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## ESCAP SSWA Newsletter

JULY 2023



### SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA SDG UPDATE

#### Lead Article

#### **Transforming the lives of women entrepreneurs through digital technology: ESCAP's work on women empowerment**

*(Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna and Ms. Suveera Saxena)*

South and South-West has been scoring low for Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment, despite progressing well on economic growth. Women have not benefitted economically and face challenges relating to access to finance and ICT; they are thus not able to expand their businesses and become part of wider regional and global supply chains. The lack of digital skill and knowledge has also been one of the impediments for upscaling of their businesses especially in the case of women-led micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

ESCAP in collaboration with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), Geneva, implemented a project titled "E-Commerce Capacity Building for Women-led MSMEs in South Asia" that enhanced the knowledge and capacity of women entrepreneurs in the application of e-commerce platforms to expand their business exports and participate in local, regional, and global supply chains. The COVID-19 pandemic also forced many consumers and suppliers to change their business modalities, paving the way for the project to play an important role in women empowerment in the subregion. Several subregional and national trainings, both online and in person, were conducted in collaboration with women associations, self-help groups and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

From September 2020 to March 2023, more than 3000 women were trained and onboarded onto digital platforms, and a regional network of training participants have been created. The trainings not only improved their knowledge and skills, but also instilled confidence in them that they can do online business. As a result of the project, many women received international orders, including from other women through the network, and diversified their production and supplies.

#### Here are what some trainees shared:

Ms. Palina Rai carries out her business through "Boju Store" in Nepal ("Boju" is the Rai/Limbu community term for Grandmother). Boju Store is an enterprise that works with farmers from the hills and Himalayas to promote, market and sell unique indigenous products in major cities throughout Nepal and abroad. It also works to provide female inmates and survivors of domestic violence with employment

Nepal in April 2022, which made it possible for her to export her products to India through networks created during the trainings.

Ms. Lasanthi S. Perera from Sri Lanka has a business producing bee honey and honey-related value-added products. She felt that the training opened the doors for small women entrepreneurs like her and provided her a big opportunity to interact with like-minded women entrepreneurs from South Asia. Through the hands-on training on the project's Wesellonline platform, she received an enquiry for her products and was able to translate it into a bulk order from the USA.

Ms. Tulsi Maya Gurung from Bhutan is co-founder of Life Changers Bhutan, a social enterprise that encourages and empowers women and youth to be socially responsible and economically productive. The social enterprise collects used cloths from households and transforms them into higher value products such as tote bags, pouches and other similar items that are designed and handcrafted by housewives and youths. She believes that the training gave her the knowledge and skills to use e-commerce platforms and enabled her to use social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram more productively to generate a higher income.

The above case studies highlight that woman entrepreneurship is both crucial in laying a successful path towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 and key to economic growth through its positive multiplier effects on society, including job creation, increasing labour force participation, and uplifting families out of poverty.

Notably, the ESCAP workshops served as a regional networking platform for women entrepreneurs, enabling them to showcase their products and services as well as connect and share experiences, thereby facilitating the creation of regional networks. One remarkable instance was a recent collaboration that materialized between two women entrepreneurs from Nepal as a result of these networks.

The project has been recognised as a success story for women-to-women (W2W) business model and South-South Cooperation. Details of the project can be found [here](#).



## **I. KEY ACTIVITIES ORGANIZED BY ESCAP ON SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA**

### **1. Strengthening National and Subnational Capacity for Sustainable Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Maldives**

8 May 2023, Male, Maldives



ESCAP, in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority of Maldives (NDMA) conducted a half-day meeting in Male, Maldives. Chaired by Mr. Umar Fikry, Deputy Director of NDMA, government stakeholders reviewed progress of the two-year SDG Fund UN Joint Project to strengthen the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation with national and subnational development planning. Since the project started in October 2022, land use data of the entire country and downscaled climate projection data for Maldives were completed. A capacity building session followed on the prototype of the ESCAP Risk and Resilience Portal using newly updated data for Maldives. [Read more.](#)

## 2. 8<sup>th</sup> Monsoon Forum

10 May 2023, Fonadhoo Island, Laamu Atoll, Maldives



The 8<sup>th</sup> Monsoon Forum was jointly organized by the Maldives Meteorological Service, ESCAP, and the Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES). Participants discussed general climate and weather systems, earthquake and tsunami early warning systems, the disaster/hazard impact assessment and reporting mechanism used in Maldives, and the impacts of future climate risks in Maldives. There was also an interactive session on island and sectoral experiences on forecast-based opportunities and risks management. The forum was opened by the President of L. Atoll Council, Mr. Ismail Ali. [Read more.](#)

## 3. Side Event at the 79<sup>th</sup> Commission Session: Policy Dialogue on Priorities for Subregional Cooperation for Climate Action and the SDGs in South and South-West Asia

18 May 2023, Bangkok, Thailand, and online



The side event discussed priority areas for climate action in South and South-West Asia and areas of collaboration among stakeholders, with the aim of identifying new opportunities through regional and subregional cooperation and of exploring the roles of policymakers, parliamentarians, the South and South-West Asia Network on the Sustainable Development Goals and ESCAP in advancing such issues. Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, Head of the ESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia (ESCAP-SSWA), opened and moderated the debate. Four leaders of eminent thinktanks in South Asia, Prof. Nagesh Kumar, Dr. Abid Suleri, Dr. Paras Kharel, and Dr. Mahfuz Kabir, presented at the event. [Read more.](#)

#### **4. Training of Trainers Programme for Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka: Enhancing Skills on Digital Marketing and E-commerce** 7 June 2023, online

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) are significant drivers of inclusive and sustainable regional development. Given that women entrepreneurs often face barriers in the access to technology, finance, ICT knowledge and are not able to expand their businesses as a result, the ESCAP-SSWA organized a training of trainers programme for women entrepreneurs from Karnataka, India. The online meeting consisted of two sessions led by Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Deputy Head of ESCAP-SSWA. The first session discussed an online e-learning course on e-commerce and digital marketing, while the second session provided guidance to trainers on how to train participants on using social media platforms for digital marketing. [Read more.](#)

#### **5. ESCAP South and South-West Asia Policy Dialogue; Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2023 “Rethinking Public Debt for the Sustainable Development Goals”** 8 June 2023, New Delhi, India, and online



ESCAP, in April 2023, launched its annual flagship publication “Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2023: Rethinking Public Debt for the SDGs”, which called for a shift in thinking about leveraging public debt and proposes a new approach to long-term public debt sustainability analysis. During the policy dialogue, experts and stakeholders shared ideas on how Asia-Pacific governments can improve SDG implementation and climate policies while maintaining the sustainability of public debt. Eminent panellists of the dialogue included: Mr. Ashish Vachhani, Additional Secretary (Budget), Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India; Mr. Mohsin Chandna, Director General, Debt Sustainability, Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan; Ms. Visakha Amarasekara, Additional Director General, Ministry of Finance, Government of Sri Lanka; Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries; Dr. R. Kavita Rao, Director, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy; and Prof. N.R. Bhanumurthy, Vice-Chancellor, Dr. B. R.

## 6. Strengthening National and Subnational Capacity for Sustainable Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in the Maldives – Introduction to Geographic Information Systems & Getting Started with QGIS

15 June 2023, online



Under the ESCAP-UNDP joint project on strengthening the integration of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, ESCAP organized an online workshop to introduce participants to the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) and the QGIS software. The basic knowledge of GIS and related software imparted during the training is expected to facilitate more productive engagement by participants at upcoming capacity-building workshops on developing land use maps of Maldives and climate risk assessments using climate projection data. [Read more.](#)

## 7. Training of Department of Commerce Officials on Negotiations of Multilateral Outcome Documents

21 June 2023, New Delhi, India

ESCAP-SSWA was requested by the Department of Commerce, Government of India, to train its new officials and staff in preparation for their role in supporting the G20 Trade, and Investment Working Group (TIWG) meetings. In this context, ESCAP-SSWA organized a training on how multilateral intergovernmental meetings and textual negotiations in adopting a report or a declaration are held. Dr. Rajan Sudesh Ratna, Deputy Head of ESCAP-SSWA, led the training. [Read more.](#)



## II. ESCAP-SSWA KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS 2023

- [Quick Guide and Compendium on Designing and Retrofitting inclusive Parks](#) (July 2023)
- [Sustainable Management of Crop Residues in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan: Challenges and Solutions](#) (May 2023)
- [Strategies to promote regional power grid connectivity and Cross-Border Electricity Trade \(CBET\) in South and South-West Asia](#) (January 2023)



## III. THE SEVENTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND PACIFIC (ESCAP)

*Disclaimer: The following summaries do not represent the full speeches made by the representatives. To obtain more details about the 79th ESCAP session, please visit: <https://www.unescap.org/events/commission79>*



### Bangladesh

The honourable delegate of Bangladesh highlighted the challenges faced by vulnerable countries like Bangladesh due to climate change, despite being a low carbon emitter. Bangladesh has adopted the Bangladesh Delta Plan and SDG targets to combat climate change, aiming for zero carbon emissions by 2050 through the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan. The honourable delegate called for financial support, simplified compliance processes, and user-friendly platforms from ESCAP and the international community. Collaboration and support from developed nations were emphasized in areas like energy, low-carbon mobility, logistics, trade, and investment. Assistance from developed nations in technical, financial, and management aspects is crucial for achieving a net-zero carbon future. The honourable delegate stressed the importance of regional frameworks and partnerships for green power corridors, low-carbon transport, climate-smart transitions, and climate-smart trade and investment. Coordinated climate actions among ESCAP members were encouraged for building a sustainable and resilient future.



### Bhutan

The honourable delegate of Bhutan highlighted the importance of reflection and progress in the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. Bhutan, with its vulnerable ecosystems and reliance on climate-sensitive sectors, emphasized its commitment to conservation and low-emission development. The honourable delegate expressed concern over unsustainable development models in the Asia-Pacific region and called for achieving net-zero emissions and carbon neutrality by mid-century. More ambitious efforts to phase out fossil fuels and adopt cleaner energy sources were deemed necessary. The honourable delegate urged international partners to fulfil climate finance commitments and support technology transfer, capacity building, and adaptation funding. Integrating climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction into national plans, particularly for least developed countries, was stressed. Bhutan pledged to promote a green and sustainable economy guided by Gross National Happiness.



### India

The honourable delegate of India discussed India's perspective on the session's theme. He emphasized the theme's relevance in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic challenges. India demonstrated its commitment to climate action by highlighting its ambitious nationally determined contribution (NDC) submitted in 2015 and the ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2016. The updated NDC targets included a 45 per cent reduction in emissions intensity of GDP by 2030 and achieving 50 per cent of electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. The honourable delegate outlined various programmes and schemes focused on combating climate change, such as initiatives for green fuel, green energy, green mobility, and energy efficiency across sectors. Notable examples mentioned were ethanol blending promotion, the national green hydrogen mission, adoption of electric vehicles, and the Indian Railways' goal of becoming net-zero carbon emitter by 2030. The honourable delegate also highlighted India's active participation in international collaborations like the International Solar Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure, as well as initiatives launched at COP26, including the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States and the Green Grids Initiative. The honourable delegate concluded by emphasizing India's ambition, determination, and commitment to actively contribute to achieving climate action goals.



### Islamic Republic of Iran

The honourable delegate from the Islamic Republic of Iran highlighted the importance of multilateralism and regional cooperation in achieving sustainable development goals in the Asia-Pacific region. He pointed out post-pandemic challenges such as inadequate development financing and unequal economic recovery, urging for their resolution based on principles of right to development and sustainable financing. The honourable delegate raised concerns about unfulfilled promises in the 2013 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the widening gap between developed and developing countries. Despite facing restrictive measures and unilateral sanctions, Iran's progress in implementing development components

countries, along with a renewed commitment to global cooperation, were highlighted as essential in resolving development issues.



### Maldives

The honourable delegate from the Maldives highlighted the challenges their low-lying country faces due to climate change. He emphasized the minimal contribution of vulnerable countries like the Maldives to global carbon emissions compared to the disproportionate impact the people suffer. The honourable delegate stressed the need for sustainable and adequate climate finance to address action gaps and conduct risk analysis and planning. Developed countries were urged to fulfil their commitment of providing \$100 billion annually. The Government of Maldives, led by President Ibrahim Mohamad Solih, passed the Climate Emergency Act with a goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. However, achieving this goal requires international support, partnerships, technical expertise, and political will. The honourable delegate also highlighted the unique vulnerabilities of small island developing countries and called for targeted support. The upcoming International Conference on Small Island Developing States was seen as an opportunity to address challenges and renew commitments. In conclusion, global solidarity and support were deemed crucial to address climate change, and the Maldives expressed willingness to collaborate with others.



### Nepal

The honourable delegate emphasized the importance of addressing global challenges, particularly climate change, for peace, harmony, and prosperity. The honourable delegate highlighted Nepal's progress in areas such as poverty alleviation, education, gender empowerment, and health, with climate change measures integrated into development plans. Notable achievements include reducing disaster risks and incorporating climate action into national policies and plans, aiming for net-zero carbon neutrality by 2045 and increased forest cover by 2030. Nepal raised important issues related to climate change adaptation, finance, food security, indigenous people, and agriculture. Data and institutional capacity remain challenges, but the honourable delegate stressed the need to prepare for Nepal's graduation from the Least Developed Country category in 2026 with a robust transition strategy. He acknowledged ESCAP's initiatives in promoting environmental sustainability and regional cooperation. The honourable delegate appreciated the 79th session as a platform for collective efforts towards development and sustainability in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.



### Pakistan

The honourable presented Pakistan's perspective on the utilization of space-based assets for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Pakistan has adopted the Goals through a unanimous resolution and ratified the Paris Climate Agreement. The national space agency, SUPARCO, is committed to utilizing space technology for sustainable development, and has undertaken numerous projects related to disaster risk reduction, natural resource management, and climate change using space applications. Collaboration with the National Disaster Risk Management Fund led to the development of a National Catastrophic Assessment Model, providing space-based information for all phases of natural disasters. Pakistan has also developed a satellite-based crop monitoring system in collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. Satellite technology is used for monitoring forestry and tracking changes in mangrove forests, contributing to climate action and life on land goals. Pakistan seeks international partnerships and collaborations to enhance its capacities in space technology and contribute to socioeconomic development. The honourable delegate appreciated ESCAP's efforts in promoting regional cooperation and expressed hope for continued collaboration.

## Sri Lanka

The honourable delegate of Sri Lanka expressed its approach to financing climate action and highlighted the initiatives in this regard. The country appointed a green finance task force to facilitate the process of sustainable financial tools. Sri Lanka also developed a sustainable finance roadmap and a green finance taxonomy to promote sustainable finance practices. With the technical support of ESCAP, the country is finalizing its green bond framework and exploring options such as debt-for-nature swaps with the assistance of UN agencies. He added that Sri Lanka believes in the importance of climate justice and equity in the global climate negotiation process. He proposed greater debt justice and debt cancellation as essential components to support climate vulnerable nations in their mitigation and adaptation efforts. He suggested the establishment of a climate justice forum for climate vulnerable developing countries prior to COP 28 (Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) and sought ESCAP's support in this endeavour. The speaker emphasized the urgency of taking action and questions whether enough had been done to address the suffering of billions of people and struggling countries. He proposed for writing off debts and reallocating those resources towards climate-related projects.



## IV. NEWS EXCERPTS ON SDG IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

*Disclaimer: These Headlines consist of selected excerpts from press articles for information only. The inclusion of headlines does not imply endorsement by ESCAP. ESCAP cannot vouch for the accuracy of these reports and is not responsible for any errors contained therein.*

### A. Economic Dimension

#### BANGLADESH

**President Mohammed Shahabuddin Thursday authenticated the proposed national budget for FY 2023-24** 2 June 2023. President Mohammed Shahabuddin Thursday authenticated the proposed national budget for FY 2023-24 and the revised budget for FY 2022-23 for placing before the Jatiya Sangsad by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal. The government is targeting to attain a gross domestic product growth rate of 7.5 percent in the next fiscal year (FY24) since the country is expected to return to the higher growth trajectory. [Read more.](#)

**The per capita income will be at least \$12,500 and less than three percent of people will be below the poverty line** in a 'Smart Bangladesh'—targets to be achieve by 2041, said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal. (UNB) As the government unveiled a Tk 7.61 trillion spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year to get the ball rolling on the 'Smart Bangladesh' initiative, more than 17 percent of the record budget deficit will have to be offset by loans amid looming fears of recession. [Read more.](#)

**Bangladesh Bank is ready to announce a contractionary monetary policy statement, withdrawing the single-digit interest cap to combat rising inflation, the central bank sources said** 19 June 2023. Unveiling a 'contractionary' monetary policy statement, Bangladesh Bank has projected domestic credit growth ceiling at 15.3 percent in the fiscal 2023-24 (FY24) accommodating 11 percent credit growth in private sector and 30 percent in public sector. Containing inflation and safeguarding the vulnerable new poor should get priority while implementing the budget for the next fiscal year, economists told a roundtable. Proper implementation of the social safety-net programme, capacity building ahead of LDC graduation, and making the tax regime more efficient are also vital for economy, He said. [Read more.](#)

#### INDIA

#### NEPAL

**The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries has expressed concerns regarding the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24** 7 June 2023. The Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industries has expressed concerns regarding the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24, stating that it lacks immediate measures to effectively address the ongoing economic slowdown. Nepali Congress leader Bimalendra Nidhi has said that the budget should accord priority for constitution and implementation of federalism. Chairman of the main opposition party CPN, KP Sharma Oli, has claimed that the budget for the upcoming fiscal year brought by the government would not tide over the existing economic crisis. [Read more.](#)

#### PAKISTAN

**The government has introduced a number of policy initiatives to bring stability and growth in the economy** 1 June 2023. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar says the current government has introduced a number of policy initiatives to bring stability and growth in the economy and improving ease of doing business. [Read more.](#)

**The Federal Board of Revenue missed its collection target by Rs430 billion** 2 June 2023. The Federal Board of Revenue missed its collection target by Rs430 billion or 6.47pc to Rs6.21 trillion for the first 11 months of the fiscal year 2023 (11MFY23) against the target of Rs6.64tr, leaving behind a huge shortfall to plug in the month of June to achieve the annual target. [Read more.](#)

**Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said the new elected government should negotiate a fresh deal with the IMF** 9 June 2023. Putting to bed once and for all uncertainty over the bailout programme's future after June, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said the new elected government should negotiate a fresh deal with the IMF. Pakistan has to satisfy the IMF on three



Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran on Wednesday said India can look for another year of solid economic performance. Beating analyst estimates, India's gross domestic product grew at 6.1 per cent in the last quarter of the previous fiscal. Further, the Centre now estimates the overall growth rate of FY23 to be 7.2 per cent, MOSPI data showed. [Read more.](#)

**A 7.2 per cent growth in GDP in 2022-23 is historic** 2 June 2023. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said a 7.2 per cent growth in GDP in 2022-23 is historic, given the current global economic situation, and going forward India would emerge as a developed nation in the next 25 years. [Read more.](#)

**Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said the government remains deeply committed to the Act East Policy and is working towards enabling its maximum potential for growth and development in the eastern region of the country** 6 June 2023. Sonowal emphasized the need for greater cooperation among the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multilateralism countries to unlock the full potential of the maritime sector in the region. [Read more.](#)

**Union Cabinet gave its approval for the metro connectivity project from HUDA City Centre to Cyber City in Gurugram** 8 June 2023. Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, gave its approval for the metro connectivity project from HUDA City Centre to Cyber City in Gurugram, with a spur to Dwarka Expressway. This project will cover a distance of 28.50 km and include 27 stations along the route. [Read more.](#)

**India's consumer price index-based inflation fell to 4.25 per cent in May, data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation showed** 13 June 2023. In the month of April, the retail inflation was 4.7 per cent. [Read more.](#)

## ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

**The World Bank in its latest report has predicted a 2.2% growth for Iran's economy in 2023** 8 June 2023. The World Bank in its latest report has predicted a 2.2% growth for Iran's economy in 2023, a figure which is higher than the average growth forecast for the global economy and despite the fact that the country is still under sanctions imposed by the US. [Read more.](#)

**Iran's economy expanded by 4.7% in the fourth quarter of 2022** 12 June 2023. Iran's economy expanded by 4.7% in the fourth quarter of 2022 to become 15th fast-growing economy in the world over the quarter, according to figures by the World Bank. [Read more.](#)

## B. Social Dimension

### AFGHANISTAN

**The Taliban condemned on Sunday a "baseless and biased" report from the UN Security Council highlighting rifts within the group's ranks** 11 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

**The Doha Agreement between the US and Taliban is less transparent and incomprehensive** 23 June 2023. The Doha Agreement between the US and Taliban is less transparent and incomprehensive, and excludes Afghan women from political engagement to a great extent, associate director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch Heather Barr says. [Read more.](#)

**Over a thousand Afghan civilians were killed in bombings and other violence** 28 June 2023. Over a thousand Afghan civilians were killed in bombings and other violence since foreign forces left and the Taliban took over in 2021, according to a report by the UN's mission to Afghanistan. [Read more.](#)

### BANGLADESH

**The UNHCR has stopped providing food assistance to 23 Rohingya people belonging to four families in Cox's Bazar** 7 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

of this month, an IMF official said. [Read more.](#)

**The budget for the new fiscal year sailed through the National Assembly** 26 June 2023. The budget for the new fiscal year sailed through the National Assembly on Sunday, a day after the government made several changes, including fiscal tightening measures, dictated by the IMF a last-ditch effort to secure critical funding. The government has introduced massive changes in the Finance Bill 2023 by withdrawing certain exemptions, re-imposition/increase in additional customs duties/regulatory duties on imports of luxury items, five percent Federal Excise Duty (FED) on fertilisers, FED on sugary drinks from 10 to 20 percent and proposed to raise income tax on high-income earners. [Read more.](#)

### SRI LANKA

**Sri Lanka is looking to roll-out the next country assessment on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism** 6 June 2023. Sri Lanka is looking to roll-out the next country assessment on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT), President Ranil Wickremesinghe announced, an effort that is imperative and directly impacts the country's ease of doing business ranking and ability to attract foreign investments. [Read more.](#)

**Sri Lanka recorded the highest export income of USD 13.1 billion last year (2022), Industries Minister Ramesh Pathirana said** 7 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

### TÜRKIYE

**Türkiye's economy rose 4% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2023** 1 June 2023. Türkiye's economy rose 4% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2023, according to data released on Wednesday, beating the market forecast, yet the growth was reined in by the impact of February's earthquakes in the country's south. [Read more.](#)

**Establishing macro-financial stability will be the government's priority** 6 June 2023. Establishing macro-financial stability will be the government's priority, newly appointed Treasury and Finance Minister Mehmet Şimşek has said, stressing that bringing down inflation to single digits in the medium term is crucial. [Read more.](#)

**President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reiterated the government's goal to ease the price pressure on households and said exporters were estimated to reach all-time high shipments by the end of the year** 19 June 2023. We plan to increase Türkiye's exports to \$265 billion by the end of 2023 and to \$285 billion by the end of next year, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said. [Read more.](#)

### PAKISTAN

**Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology Dr Qibla Ayaz said universities in Pakistan had failed to produce 'genuine' graduates** 6 June 2023. He said in developed countries, educational institutions and think-tanks encouraged students to ask questions. [Read more.](#)

**The government has decided to introduce a 'budgeted' subsidy to the tune of Rs151 billion to provide relief to customers across the country** 14 June 2023. In a bid to offset the burden shouldered by power consumers due to the line losses of distribution companies, the government has decided to introduce a 'budgeted' subsidy to the tune of Rs151 billion to provide relief to customers across the country, except Karachi. [Read more.](#)

### SRI LANKA

**Hundreds of members of LGBTQ+ community paraded for the Pride month** 5 June 2023. Hundreds of members of Sri Lanka's LGBTQ+ community paraded through the streets of the capital Colombo on Sunday to mark the Pride month and demand an end to discrimination. [Read more.](#)

**Food safety goes beyond individual well-being; it**

immediately suspend a pilot repatriation project for Rohingya refugees to return to Myanmar, where He "face serious risks" to their lives and liberty, a UN expert said on Thursday. [Read more.](#)

**Child mortality rate in Bangladesh increased significantly last year compared to 2021** 14 June 2023. Child mortality rate in Bangladesh increased significantly last year compared to 2021, according to the Bangladesh Sample Vital Statistics 2022 launched Tuesday by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. [Read more.](#)

**Bangladesh has ranked 1st among South Asian countries in terms of gender parity, according to the latest Global Gender Gap Report 2023 by the World Economic Forum** 23 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

## INDIA

**India does not consist of binary rural and urban areas anymore and the country needs to look at taking manufacturing to its villages to fill the income gap and achieve its development goals, experts said** 8 June 2023. At a conference on re-imagining rural India, organised by the Union Rural Development Ministry in collaboration with the World Bank and the Bills and Melinda Gates Foundation, NITI Ayog member Ramesh Chand said a major portion of resources allocated for rural development were on social schemes and stressed on the need for investment for overall development. [Read more.](#)

**India has set a target of eradicating tuberculosis by 2025** 19 June 2023. India has set a target of eradicating tuberculosis by 2025 and 'Ni-kshay Mitra' has taken charge of this movement against the disease, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his monthly radio programme 'Mann ki Baat'. [Read more.](#)

## NEPAL

**The Kathmandu Metropolitan City has warned of action if found illegally providing custody to children or employing them in precarious work** 6 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

**The 'measles-rubella vaccination campaign' is being administered for children from six months to less than 15 years of age in Kanchanpur from Thursday onward** 8 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

**Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal said on Saturday that he is discharging his duty with a firm commitment to work for the cause of the country and people** 12 June 2023. Inaugurating the administrative building of Panchakanya Rural Municipality in Nuwakot district, the PM said that the government is providing services to the people in an accessible manner with cooperation from the private and public institutions. [Read more.](#)

**Rights activists have demanded that the government amend torture laws** 28 June 2023. Rights activists have demanded that the government amend torture laws, set up an independent mechanism to investigate torture cases and create a national fund for awarding compensation to torture victims. [Read more.](#)

## C. Environmental Dimension

### BANGLADESH

**Dhaka's air quality continued to be unhealthy for sensitive groups on Monday morning** 6 June 2023. With an air quality index score of 121 at 9:10am, Dhaka ranked 8th on the list of cities around the world with the worst air quality. [Read more.](#)

**Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister said the government has taken steps to implement circular economy model and extended producer responsibility** 9 June 2023. Minister Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin Thursday said the government has taken steps to implement circular economy model and extended producer responsibility to prevent plastic pollution in the country. [Read more.](#)

**Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Aleksandr**

potential of the food industry but also safeguards the health and safety of all Sri Lankans. [Read more.](#)

**Amāna Bank recently adopted a 1990 Suwa Seriya Ambulance as part of its commitment to support the people of Sri Lanka** 16 June 2023. Responding to a national need, Amāna Bank recently adopted a 1990 Suwa Seriya Ambulance as part of its commitment to support the people of Sri Lanka, which resonates with the bank's people-friendly banking model. Established by an Act of Parliament and operating a fleet of 297 ambulances, the 1990 Suwa Seriya Service provides island-wide free pre-hospital emergency care to all Sri Lankans with an average response time of 11:30 minutes. [Read more.](#)

**A special Gazette notification (2336/78) has been issued declaring several services as essential public services** 19 June 2023. According to the notification all services connected to the supply of electricity, the supply or distribution of petroleum products and fuel, all services, work or labour, of any description whatsoever, necessary or required to be done in connection with the maintenance, and reception, care, feeding and treatment of patients in hospitals, nursing homes, dispensaries and other similar institutions have been declared as essential services. [Read more.](#)

## TÜRKIYE

**A court has decided that the cost of the HPV vaccine should be covered by the Social Security Institution** 8 June 2023. In a lawsuit regarding the fee of the HPV vaccine, which has been campaigned to be free for a while as it provides essential protection against cervical cancer, a court has decided that the cost of the vaccine should be covered by the Social Security Institution, marking a landmark decision. [Read more.](#)

**The number of unemployed people in Türkiye rose by 0.1 of a percentage points in April from the previous month to 10.2% in April, the country's statistical authority said** 13 June 2023. A commission is set to hold its first meeting later this week to discuss a hike in minimum wages for millions of workers. [Read more.](#)

**The Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change Ministry has recently launched an effort with the goal of transforming 2 million homes in all 81 cities** 28 June 2023. The Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change Ministry has recently launched an effort with the goal of transforming 2 million homes in all 81 cities, with an annual target of 400,000 homes over a five-year period, with a focus on risky areas in 59 provinces and reserve building zones in 65 provinces. [Read more.](#)

### ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

**The main goal of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran in its nuclear is to commercialize its nuclear industry** 13 June 2023. The main goal of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) in its nuclear research (including uranium enrichment, etc.) is to commercialize its nuclear industry by producing various types of products, Spokesman of the AEOL, Behrouz Kamalvandi said. [Read more.](#)

**The overflow of nuclear technology into the medical sector has led to significant progress in the use of radiopharmaceuticals for diagnostic purposes** 14 June 2023. A senior researcher with the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran has hailed the country's self-sufficiency in the field of nuclear industry, saying the overflow of nuclear technology into the medical sector has led to significant progress

always been the backbone of our economic relations. Gazprom company has successfully drilled 20 gas wells in the south of your country," he said. [Read more.](#)

## INDIA

**The Maharashtra government signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a Hydro Pumped Storage Project** 7 June 2023. The Maharashtra government Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding with National Hydro Power Corporation and Torrent Power to generate 13,050 MW power through a Hydro Pumped Storage Project. [Read more.](#)

**India is close to starting a mega hydropower project that has been in the works for 20 years, a key step in the country's energy transition** 14 June 2023. State-run hydropower company NHPC Ltd. will start trial runs in July for the Subansiri Lower project that runs through the states of Assam and Arunchal Pradesh in the country's north-east. The first unit is expected to be commissioned in December, according to finance director Rajendra Prasad Goyal. By the end of 2024, all eight units will be commissioned, he said. [Read more.](#)

**India's top oil companies have set some of the most ambitious net-zero goals on the planet** 30 June 2023. India's top oil companies, led by explorer Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and refiner IOC, have set some of the most ambitious net-zero goals on the planet, well ahead of India's plans to slash emissions -- the national target of 2070 is the farthest among major nations. [Read more.](#)

**India's Adani Group is looking to complete the renewable energy project in Sri Lanka by December 2024** 13 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

## TÜRKIYE

**Sales of electric vehicles in Türkiye skyrocketed in the year through May** 6 June 2023. Sales of electric vehicles in Türkiye skyrocketed in the year through May, propelled by the launch of the country's first indigenous car and arrival of new brands. Some 7,526 battery-power cars exchanged hands during the January-May period, according to the Automotive Distributors and Mobility Association data that showed overall vehicle sales in Türkiye achieved their best May and five-month figures ever. [Read more.](#)

**The energy demands of some 2,200 households in Türkiye's southeastern Bitlis are being met through the utilization of the waste** 15 June 2023. The energy demands of some 2,200 households in Türkiye's southeastern Bitlis are being met through the utilization of the waste being processed at the local solid waste site, a public officer of the association in charge of the process noted on Tuesday. [Read more.](#)

**Construction of Türkiye's first nuclear power plant, the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant in southern Mersin province, is progressing at an impressive pace** 27 June 2023. Denis Sezemin, the production and construction organization director of the power plant, has confirmed that the first unit is on track to be completed this year. [Read more.](#)



### About SANS

The South & South-West Asia Network on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 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 details on SANS, click [here](#).

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

## D. International Cooperation

### BANGLADESH

**The government of Japan has decided to provide the IOM with USD 0.5 million assistance in response to the super Cyclone Mocha** 7 June 2023. The government of Japan has decided to provide the IOM with USD 0.5 million assistance in response to the super Cyclone Mocha which made landfall on 14 May and hit Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar. [Read more.](#)

**About \$1 billion in budget support is set to arrive in the next few days from three development partners to help the government meet its deficit financing for this fiscal year** 15 June 2023. Of the sum, \$400 million is coming from the Asian Development Bank, another \$400 million from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and \$216 million from the Japan International Cooperation Agency. [Read more.](#)

**The ADB and the government of Bangladesh Sunday signed a loan agreement for \$400 million to build a dual-gauge railway connecting Chattogram and Cox's Bazar to promote trade, investment, and tourism in Bangladesh** 26 June 2023. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahrar Alam Sunday said the government is still determined to go for a "small trial," in terms of Rohingya

### NEPAL

**An agreement to construct a dry port at Dodhara Chandani in Kanchanpur has sent waves of happiness to the locals** 5 June 2023. The agreement to this effect was reached between Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi during the former's official visit to India recently. Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies Madhu Kumar Marasini on behalf of Nepal, and Ambassador of India to Nepal, Naveen Srivastava exchanged a memorandum of understanding in this regard. [Read more.](#)

**The National Human Rights Commission of Nepal and Qatar on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate on protecting the rights of migrant workers** 8 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

### SRI LANKA

**The State Bank of India had extended the tenure of the USD 1 billion Credit Facility** 1 June 2023. The Indian High Commission said that following a request from Sri Lanka, the State Bank of India had extended the tenure of the USD 1 billion Credit Facility, provided in March 2022, for the procurement

**INDIA**

The World Bank has approved a USD 255.5 million loan for improving the quality of technical education in government-run institutions in India 26 June 2023. Over the next five years, the project will support around 275 government-run technical institutions in selected states across the country, benefitting more than 350,000 students each year. [Read more.](#)

**ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN**

Iran's permanent representative at the UN has urged the European governments to refrain from "provocative and unconstructive attitudes" 8 June 2023. Iran's permanent representative at the UN office in Vienna has urged the European governments to refrain from "provocative and unconstructive attitudes" and instead work with the Islamic Republic to resolve the "shared concerns." [Read more.](#)

Ranil Wickremesinghe held a meeting with Robert Floyd, the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. [Read more.](#)

The World Bank has approved \$700 million in financing to help Sri Lanka implement foundational reforms that restore macroeconomic stability and sustainability 30 June 2023. [Read more.](#)

**TÜRKIYE**

Erdogan has called on his top EU counterparts to intensify the bilateral dialogue between Ankara and Brussels to promote positive agenda 9 June 2023. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has called on his top EU counterparts to intensify the bilateral dialogue between Ankara and Brussels to further promote positive agenda that includes visa liberalization and modernization of the customs union. [Read more.](#)

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

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



April 2023



May 2022

ESCAP SOUTH NEWSLETTER  
JANUARY 2023




**COVER ARTICLE: SIXTH SOUTH AND SOUTH-WEST ASIA FORUM ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS COMMITTS TO STRONGER REGIONAL COOPERATION TO OVERCOME GLOBAL CHALLENGES**



The Sixth South and South-West Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals was held from 5 to 7 December 2022 in Islamabad, Pakistan, in cooperation with the Government of Pakistan and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute.

This year's theme, "Accelerating the recovery from COVID-19 and the full implementation of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development" at all levels, provided a unique platform to facilitate discussions on accelerating global challenges within the subregion that were aggravated by the S CoV - climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and conflict.

January 2023

ESCAP SOUTH NEWSLETTER  
OCTOBER 2021




**I. Key Activities during July - Sep 2021**

**1. ESCAP project "E-commerce capacity building program for women-led SMEs in South Asia" presented at the WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender**



Geneva, Switzerland, 16 July 2021. The ESCAP Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia and the Enhanced Integrated Frameworks, Geneva (EIF) jointly presented and shared their experiences of implementing the project "E-commerce capacity building program for women-led SMEs in South Asia" at the WTO Informal Working Group on Trade and Gender. During the session, objectives, outputs, results, and impact made so far were presented to the WTO members. The meeting was informed about the e-commerce project for women-led, small and medium enterprises, its training programs conducted for 1000 women entrepreneurs to date, and how they have enhanced their knowledge about e-commerce, successfully registered with the e-commerce platform and used digital media to promote their businesses.

October 2021

ESCAP SOUTH NEWSLETTER  
JANUARY 2022




**I. Key Activities during Oct - Dec 2021**

**1. Fifth South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals calls for building back better from COVID-19 while accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in South and South-West Asia**



January 2022

ESCAP SOUTH NEWSLETTER  
APRIL 2021




**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 on a new challenge from United Nations to head the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID), New Delhi, several public sector firms. Since 2009, Dr. Kumar has served UNESCAP in different senior management roles including as Chief Economic Officer, Monitoring, Policy and Planning, and Development, and Senior Development Officer, based at the UNESCAP headquarters in Bangkok. Before joining UNESCAP in 2009, Dr. Kumar was the Vice-Chief of the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RISDC), a World Bank Group project unit at the International Centre for Economic Research (ICER), at UNESCAP in Bhujwala, the National (1991-1995), a PhD from the State School of Economics, Dr. Kumar is recipient of the East South Asia International Trade Network Award and UN Women Research Medal. He has researched extensively on different aspects of economic development, including the publication of 40 books, over 400 papers, reports of United Nations and PNG, and over 100 peer-reviewed papers, attracting nearly 7000 academic citations.



While the staff comprising the development strategies and the core network in South Asia and beyond, he has helped to establish the UNESCAP Office as a leading regional development partner in the subregion, enhancing visibility and outreach of UNESCAP's work. The UNESCAP Office has served Dr. Kumar all his time in the South Asia subregion.

April 2021

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