Message

Mio Oka, Country Director

Welcome to this latest issue of the India Resident Mission’s e-Newsletter! In the first 2024 edition of the e-Newsletter, I extend a belated but sincere new year greeting to you and your families, wishing you a very happy, healthy, and prosperous 2024.

It is a great privilege for me to lead ADB operations in India as a new country director. It will be my mission to build on our strong partnership with the Government of India and work with all other stakeholders to support the country’s priority development needs. I have already reached out to many stakeholders and will take the opportunity to meet all our partners over the coming weeks and months.

As country director, my mandate is to carry forward ADB’s commitment to bolster India’s inclusive and green growth momentum through strategic investments to address critical challenges in infrastructure, human development, and climate risk vulnerability, while simultaneously promoting private sector development.

Aligned to these commitments, ADB inked $2.59 billion in sovereign lending to India in 2023, accompanied by $16.31 million in technical assistance and $5.25 million in grants. Our current India sovereign portfolio comprises 73 projects with a total investment of $15.7 billion. Furthermore, our private sector operations topped $1 billion in investments during the year.

Recently, we reviewed ADB’s active portfolio and the prospective lending pipeline during the first tripartite review meeting of the year in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. This marked our first in-person, off-site review since the waning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Led by the Department of Economic Affairs, the discussions were enriched by participation of officials from the ADB-funded project executing and implementing agencies, and ADB staff, some of whom connected remotely from our headquarters. I urge you to have a look at the special coverage on the meeting featured in this issue.

Also in this issue, we put a Spotlight on ADB’s policy-based lending operations that are supporting the government’s reforms agenda across the urban, energy, and health sectors and promoting industrial corridor and logistics development.

Other coverage features an ADB-funded project that is promoting gender responsive and socially inclusive urban services in Madhya Pradesh a throwback on our operations in 2023, and we also report on our latest events and activities, and knowledge work.

We look forward to your valuable feedback.
ADB Supports India’s Key Reforms Agenda Through Policy-Based Lending

The Government of India has initiated holistic reforms to help India become a developed country by 2047. These reforms target robust macroeconomic growth alongside all-inclusive microeconomic welfare, promote climate action, and spur technology-enabled progress, while fostering private sector investment.

Reforms across various sectors are designed to drive inclusive development, enhance infrastructure investments and job creation, improve local service delivery, ensure good governance, foster green growth, advance skills development, and strengthen the financial sector.

As India’s long-term development partner, ADB supports government reform initiatives that align with national development priorities. ADB’s policy-based lending (PBL) operations strategically support sector and inter-sector reform programs to catalyze macroeconomic development. The targeted interventions may include introduction or revisions of laws, regulations, and
policies to address structural bottlenecks and strengthen the capacity of both central and state institutions.

Currently, ADB's PBL operations support the government's reform efforts in the urban, energy, and health sectors, as well as the policy and regulatory frameworks for industrial corridor and logistics development.

These initiatives align with the government's flagship initiatives that are driving reforms across these sectors. They include

INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

One of India’s key development challenges is raising its manufacturing competitiveness. To tackle this, the government unveiled the National Industrial Corridor Development Program (NICDP), which aims to pursue integrated corridor development to increase the competitiveness of India’s manufacturing sector, strengthen national supply chains and links with regional and global value chains, and create more and better jobs.

ADB supports the NICDP through a programmatic, two-phase PBL, with each phase valued at $250 million. The first subprogram, approved in 2021, aims to help develop an institutional and regulatory framework and lay out policy guidelines for industrial clusters and corridors developed by the states participating in the NICDP.

The subprogram builds on ADB’s prior support developing state-level industrial corridors such as the Vizag–Chennai Industrial Corridor. This approach involves the creation of an efficient multimodal transport network underpinned by quality infrastructure and logistics within a defined geography, and a policy framework that facilitates business operations for integration with global production networks.

The aim is to strengthen industrial corridor management by supporting the integration of institutions and synchronization of policies between federal and state governments. Policy actions supported include developing the green corridor framework, launching an industrial landbank, upgrading the industrial park rating system, integrating the national single window clearance system, developing a framework for inclusive housing of workers, and linking industrial corridor development with the Skill India initiative. These actions are building synergy between the industrial corridor development program and India’s reform agenda.

The follow up and second subprogram, approved in 2023, will help develop multimodal logistics infrastructure in industrial corridors under the government’s Prime Minister Gati Shakti platform. In addition, it will help industrial corridors develop alternative financing solutions, such as green finance, for industrial cluster development, improve industrial workplace safety, and integrate environment and climate change practices in these areas.

PM Gati Shakti, or the national masterplan for multi-modal connectivity, national logistics policy, national industrial corridor development program, power distribution program, Ayushman Bharat health mission, and urban missions such as AMRUT 2.0.

The following are some ADB-supported programs that align with the government's objectives.
STRENGTHENING MULTIMODAL AND INTEGRATED LOGISTICS ECOSYSTEM PROGRAM

India is prioritizing multimodal logistics infrastructure development to increase its logistics efficiency.

High logistics costs, estimated at nearly 14% of India’s gross domestic product, hamper the country’s economic competitiveness and productivity, particularly for manufacturing, services, and trade. For planned and coordinated development of logistics, the government launched the Prime Minister Gati Shakti multimodal connectivity program in 2021, which aims to integrate transport infrastructure development plans for ports, airports, highways, railways, and inland waterways; incorporate intermodal connectivity; and promote integrated and coordinated planning and implementation of these facilities. To complement these efforts, India launched the National Logistics Policy in 2022 to enhance the efficiency of its logistics ecosystem. ADB’s support to the Logistics Division since 2015 helped in shaping the policy.

ADB is supporting the government in undertaking wide-ranging reforms in the logistics sector through its Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem Program. Subprogram 1, approved in 2022 and valued at $250 million, aims to (i) establish and operationalize a comprehensive policy framework to enhance logistics efficiency through multimodal logistics infrastructure development at the national, state, and city levels; (ii) strengthen supply chains; (iii) incentivize greater private sector investment in logistics; (iv) improve efficiencies in external trade logistics; and (v) adopt smart systems for efficient and low-emission logistics.

SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY PROGRAM

ADB is supporting India’s urban sector reforms to ensure universal delivery of basic urban services such as water and sanitation.

The government aims to develop urban areas as engines of economic growth. As part of the COVID-19 pandemic recovery process, the government accelerated urban reforms in 2021, prioritizing universal delivery of basic urban services. It also shifted from grant-financing projects (input-based) to performance- and outcome-based grants for service delivery improvement and reforms.

In line with these objectives and leveraging ADB’s long-term engagement in the state-level urban sector and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in implementing urban flagship missions, ADB approved the two-part Sustainable Urban Development and Service Delivery Program. ADB also engaged with the 15th Finance Commission and provided inputs on performance-based fiscal transfers to urban local bodies.

Designed as a PBL, the program is supporting the government’s urban reform agenda for improving the quality of urban life with the creation of high-quality urban infrastructure, assured public services, and efficient governance systems. The subprograms support policy actions sequentially at the national level (subprogram 1) and ensure that reforms are undertaken coherently at the state and urban local body levels (subprogram 2).

Subprogram 1, worth $350 million, established national policies and guidelines to improve basic urban services under major reforms proposed through urban flagship missions such as AMRUT 2.0, Prime Minister Awas Yojana (a housing scheme for urban areas), and municipal reforms and local resource generation recommended by the 15th Finance Commission. It also helped select low-income states and urban local bodies that would implement policy reforms, prepare investment plans, and provide recommendations on cross-cutting issues like climate change, environmental and social safeguards assessment, and gender equality and social inclusion. Subprogram 2, worth $400 million, helps individual states implement policies and guidelines established to achieve these objectives.
POWER SECTOR REFORM PROGRAM

Reforms in the power sector will facilitate accelerated deployment of solar and other renewable energy technologies.

Given ADB’s long-standing engagement in India’s power sector, the government requested ADB’s financial and advisory support for its comprehensive reforms in the power sector at the national and state levels. The programmatic PBL, consisting of two subprograms worth $250 million each, would enable the reforms to be undertaken in a coherent and sequential manner.

The first of the two-part program, approved in 2023, will strengthen the development of markets for power trade and related ancillary services. This will facilitate the integration of intermittent renewable energy in line with India’s target of having 50% of its power generation capacity come from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. These policy actions will, among others, help accelerate the deployment of solar and other renewable energy technologies and promote the use of renewables in the agriculture sector.

It will further support reforms required to restore the financial viability of power distribution companies through measures to improve their financial performance, corporate governance, and service quality besides creating a conducive environment for private sector investment. It will aid in the implementation of an incentive-based, results-oriented approach to improving power distribution companies’ performance on parameters including losses, cost recovery, metering, and timely payment of dues in order to access government budget support.

MAHARASHTRA TERTIARY CARE AND MEDICAL EDUCATION SECTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

ADB’s long-term support to India’s health sector development and reforms continues with the Maharashtra Tertiary Care and Medical Education Sector Development Program.

ADB has supported health sector development and reforms in India for nearly a decade through sector diagnostic and design work, technical assistance, program lending, and project investments. These interventions targeted urban primary care, the COVID-19 pandemic response including vaccinations, and health system strengthening to enhance resilience.

The Maharashtra Tertiary Care and Medical Education Sector Development Program deepens this engagement by targeting medical education and tertiary health care at the state level. Lessons learned from ADB’s experience in implementing Ayushman Bharat and PM-Jay initiatives helped shape the program.

The program includes a sector development component, a $150 million loan approved in 2023, to drive policy actions in Maharashtra’s tertiary healthcare and medical education system. These actions will build the necessary policy, legal, and institutional building blocks to facilitate the next phase of ADB’s investment, amounting to $350 million, to build four medical colleges and tertiary hospitals in underserved districts.

Policy actions target creating an enabling environment for recruiting and retaining quality doctors and staff through performance-based incentives, developing a new talent management policy, and establishing India’s first state-led health care and medical education centers of excellence. They also aim to reduce out-of-pocket expenditure through better availability of quality drugs; support efficient management of assets and their sustainability; and develop healthy competition among medical colleges through a performance management system.
The year 2023 marked the approval of ADB's new country partnership strategy (CPS) for India for 2023–2027. Besides serving as a strategic anchor for ADB’s public and private sector operations, pipeline building, and heightened climate focus, the strategy identifies pathways to address the twin challenges faced by other multilateral development agencies in India of achieving scale and maximizing value-addition.

These pathways are differentiated approaches to respond to the unique development needs of India’s leading and lagging states; preparing upstream studies on topics for market development to open opportunities for public–private partnerships or private investments; and scaling-up knowledge, program replication, and capacity development.

The CPS targets $5 billion in public sector projects to be signed each year compared to $3.5 billion during the previous CPS period. This ambition also stems from the increased lending headroom facilitated by ADB’s capital adequacy framework update last year, which will result in an ADB-wide increase of $10 billion each year until 2033.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ADB’S 2023 OPERATIONS

In 2023, the ADB Board approved 19 public sector projects amounting to $3.98 billion for India. Of these, 12 projects worth $2.59 billion were signed, including flagship policy-based lending programs on industrial corridor development, urban development, power sector reforms, and regional rapid transit solutions.

Seven of these projects were in lagging states in line with the strategic focus on developing basic infrastructure and services in these states. On climate financing, $1.25 billion of the total committed program of $2.59 billion was achieved in 2023, compared to $965 million in 2022.

Among the committed projects, the bank continued to support to the government’s urban reforms agenda and promotion of cities as engines of economic growth with a $400 million policy-based loan that will support investment planning and reform actions at the state and urban local body levels. In continued support to expand urban services in Rajasthan, ADB committed a $200 million program loan that will benefit 1.2 million residents across at least 10 urban local bodies. A $100 million loan was furthermore extended to improve urban services and create tourism facilities in Tripura.
ADB also provided a $141 million loan for the Visakhapatnam–Chennai Industrial Corridor Development Program to support integrated industrial and urban planning and investment promotion. Additionally, three $250 million projects were committed to promote power sector reforms to facilitate the shift to renewable energy, support India's industrial corridor development to enhance manufacturing competitiveness, and construct the 82 kilometer Delhi-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System. ADB committed two $200 million loans to expand the transmission and distribution network and urban services in Uttarakhand.

To better link remote rural areas to urban centers and markets, ADB committed a $295 million loan to help widen and upgrade about 265 kilometers of state highways in the state of Bihar and a $175 million loan to support road subsector development with climate resilience and safety features in Madhya Pradesh. A $130 million loan was provided to boost horticulture development in Himachal Pradesh. Besides this, ADB’s private sector operations in 2023 committed $770 million for 10 projects as well as multiple transactions under the Micro Finance Program, Supply Chain Program, and ADB Ventures. In addition, ADB mobilized $455 million in commitments from co-lenders, surpassing the $1 billion mark in private sector commitments in 2023.

ADB's private sector investments were guided by the twin principles of filling market gaps and establishing additionality. In the future, ADB will increasingly look to support multidisciplinary projects that combine public and private sector components. Support from the Department of Economic Affairs would be needed to identify ways to bring in private sector development at the pre-preliminary project reports stage. Sustained effort with suitable incentives is also needed to link One ADB upstream strategic studies with midstream and downstream investments.

Reforms in the power sector will facilitate accelerated deployment of solar and other renewable energy technologies.
Ms. Mio Oka recently joined as the new Country Director of ADB’s India Resident Mission. In a candid interview with Urban Transport News, she talks about her vision, ADB’s long-standing partnership with the Government of India, her focus on addressing critical development challenges, and key sectors of ADB support going forward. Excerpts from the interview are provided below.

Access the full interview here.

On ADB’s partnership with the Government of India:

Mio Oka: We, at ADB, value highly the trust the Government of India (GOI) has reposed in the bank since the start of our operations in 1986. As Country Director, I look forward to further solidifying this partnership to support the country’s development ambitions. Overall, we aim to help India achieve robust growth, with climate and private sector focus keeping inclusive development goals in mind. The strategic roadmap for this engagement is already charted in the Country Partnership Strategy or CPS for 2023–2027, prepared in consultation with the Government of India and approved by the ADB Board in May 2023. This will be achieved through accelerated structural transformation and job creation, addressing infrastructure gaps, promoting climate-resilient green growth, and enhancing social and economic inclusiveness while deploying smart technologies and innovations. ADB will combine financing, knowledge support, and partnerships to offer integrated solutions and ensure optimal development impact.

On how ADB would address critical challenges in infrastructure, human development, and climate risk vulnerability:

Mio Oka: First, we remain committed to support India’s national goal of strengthening infrastructure under the PM Gati Shakti Program and the National Infrastructure Plan. Our financing will be directed to support multisectoral areas such as logistics, industrial estates, and economic corridor development. To improve quality of life in urban areas and promote cities as engines of economic growth, ADB is supporting expansion of universal coverage of basic urban services. Second, for strengthening human capital, ADB has been increasing investments in skills, education, and health sectors besides promoting rural development. Last but not the least, supporting India’s climate agenda will remain at the front and center of our India program in the next 5 years. We will assist in mainstreaming climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives across all sectors. Our support will be anchored in decarbonization of transport, clean energy transition, circular economy, integrated water resource management, and climate adaption focusing on disaster resilience.

On key sectors and projects to ensure inclusive, resilient, and sustainable growth:

Mio Oka: Our assistance to India is guided by the CPS aligned to India’s development priorities. We will support projects and programs that will accelerate structural transformation and job creation through convergence of logistics–industry–urban–skilling programs, coupled with support for micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises. In parallel, we will expand assistance to education, health, social protection, and rural development to support the objective of inclusive and broad-based development. Geographically, our support will focus on lagging states and underdeveloped districts of high-income states. Apart from that, our projects consciously incorporate inclusiveness elements towards gender, lower-skilled workers, at-risk communities, and aspirational states while incorporating sustainable solutions.
On ADB’s role in tackling diverse development challenges across regions and states:

Mio Oka: ADB will continue to expand support to the social sector to help build human capital, especially of low-income and marginalized groups, thereby, increasing their potential to participate in economic activities. Personally, having recently switched from the agriculture sector, we see the role of rural development in addressing poverty while also keeping focus on basic urban services, prioritizing lagging states and districts. In addition, to meet the divergent needs of states, ADB pursues a differentiated approach. For low-income states, we prioritize projects on basic services, critical infrastructure and services, institutional strengthening, and private sector development through strategic long-term engagement. Support to higher and middle-income states/cities would promote innovation, scalable models and focus on transformational programs with policy and knowledge advice. In addition, ADB has introduced a new funding modality, project readiness financing, to help states with limited capacity in preparing readily investable projects. The financing is used to help executing agencies’ project preparation activities, such as detailed engineering design, preparation of safeguards and bidding documents, and upfront capacity building. ADB has already extended this modality to several northeastern states and Himachal Pradesh.

On ADB support to gender equality:

Mio Oka: Accelerating progress in gender equality in Asia and the Pacific region is an operational priority of ADB’s Strategy 2030 and a key priority of India CPS. Our India operations aim to accelerate progress in gender equality by empowering women and girls in areas such as education, health, financial inclusion, decision-making and leadership, and promoting women’s resilience to external shocks. With gender equality mainstreamed at all levels, more than 90% of our approved and pipeline projects in 2023 and 2024 incorporate gender mainstreaming elements. Looking ahead, a gender equality and social inclusion laboratory is proposed to identify gender-themed initiatives and build on gender mainstreaming activities at the project level with provision to strengthen capacity of project implementing agencies in promoting gender initiatives.
SENIOR IAS OFFICER VIKAS SHEEL APPOINTED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

Seasoned bureaucrat Vikash Sheel has been appointed as the Executive Director of the Asian Development Bank, as per an order from the Ministry of Personnel.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK APPOINTS MIO OKA AS COUNTRY DIRECTOR FOR INDIA

Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Monday appointed Mio Oka as its country director for India. She will succeed Takeo Konishi who has been promoted as ADB Director General for South Asia at the Manila headquarters.

ADB RAISES INDIA'S GDP GROWTH FORECAST FOR FY25 TO 7%

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday raised India's GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal to 7 per cent, from 6.7 per cent earlier, saying the robust growth will be driven by public and private sector investment and improvement in consumer demand. In its April edition of the Asian Development Outlook, ADB said India would remain "a major growth engine" in the Asia and Pacific region.

PVT INVESTMENTS RISE IN INDIA VERY VISIBLE, SAYS ADB VICE PRESIDENT

The resurgence in private investments in India is "very visible" now, Bhargav Dasgupta, vice-president (Market Solutions) at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said on Tuesday, adding that the multilateral lender, too, is looking at ramping up its private sector initiatives in the country, especially in areas like climate change.
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA AND ADB SIGN $200 MILLION LOAN TO TACKLE FLOOD AND EROSION RISK ALONG BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Friday signed a $200 million loan to strengthen flood and riverbank erosion risk management along the 650 kilometer long main stem of the Brahmaputra River in the state of Assam.

INDIA, ADB SIGN $181 MILLION LOAN TO IMPROVE LIVABILITY AND MOBILITY IN AHMEDABAD

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a $181 million loan to build quality infrastructure and services toward improving urban livability and mobility in the peri-urban areas of Ahmedabad city in Gujarat.

GOVT, ADB INK USD 23 MILLION LOAN PACT TO STRENGTHEN FINTECH ECOSYSTEM IN INDIA

The government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Thursday signed a USD 23 million loan agreement to enhance access to quality fintech education, research, and innovation at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City. GIFT City is an initiative of the Centre and the Gujarat government to foster India’s financial services and fintech ecosystem.

‘WITH ADB HELP, HP TO SPEND RS 2.5K CR ON TOURISM INFRA’

RS Bali, Chairman, Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation, said the state government would spend Rs 2,500 crore for tourism development in Himachal with the help of the Asian Development Bank. Bali said initially, an amount of Rs 1,300 crore had already been approved.
Meeting Reviews ADB’s India Portfolio and Pipeline Projects for 2024

For over 270 participants from the government, project executing agencies, and ADB who congregated in Chennai on 6–8 February, it was a welcome change to meet face-to-face to discuss the bank’s current India portfolio and pipeline projects for 2024. This was the first off-site, in-person tripartite portfolio/pipeline review meeting organized by ADB’s India Resident Mission since the waning of COVID-19 pandemic.

Chennai’s temperate weather was an added relief, especially for the participants joining from northern India which, at the time, was gripped by a severe cold wave. In-person attendance infused a new energy to discussions as participants from across India discussed systemic issues affecting the overall execution of ADB’s portfolio, shared learnings from their projects, and mingled informally on the sidelines of the talks.

India’s Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance, Joint Secretary Juhi Mukherjee, and Director General of ADB’s South Asia Department Takeo Konishi chaired the meetings, along with the newly appointed Country Director for India, Mio Oka.
PORTFOLIO REVIEW MEETING

The portfolio review meeting on 6–7 February discussed performance of 69 ADB-financed projects, critical issues affecting project implementation, corrective actions to resolve them, and agreed on a time-bound action plan to bring slow-moving projects back on track.

Major reasons for delays in project implementation include obstacles to land acquisition, obtaining forest and environmental clearances, contractor poor performance, cash flow difficulties, termination of contracts, and rebidding.

The meeting also assessed contract award and disbursement projections for 2024. Both the DEA and ADB reiterated the need for strong project and contract management discipline for timely and quality project implementation.

At the outset, DEA Joint Secretary Ms. Mukherjee congratulated all participants from the executing and implementing agencies, state finance departments, project management and implementing units, CAAA, and ADB for the improved implementation quality and progress of ADB’s India portfolio in 2023 over the previous year. Highlighting the importance of the first review meeting of the year in setting the contract award and disbursement targets for 2024, Ms. Mukherjee advised project implementing agencies to be very ambitious in setting out the targets and be committed to achieving them during the year.

ADB’S ONGOING PORTFOLIO IN INDIA BY SECTOR
(AS ON 31 DECEMBER 2023, IN $ MILLION)

Agriculture
$899.0 (5.7%)
6 projects: 6 loans

Finance
$252.0 (1.6%)
2 projects: 2 loans

Urban
$4,583.5 (29.2%
27 projects: 28 loans + 4 grants

Human Development
$1,257.5 (8%)
8 projects: 8 loans

Energy
$2,186.8 (13.9%)
9 projects: 10 loans  + 3 grants

Transport
$6,526 (41.6%)
21 projects: 22 loans + 1 grant

Total Net Portfolio
$15.70 billion
73 Projects
76 loans + 8 grants

$ refers to US dollars

1 Loans included are those that have been approved though not necessarily disbursed. Net amount refers to the principal and supplementary amount of loans/grants less cancellations (includes 6 Project Readiness Financing (PRF))

2 Includes 1 Clean Technology Fund (CTF) loan
ADB Director General Mr. Konishi in his welcome remarks highlighted the importance of robust project readiness and diligent portfolio management, which yielded strong contract award results in 2023. He emphasized the need to mitigate risks, including fund flow and safeguards compliance, to optimize project execution. As of 31 December 2023, ADB’s net portfolio in India was $15.70 billion across 73 projects, with transport and urban sectors constituting the dominant share, followed by energy, human development, agriculture and natural resources, and finance.

Acknowledging India’s important contribution to ADB’s development portfolio, the new Country Director, Ms. Oka, assured ADB’s continued support to the country’s emerging priorities as committed in the Country Partnership Strategy, 2023–2027. Ms. Oka emphasized the need to focus on finance-plus elements aiming at benefits to all.

PIPELINE REVIEW MEETING

The pipeline review meeting on 8 February started with taking stock of 2023 achievements. The ADB Board approved 19 loans worth $3.98 billion during the year, of which 12 loans amounting to $2.59 billion were committed or signed. The meeting took stock of 34 pipeline projects for 2024 and reviewed the progress of project preparation regarding the DEA’s readiness criteria, diving deep into issues faced by the proposed projects.

Mr. Konishi said ADB is committed to building a robust pipeline for India. “It is evident from the participation of most of the sector directors from the ADB headquarters in Manila, who will take the lead in pipeline development in accordance with ADB’s organizations reforms under the New Operating Model,” said ADB South Asia Department Director General Takeo Konishi.

Country Director Ms. Oka said ADB’s priority would be to strengthen its operations on climate change and private sector development and contribute to India’s green and inclusive growth. The 2024 program covers 29 firm projects totaling $3.9 billion, with predominant projects in energy, water and urban development, and transport sectors. Half of these projects are state projects, of which about 92% are in lagging states.
I would like to thank ADB for organizing the TPRM (tripartite portfolio/pipeline review meeting) so well and for bringing together everybody in such a short time in a seamless manner. We have reviewed the portfolio. I have noted ambitious targets for contract awards and disbursements set by the states and project implementing agencies. At DEA, we will provide full support to help them execute and achieve these targets.

“I’m sure all the ADB-funded projects we discussed will eventually go on to be very fruitful and very helpful to the public at large and their ultimate objectives are fulfilled.

“I would again request ADB to share with us more and more expertise, more and more best practices like you have been doing.

“I appreciate that ADB always aligns its policies with the policies of the government. We are happy to partner with ADB for implementing the new Country Partnership Strategy and fulfill the goals and commitments of the Government of India as well as ADB.”
Gandharva Rathore is the project director of the ADB-funded Himachal Pradesh Skill Development Project. “We discussed the project progress at the meeting. We have set up 27 training centers, 15 of which are currently operational. Over 50,000 people have been enrolled in vocational trainings under the project so far,” she said. “More training programs are planned to ensure the aim of boosting the employability of Himachal Pradesh’s youth and improving their employment prospects is met.”

K. Vijayakarthikeyan is project director of the ADB-funded Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Housing for Urban Poor Sector Project in Tamil Nadu.

Speaking about the project’s progress, he said 6,500 houses are being constructed in the cities of Vallam, Kalanivasal, and Rediyarpatti, which would help people who are otherwise living in encroached water bodies to relocate and have climate-resilient, low-cost houses.

“It was a great experience to attend in-person the portfolio review meeting in Chennai. We prefer offline meetings which present a good opportunity to meet everyone and personally discuss project-related issues and learn from each other’s experience.”

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MAKING MEMORIES: PARTICIPANTS CAPTURED ON CAMERA DURING THE REVIEW MEETING IN CHENNAI
Like other Indian states, Madhya Pradesh is rapidly urbanizing, which is likely to exacerbate the already deficient urban infrastructure and basic services. To tackle this challenge, ADB supported the state with a $275 million loan in 2017 to improve urban infrastructure services across 64 small and medium-sized towns in the state.

The Madhya Pradesh Urban Services Improvement Project adopts a sector approach in developing sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient water supply in 64 towns as well as integrated storm water and sewerage infrastructure in four towns. Building on the project learnings, a second phase has been initiated with additional financing for 72 towns.

Affirmative actions to mitigate challenges faced by women and marginalized groups

To maximize the benefits of the infrastructure developed for women and marginalized groups, affirmative actions were included in the project’s gender and social inclusion action plan.

These are structured under two key project outputs:

1. **INCREASED ACCESS OF VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS TO PIPED WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SYSTEMS.**

   The project will provide metered water connections to 30,000 households, thereby increasing piped water supply coverage to 90% of the populations in 64 small and medium-sized towns, which have a higher prevalence of poverty. To date, out of the 198,417 households provided with metered water connections, 61% belong to marginalized social categories (such as scheduled caste or tribe), while of the 730 households provided access to sanitation systems, 77% fell into the same categories. Some 5% of the metered piped water connections and 6% of the sanitation systems provided under the project are to female-headed households.

   ![A capacity-building training session.](image)

2. **GENDER SENSITIVE BEHAVIOR CHANGE AND COMMUNICATION.**

   A gender-sensitive behavior change and communication (BCC) plan has been prepared and implemented in 68 towns, with the participation of 53,878 community members, of whom 56% are women. Women have been engaged as preraks (motivators) to implement the BCC plan, the objective of which is to promote behavior that will lead to people adopting metered connections, improving personal hygiene, and increasing water efficiency through reduced wastage. These messages have been disseminated through 1,284 street plays, 289 billboards across towns, and social media, including Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter.
WOMEN AS SOCIAL MOBILIZERS IN URBAN WATER SUPPLY PROGRAMS

To mitigate stress and disruption in communities that may occur during implementation of infrastructure projects, community women have been engaged as preraks (motivators) to inform community members about the project components, reduce resistance to project activities, and avoid conflicts that may occur during planning, construction, and operation and maintenance. Some 211 preraks across the state have contributed to successful implementation of the project by creating awareness among community members about the project benefits, promoting adoption of metered water connections, linking community members to skilling opportunities, creating linkages between community members and government departments, and ensuring awareness about grievance redressal mechanisms constituted by the project.

Some of the activities under the BCC plan include:

- Awareness raising events in project towns. Awareness raising events are organized on water conservation, environmental protection, hygiene behavior, and complaint mechanisms for when water becomes unavailable or water leakages occur. To date, 215,703 households across 68 project towns have been covered by these activities.

- Training of community women on participatory planning and monitoring. Community groups and neighborhood networks are included in the training for community members on participatory planning, community monitoring and maintenance of water, sanitation, and hygiene practices. These trainings also provide a platform for women to raise their concerns and enhance their ownership of the services and infrastructure developed by the project.

Women’s participation in Grievance Redressal Committees. A three-tier Grievance Redressal Committee (GRC) was formed to resolve community complaints that emerged during the project period. At the lowest level, a five-member committee was constituted in each project town to resolve grievances.
pertaining to loss of property and livelihoods due to the works during the construction and maintenance period of the project. Complaints related to leakage of pipes, low water pressure, and other related issues are also addressed through GRCs. Out of the 340 members in 68 GRCs, 102, or 30%, are women. In tribal towns, efforts were made to include tribal women in the committees.

Creation of Gender Budget Cell in Urban Development and Housing Department. A Gender Budget Cell with clearly defined composition, roles, and responsibilities was established in the Urban Development and Housing Department to mainstream gender concerns in its planning and budgetary processes. The cell will enable the department to monitor expenditure and service delivery from a gender perspective, even beyond the project period.

Enhancing capacities on gender-responsive urban service delivery. Nearly 4,000 staff of the state urban development department, urban local bodies, and service utilities have been trained through 56 programs on gender-responsive urban service delivery and on management and monitoring of design–build–operate project performance and sustainability of services. Notably, 92% of the female staff of the Madhya Pradesh Urban Development Company (MPUDC), urban local bodies, and service utilities have been covered through these trainings.

Women's participation in livelihood opportunities and skills. Training for women has been organized for non-traditional professional skills like plumbing, meter installation, meter reading, and leakage detection. These skills will enable them to increase their income in the near future, particularly during the project’s operation and maintenance phase.
Events

ADB Joins International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

Country Director Mio Oka in her remarks at the closing plenary of the conference on 25 April emphasized the importance of attracting private sector investments and creating bankable projects for climate adaptation. To achieve this, multilateral development banks (MDBs), governments and private sector should work collectively to foster an enabling environment and generate viable investment prospects, she said. The two-day conference was organized by the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure—a global partnership of governments, UN agencies and MDBs including ADB to promote infrastructure systems that could withstand climate and disaster risks. India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the conference on 24 April.

ADB Vice President Visits India

ADB Vice President (Market Solutions) Bhargav Dasgupta visited India from 18 to 22 March. During his visit, Mr. Bhargav met with India’s Minister of Finance and ADB Governor Nirmala Sitharaman and the Ministry of Finance Department of Economic Affairs Secretary and Alternate Governor Ajay Seth in New Delhi to map out strategic partnerships for Viksit Bharat 2047, India’s blueprint to becoming a fully developed nation by 2047. They discussed how ADB and the government can ramp up private sector initiatives and public-private partnerships to drive climate action, sustainable infrastructure, and urban rejuvenation. Mr. Bhargav also met with several corporate executives to shape potential collaborations on energy transition, infrastructure finance, capital investments, health infrastructure, and financial services.

ADB Joins High-Level Workshop on Multilateral Development Bank Financing in Delhi

India’s Department of Economic Affairs Secretary and ADB Alternate Governor Ajay Seth, along with senior central government secretaries, joined a seminar on “Facilitating Strategic Engagement with Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) for a Future-Ready India” on 7 March. Over 200 representatives from the government, MDBs, and private sector joined the discussions on ways to maximize the value addition of MDB financing. ADB staff from sector groups and the South Asia Regional Department actively participated across different sessions through Country Director Mio Oka; Regional Head, Private Sector Development, Takeo Koike; sector directors from energy and energy transition, and procurement specialists. Representatives from the World Bank, AIIB, NDB, IFAD, IFC, and EBRD joined the discussions.
Country Director Mio Oka joined the workshop on MDB financing in Delhi.

WEBINAR DISCUSSES ADB LOAN FINANCING OPTIONS FOR BORROWERS

The India Resident Mission’s Capacity Development Resource Center, in collaboration with the Treasury Department, organized on 6 March a webinar on ADB loan financing options for India clients. The webinar provided details on key features of ADB flexible loan products, loan conversion options, local currency loan products, and so on. The aim of the webinar was to build capacity among India clients to make informed decisions on selecting the optimal financial terms in the context of project and debt management. Country Director Mio Oka gave opening remarks and Assistant Treasurer Jonathan P. Grosvenor gave the inaugural address. Over 90 participants from the Department of Economic Affairs, state finance departments, and other key agencies joined the webinar.

India Resident Mission staff celebrate International Women’s Day.

ADB TEAM MEETS WITH UTTAR PRADESH OFFICIALS

An ADB team led by Country Director Mio Oka met with the Government of Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra in Lucknow on 4 March to discuss the ongoing and potential collaboration between ADB and the state in different sectors. The chief secretary said there was potential for increased collaboration with ADB as the state was growing fast and had large funding requirements. The country director briefed him about ADB’s value addition in the climate change, energy, urban, health, skills, tourism, and agriculture sectors and highlighted potential projects such as Buddhist Circuit Tourism. The ADB team also met with the Additional Chief Secretary Finance to present ADB’s financing options in different currencies, which will address cost of funding concerns.

ADB’s India Resident Mission celebrated International Women’s Day by highlighting ADB’s commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment. Country Director Mio Oka emphasized ADB’s commitment to incorporate gender equality in planning and India operations as highlighted in the 2023–2027 Country Partnership Strategy for India. Further, ADB is setting up a gender equality and social inclusion laboratory to promote dialogue between ADB and the government and develop good practice demonstration models on women’s economic empowerment, education, and skills development. Aligned with this year’s theme “Invest in Her, Increase Impact,” videos showcasing success stories from the resident mission’s projects in India were screened at the event. Young women from two ongoing India projects visited the resident mission and shared their transformational journey in challenging gender stereotypes and becoming economically independent. Staff also shared reflections and their commitment to fostering gender equality.

Participants of the webinar.
ADB in India

Country Director Mio Oka and the ADB team meet with Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra in Lucknow.

ADB JOINS INDIA CLIMATE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS’ MEET

Country Director Mio Oka delivered a keynote address virtually to the “Innovative Financing for Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience” panel at the Development Partners’ Meet in Goa on 20–21 February. In her address, she emphasized the urgent need for collaborative efforts in mobilizing innovative financing to support India’s transition towards low-carbon and climate-resilient development. The event, jointly organized by the Government of Goa and World Bank, brought together officials from central and state government agencies, IFC, AfDB, AFD, GIZ, leaders and experts to explore groundbreaking strategies and solutions for tackling climate challenges.

ADB JOINS ROUNDTABLE ON ECONOMIC CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA’S NORTHEAST REGION

Deputy Country Director Hoe Yun Jeong, in his special address at the roundtable on the Inter Country Economic Corridor in Northeast of India for Inclusive Growth on 16 February, presented ADB’s 360-degree approach to corridor, logistics, trade facilitation, and skills development in South Asia. He shared lessons learned from ADB’s decade-long experience in multidisciplinary and integrated corridor and logistics development in the subregion—supporting conceptual and master planning studies, policy and regulatory reforms, institutional strengthening, investment promotion, and financing critical infrastructure. Mr. Jeong highlighted the Northeast Economic Corridor feasibility study that identified economic drivers and a multimodal transport network that will better link the northeast with India’s main hubs and connect India with its South Asian neighbors, serving as a gateway to the Associated of South East Asian Nations. Organized by the Government of Assam, the roundtable was attended by senior officials from state governments, India’s Ministry of External Affairs, and consul generals of South Asian countries.

REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE ROLE OF INSURANCE IN CLIMATE FINANCING HELD IN DELHI

On 15 February, ADB Finance Sector Group and the India Resident Mission co-organized a regional workshop on the “Role of Insurance in Financing Climate Risk,” with the support of the Department of Economic Affairs, as a follow-up to India’s G20 Presidency 2023. Country Director Mio Oka hosted the opening session and introduced India’s Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran, who discussed how insurance and other innovative risk financing mechanisms from the private sector, governments, and multilateral organizations can help to address the multiple dimensions of climate risks. ADB Sectors Group Director General and Group Chief Ramesh Subramaniam stated in his opening remarks that insurance forms part of a comprehensive disaster and climate risk management approach and highlighted concrete examples on how ADB is integrating insurance to support finance operations. The workshop was attended by public and private stakeholders from India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, and Viet Nam, as well as by representatives of the Insurance Development Forum and donor funds such as the Global Risk Modeling Allianz and the Global Shield against Climate Risk.
SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR GENERAL MEETS INDIA ALTERNATE GOVERNOR, DISCUSSES KEY OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

Director General Takeo Konishi on 9 February met with India’s Department of Economic Affairs Secretary and Alternate Governor Ajay Seth to introduce the new India Resident Mission Country Director, Mio Oka, brief on key achievements of ADB’s 2023 India operations, and discuss priority areas of collaboration aligned to the 2023–2027 Country Partnership Strategy. During discussions, Mr. Konishi highlighted the prior year’s progress in the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation program and focus on building a robust pipeline through upstream knowledge work and strategic engagement with states and central line ministries to support India’s development priorities, with a focus on climate initiatives. While seeking the department’s ongoing support to ADB operations, Mr. Konishi expressed ADB’s readiness to enhance lending to India with the additional lending headroom from the reforms to ADB’s Capital Adequacy Framework, and explore mobilizing concessional financing to lower costs. In Delhi, Mr. Konishi met with secretaries of the ministries of environment, forest, and climate change, and heavy industries to discuss ongoing and proposed projects. In Chennai, Mr. Konishi and sector directors met with the chief secretary and senior officials of the Government of Tamil Nadu to discuss ADB’s long-term partnership with the state and proposed interventions across various sectors.

ADB HOLDS THE YEAR’S FIRST PORTFOLIO AND PIPELINE REVIEW MEETINGS

India’s Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) Joint Secretary Juhi Mukherjee and ADB South Asia Regional Department Director General Takeo Konishi chaired the year’s first portfolio and pipeline review meetings, along with Country Director Mio Oka, in Chennai on 6–8 February. Over 270 participants from the government, executing agencies, and ADB joined the meetings. Most sector directors in charge of India operations travelled from Manila to participate in the meetings. The portfolio review meeting discussed performance of ADB-financed projects and critical project implementation issues, identified measures to improve portfolio performance, and assessed contract award and disbursement projections for 2024. DEA and ADB reiterated the need for strong project and contract management discipline for timely and quality project implementation. Separately, tripartite discussions were completed for 34 selected pipeline projects under processing. This was followed by bilateral discussions between ADB and DEA, where ADB sector group directors presented their respective sector strategic approaches in alignment with the India Country Partnership Strategy, their project pipelines for 2025–2027, and issues where they needed support from the DEA.
ADB JOINS CONFERENCE ON WATER VISION

Deputy Country Director Hoe Yun Jeong participated in the All-India Secretaries Conference on Water Vision@2047—Way Ahead held in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu on 23–24 January, which was organized by the National Water Mission, Ministry of Jal Shakti (water resources), Government of India. Minister of Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat addressed the conference, which reviewed the progress on the 22 actionable items finalized in last year’s first Conference of Ministers on Water Vision 2047—Way Ahead. The action items covered five thematic areas: climate change and river health; water storage and management; water governance; people’s participation in Jan Bhagidari; water use efficiency; and reuse of wastewater. At the conference, Mr. Jeong met with secretaries of central ministries and state governments, and reaffirmed ADB’s technical and financial support to the Ministry of Jal Shakti and state governments for initiatives on climate change and adaptation, water use efficiency, ground water management, the Dam Safety Fund, command area development and water management, Jal Shakti Kendra, recycle and reuse of wastewater, and the National River Conservation Program. He also discussed with World Bank delegates possible collaborations in the above-mentioned areas.

ADB STUDY ON GREEN HYDROGEN LAUNCHED AT VIBRANT GUJARAT GLOBAL SUMMIT

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel launched the ADB study Key Pillars to Drive Gujarat’s Green Hydrogen Economy Leadership at the 10th Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit on 12 January. The study identified strategic interventions to help the state of Gujarat achieve its Green Hydrogen Economy Vision. ADB Senior Director, Energy, Priyantha Wijayatunga presented the study, and this was followed by a panel discussion with thought leaders moderated by Senior Energy Specialist Stephen Peters. The event was attended by over 1,500 people.
Flagship Publication

Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2024

Growth in developing Asia and the Pacific is expected to remain resilient, propelled by strong domestic demand, improving semiconductor exports, and the ongoing recovery in tourism, according to the Asian Development Bank’s flagship economic publication, Asian Development Outlook, April 2024.

Case Study

Solar Roofing: India’s 500-Gigawatt Renewable Energy Push through RESCO-Based Distributed Generation

In 2015, India set itself the target of generating 100 gigawatts (GW) of energy from solar power by 2022, of which 60 GW was to be met by ground-mounted systems and 40 GW by rooftop installations. By November 2017, India had made significant progress in the installation of ground-mounted solar systems (reaching 16 GW), but only achieved 0.9 GW through solar rooftops.

Working Papers

Examining the Perception of Women’s Role in India’s Blue Economy: A Systematic Literature Review

This systematic literature review looks at the perceptions and attitudes of women’s employment and leadership in India’s blue economy. The review examines studies and reports published from 1 January 2000 to 5 November 2022 to find out how people think and feel about women’s participation with regard to employment and leadership in terms of taking decisions in the traditionally male-dominated sectors of fishing, marine shipping, and blue economy tourism.

Resolving Demand-Side Issues in Electric Vehicle Financing in India

This working paper presents an overview of the electric vehicle (EV) financing landscape in India, along with suggestions on how to enhance financing options and services to promote the adoption of EVs.

Learning Loss and Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Systematic Review of Evidence

The review provides the first meta-analysis of learning losses that covers more developing than developed countries. It finds that a year of school closure is associated with learning loss equivalent to 1.1 years’ worth of learning and that school reopening reduces this loss to 0.5 years. Looking at measures to reduce learning loss, it finds that tutoring delivered either in-person or through mobile phones has positive, statistically significant effects.
Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in South Asia: An Assessment for Action

ADB’s South Asia Department (SARD) conducted a study to assess the status and responses to the needs of disadvantaged groups in its member countries and identify entry points for greater gender equality and social inclusion impacts in its operations.

The Role of Intermediaries in Inclusive Water and Sanitation Services for Informal Settlements in Asia and the Pacific

In the Asia and Pacific region, accessing clean water and sanitation is a constant challenge for residents of informal settlements. Informal service providers, or intermediaries, have emerged in response to this significant essential service gap.

Financing Transport Connectivity in the BIMSTEC Region

This report assesses how to finance an extensive overhaul of transport infrastructure in the BIMSTEC subregion, considers the challenges of public and private financing, and outlines how to create an overarching financial framework.

Budgeting for Gender Equality: A Practical Guide to Gender Budgeting

This guide shows how using gender budgeting to weave gender-related targets into fiscal policies and public financial management can reduce inequality and drive stronger and more stable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific.
Asian Impact Webinar 71: Cloud Computing Policies and Impacts in Asia and the Pacific

Government policies promoting cloud adoption not only impact the level of government effectiveness but also have positive spillover effects on the rest of the economy. Drawing on a recent ADB Institute Policy Brief, this webinar examines the types of policies that are critical for stimulating the migration of government systems to the cloud. Watch video.

Supporting Innovative and Sustainable Finance Sector in Asia and the Pacific

The Financial Sector Development Partnership Special Fund aims to strengthen regional, subregional, and national financial systems in Asia and the Pacific. Established in 2013 by ADB in partnership with the Government of Luxembourg, the multi-donor trust fund has allocated over $27 million for various projects. Watch video.

Decarbonizing Global Value Chains

Carbon emissions from global trade and value chains rise faster than from other sources, especially in Asia. Developing Asian economies have become critical players within global value chains. The theme chapter of the Asian Economic Integration Report 2024 tackles carbon pricing initiatives and its impact on climate change, global trade, and economic growth. Watch video.
How Fintech Can Enable Financial Inclusion and Reduce Gender Gaps in India

The traditional banking system in India is struggling to meet the needs of under-served communities, including women. Fintech solutions can bridge this gap and expand financial inclusion if pursued carefully and with the right precautions.

Three Pathways to Inclusive Green Housing for Women in Asia and the Pacific

Addressing Asia and the Pacific’s urgent need for affordable, green housing is vital for women’s resilience and sustainable development. It requires inclusive policies, awareness, gender-sensitive financing, and technology-enhanced access to financing.

How to Address the Impact of Climate Change-Driven Extreme Heat on Women’s Lives

Extreme heat has a unique impact on women’s lives in Asia and the Pacific. Effective, gender-responsive strategies are needed to build resilience and ensure women’s health and economic security.

How to Design a Grid-Connected Battery Energy Storage System

When planning the implementation of a battery energy storage system (BESS), policy makers face a range of design challenges. This is primarily due to the unique nature of each BESS, which does not neatly fit into any established power supply service category. These challenges encompass both technical aspects, like determining storage capacity sizing, and regulatory considerations, including ownership, safety regulations, sustainability, and commercial viability.

How the Breakthrough Agenda Enhances International Cooperation for Climate Action

Amid global efforts to address climate change, the Breakthrough Agenda, initiated by world leaders at COP26, stands as a notable initiative for practical collaboration. It represents a worldwide commitment to expedite the adoption of clean technologies and sustainable solutions. This article explores how the Breakthrough Agenda facilitates global cooperation, establishes ambitious goals in crucial sectors, and assesses its impact on advancing sustainability worldwide.

Advancing Gender Equality through Gender-Responsive Public Financial Management

Gender equality is crucial for eliminating extreme poverty and advancing a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Poverty cannot be eradicated without achieving gender equality, entailing promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men. Disparities in accessing education, health services, and the labor force undermine society’s full potential and impede economic growth.