countries 11 April 2021 Travels to and from Iraq was prohibited due to the health situation in Khuzestan province. Read more [here](#)

Turkey welcomes Ramadan with tight measures against COVID-19 12 April 2021 Authorities expect a string of measures, coupled with less mobility during the holy month of Ramadan, may curb the coronavirus pandemic. Read more [here](#)

India fast-tracks approval for foreign vaccines 13 April 2021 The move came following the world's biggest surge in cases in the country this month. Read more [here](#)

Second shot of Covid-19 vaccine to be administered from April 20 in Nepal 13 April 2021 People who took their first jab between January 27 and March 5 should take the booster dose between April 20 and April 24. Read more [here](#)

Over \$1billion World Bank loan coming as COVID-19 response for Bangladesh 14 April 2021 Bangladesh has signed three agreements with the World Bank for \$1.04 billion loan to build resilience to future crises. Read more [here](#)

Many Indians struggle to get coronavirus tests as cases rocket 20 April 2021 Diagnostics firms testing for coronavirus are nearing breaking point in cities like New Delhi and Mumbai. Read more [here](#)

Asian Development Bank grants \$50 million to Afghanistan 21 April 2021 The grant is to help the Government of Afghanistan procure and deploy safe, high-quality COVID-19 vaccines. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh Prime Minister allocates Taka 10.50 crore for affected poor 21 April 2021 The assistance from this money will be provided to the poor, distressed and insolvent people affected by the lockdown. Read more [here](#)

Six cases of blood clots among AstraZeneca vaccine recipients in Sri Lanka 21 April 2021 Out of the six recipients with clot, three have died. Read more [here](#)

Iran faces worst wave 22 April 2021 Even while facing the worst wave, Tehran commuters still pour into its subway system and buses each working day. Read more [here](#)

World Bank approves \$ 80million COVID-19 vaccine financing for Sri Lanka 29 April 2021 \$80.5 million additional financing was given to strengthen the country's vaccination system and pandemic response and help in distributing the vaccines fairly. Read more [here](#)

Emergency approval for China's Sinopharm vaccine given in Bangladesh 29 April 2021 The second dose of this vaccine has to be taken 28 days after the first dose. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh offers emergency medical equipment to India 29 April 2021 The Government of Bangladesh expresses deep sorrow and condolences at the loss of lives in India and dispatched emergency medicines and medical equipment for the people of India. Read more [here](#)

Turkey enters first full lockdown 29 April 2021 This was done to curb a surge in infections and deaths seen in Turkey, reportedly the highest infection rate in Europe.. Read more [here](#)

the clock, while parks and other empty spaces are also being utilized for cremations. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan bans all tourism activities during Eid 27 April 2021 This is an attempt to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Read more [here](#)

Turkey braces for toughest lockdown 27 April 2021 It will be a nearly three-week 'full' lockdown to curb COVID-19 infection. Read more [here](#)

Vital medical supplies reach India 28 April 2021 A shipment from Britain, including 100 ventilators and 95 oxygen concentrators arrived in the capital New Delhi. Read more [here](#)

Indians rush for vaccines as COVID-19 deaths rise 28 April 2021 The second wave of infections has overwhelmed health facilities and crematoriums and prompts an increasingly urgent response from allies. Read more [here](#)

Nepal government makes 10-day quarantine mandatory for all arrivals 28 April 2021 All foreign nationals except those from China and India would be barred entry to the country from land route. Read more [here](#)

High-tech hunt for scarce COVID-19 vaccines in India 5 May 2021 Indian tech experts have written software code and designed websites to help people book scarce COVID-19 vaccinations online. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lanka receives 15,000 doses of Sputnik V 5 May 2021 Sri Lanka has been unable to receive doses of the AstraZeneca Covishield vaccine from the Serum Institute of India for the second dose of vaccination. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh seeks immediate delivery of 4 million vaccine doses from US: Foreign Minister 6 May 2021 The US will share up to 60 million doses of its Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine with other countries as they become available. Read more [here](#)

India's neighbors close borders over surge in COVID-19 cases 6 May 2021 Sri Lanka became the latest of India's neighbors to seal its borders with the South Asian giant as it battles a record COVID-19 surge. Read more [here](#)

Turkey's inactive COVID-19 vaccine makes it to World Health Organization list 6 May 2021 The World Health Organization added an innovative inactive vaccine being developed by Turkish scientists to its list of vaccines in development. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh government bans entry of passengers from Nepal 9 May 2021 The decision was taken in order to curb transmission of coronavirus from the badly-affected neighbor countries. Read more [here](#)

Do not sell, distribute oxygen cylinders without official permit: Nepal Health Ministry 9 May 2021 The step was taken in a bid to curb ongoing shortage of oxygen cylinders. Read more [here](#)

Maharashtra, UP, Delhi among 18 states where daily Covid-19 cases falling: Indian Government 11 May 2021 Union health secretary said that there are 13 states which have more than 1 lakh active cases of Covid-19. Read more [here](#)

Dozens more bodies wash up on Ganges river bank in India 11 May 2021 Dozens more bodies have washed up on the banks of the Ganges in northern India as the country struggles with a second Covid wave. Read more [here](#)

Nepal's vaccination status 12 May 2021 Nepal government's poor communication system has left many Nepalis confused about its vaccination campaign. Read more [here](#)

Hospitals in Nepal's capital 'not to admit more patients' 13 May 2021 They said they would not be able to admit more COVID patients till the government

United Nations Child Fund provides Personal Protective Equipment to Pakistan 2 May 2021 Personal Protection Equipment test kits and medicines for a total value of US\$14.5 million would be provided Read more [here](#)

Trainee Indian doctors pulled from exams to fight World's biggest covid surge 3 May 2021 India postponed exams for trainee doctors and nurses, freeing them up to fight the surge in infections. Read more [here](#)

Nepal suspends all flights amid spike in Covid-19 cases 3 May 2021 All domestic flights will be suspended from midnight 5th May while international flights will be halted from midnight 7th May. Read more [here](#)

Nepal's all census-related work halted due to pandemic 3 May 2021 It is uncertain when the census will be conducted as Covid-19 pandemic continues to create havoc in the country. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan tightens borders as Covid-19 cases soar 3 May 2021 Pakistan has closed land crossings with Iran and Afghanistan for travellers and slashed international flights. Read more [here](#)

Delhi calls for army help amid crisis 3 May 2021 Delhi's government wants the army to run Covid care facilities and intensive care units. Read more [here](#)

Nepal appeals for COVID-19 vaccines as cases rise 4 May 2021 Nepal urgently needs at least 1.6 million AstraZeneca's COVID-19 vaccine doses to administer second shots. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lanka's Board Of Investment steps up support amidst export sector concerns over latest lockdown 14 May They plan to ensure uninterrupted services for export-oriented enterprises. Read more [here](#)

Covid-19 vaccine registration opens for citizens above 30 years of age in Pakistan 16 May 2021 Citizens above 30 years of age could register themselves by sending their Computerized National Identity Card numbers to 1166. Read more [here](#)

India rolls out new local Covid drug after emergency approval 17 May 2021 Authorities have approved 2-DG and it is to be first used in hospitals across the capital, Delhi. Read more [here](#)

Will give ₹50,000 to family who faced Covid-19 death, announces Chief Minister of India's capital 18 May 2021 He announced financial compensation of ₹50,000 as ex-gratia for families in the national capital who lost a member due to Covid-19. Read more [here](#)

Only 20% of United Nations Children's Emergency Fund appeal to support Sri Lanka funded 19 May 2021 The UNICEF has appealed for US\$4 million to support the Sri Lankan Government's response to the COVID-19 situation, but only 20% has been funded. Read more [here](#)

24 and 25 May declared special Government holiday in Sri Lanka 19 May 2021 The Sri Lankan government announced that all State offices will be closed on 24 and 25 May in an attempt to limit movement and control the spread of COVID-19. Read more [here](#)

Nepal unlikely to receive Serum Institute manufactured COVISHIELD anytime soon 19 May 2021 Nepal's hopes of receiving remaining doses of COVISHIELD vaccines, seem to be sinking as the manufacturer Serum Institute of India said it would not export vaccines for several months. Read more [here](#)

Staggered reopening of educational institutes, outdoor dining from May 24 in Pakistan 19 May 2021 The National Command and Operation Centre announced the lifting of a number of restrictions imposed to control the spread of the coronavirus.

increased their daily quota of medical oxygen. Read more [here](#)

Positivity rate in Bangladesh crosses 10 percent again 25 May 2021 With Covid cases soaring in frontier districts, experts fear that Bangladesh may face the worst outbreak of the deadly virus by end of June. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh Bank allows banking in lockdown areas 25 May 2021 Bangladesh Bank today asked banks to keep their branches open in areas where lockdowns have been imposed amid a surge in Covid-19 infections, after having discussion with respective metropolitan and district administrations. Read more [here](#)

Turkey aims for July in relief from COVID-19 pandemic 25 May 2021 With planned incentives to encourage vaccination and adhering to decreasing case trends in the coronavirus pandemic, Turkey hopes to reach the normalization target in July. Read more [here](#)

Pakistan opens vaccination for ages 19, above 26 May 2021 The development means Pakistan will now be able to vaccinate its entire population that is approved for vaccination. Read more [here](#)

Central Bank of Sri Lanka extends fresh debt relief till end-August 26 May 2021 The Central Bank has announced extension of debt relief for COVID-impacted businesses and individuals in response to requests following the rapid spread of the third wave of the pandemic. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh's cabinet body okays proposal to procure 1.5 crore Chinese Sinopharm vaccines 27 May 2021 The Health Service Division of the Health and Family Welfare Ministry will procure a total of 1.5 crore vaccines in the next three months. Read more [here](#)

Pfizer-BioTech Covid-19 vaccine approved for emergency use in Bangladesh 27 May 2021 The approval comes at a time when the country is battling the second wave amid the supply shortage of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from neighboring India. Read more [here](#)

Indian government scraps local trials for foreign vaccines to fast-track imports 27 May 2021 Government says working with Pfizer for earliest import; multiple rounds of talks held with Johnson and Johnson, Moderna. Read more [here](#)

Sri Lankan President decides not to relax travel restrictions until 7 June 29 May 2021 A statement from President's Media Office said the conduct of the people when restrictions were relaxed proved that it would lead to a further spread of the COVID-19 virus. Read more [here](#)

Indian capital extends Covid-19 lockdown until June 7 30 May 2021 Lockdown which started from 19th May, has now been extended but the restrictions have been eased for two sectors - manufacturing and construction businesses this time. Read more [here](#)

Bangladesh's Mass vaccination expected to resume in July 17 June 2021 The government is making all-out efforts to collect vaccines, said Bangladesh's Principal Secretary, Dr. Ahmed. Read more [here](#)

Official says Nepal desperately needs vaccines 17 June 2021 Nepal has significantly reduced coronavirus infections after its worst outbreak but is in desperate need of vaccines. Read more [here](#)

Read more [here](#)

India's Bharat Biotech ramps up vaccine production 20 May 2021 They would ramp up production of COVID-19 vaccine by 200 million doses per year by the fourth quarter, as the country faces a severe vaccine shortage in a ruthless second wave of the pandemic. Read more [here](#)

India deals with fears about a third Covid-19 wave affecting kids 23 May 2021 doctors and health experts have noted a rise in infections among children, fueling concerns that children are more vulnerable to catching the disease. Read more [here](#)

Iran produces one million doses of COV-Iran Berekat vaccine 30 May 2021 The production of the vaccine will increase to three million doses during the current Iranian calendar year said Hassan Jalili. Read more [here](#)

India accelerates vaccine supplies in fight against COVID-19 31 May 2021 Serum Institute will increase production of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines by nearly 40% in June. Read more [here](#)

India may grant indemnity to Pfizer, Moderna 2 June 2021 Countries like the US have granted these vaccine makers immunity where they cannot be sued for any adverse effects. Read more [here](#)

Lockdown extended till June 14 in Kathmandu valley 2 June 2021 The District Administration Offices have decided to extend the lockdown for another 10 days while relaxing a few regulatory measures. Read more [here](#)

India revises vaccination policy 7 June 2021 The government will provide free Covid-19 vaccinations for all adults. Read more [here](#)

Nepal signs non-disclosure agreement to buy Chinese Covid-19 vaccines 7 June 2021 Nepal wants to buy 10 million doses, but Sinopharm can only supply 2 million now and the price is not fixed yet. Read more [here](#)

Nepal Home ministry mulling gradual relaxation of prohibitory orders across country 8 June 2021 They plan to ease people's movement and bring back normalcy from mid-June. Read more [here](#)

Elephants in India tested for coronavirus 9 June 2021 Twenty-eight elephants have been tested for Covid-19 at a forest reserve in southern India. Read more [here](#)

Private labs to stop sample collection booths outside hospitals in Bangladesh 10 June 2021 All private Covid-19 testing laboratories to stop running sample collection booths outside hospitals that were set up for passengers going to foreign destinations. Read more [here](#)

Goods and Service Tax cuts on several Covid essentials in India 12 June 2021 The decisions are in line with the recommendations by a Group of Ministers, which was mandated to examine tax exemption and concessions on various Covid items. Read more [here](#)

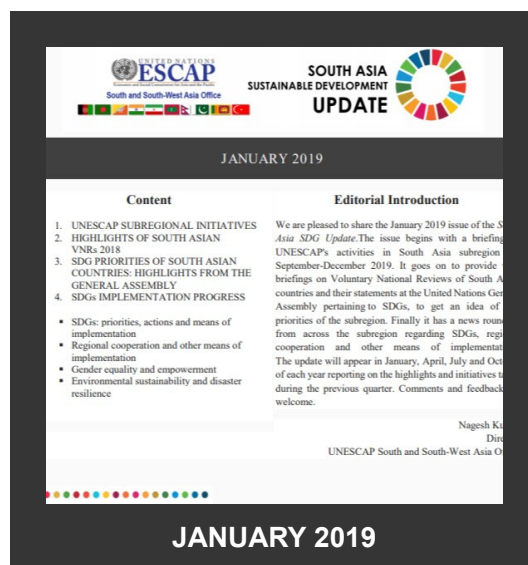
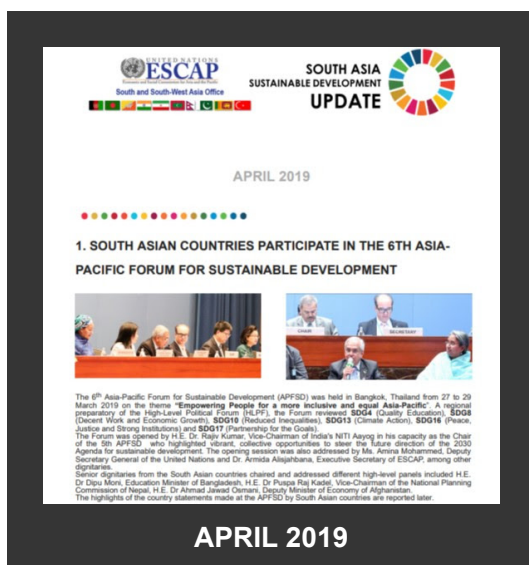
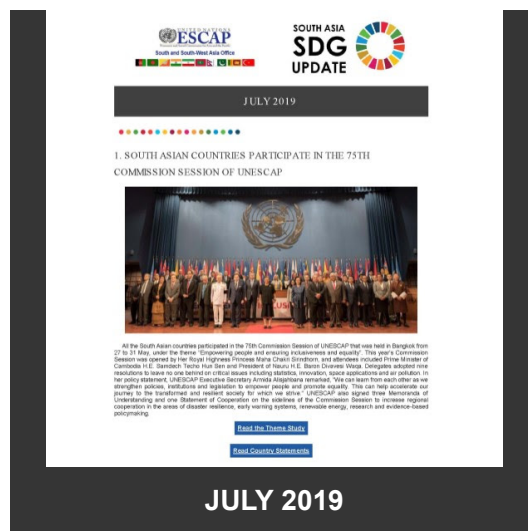
International vaccine institute to be set up in Bangladesh: Hasina 16 June 2021 She said the government would sign an agreement with South Korea to set up the vaccine institute. Read more [here](#)

Disclaimer: UN-ESCAP does not guarantee the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of any of the news items linked to in the above message. All news items are provided for informational purposes only and all copyrights remain those of the respective copyright holders. The views represented therein reflect those of the authors and not that of UN-ESCAP or any of its member states.

Your valuable feedback is welcome and greatly appreciated. Please send your comments or suggestions to: sswa.escap@un.org.

If you have missed them, here are the links to previous newsletters editions!





South Asia
Network on the
Sustainable
Development
Goals (SANS)

The South Asia Network on the Sustainable Development Goals (SANS) has been developed by ESCAP to foster subregional cooperation by sharing good practices towards achievement of the SDGs amongst the government agencies, think-tanks, CSOs and other stakeholders in South Asia to build back better.

For further details click [here](#) and for details on SANS membership, click [here](#).

CONTACT US

UNESCAP- South and South-West Asia Office,
C-2, Qutab Institutional Area, Post Box No. 4575, 110016 New Delhi, India

Telephone: +91 11 3097 3700 / Fax: +91 11 2685 6274
Website: sswa.unescap.org | E-mail: sswa.unescap@un.org

