

Press Release

India-Bhutan Commerce Secretary Level Meeting (27-28 September 2024)

H.E. Shri Sunil Barthwal, Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India paid an official visit to Bhutan from 27-28 September 2024. During the visit, Commerce Secretary called on H.E. Lyonpo Namgyal Dorji, Hon'ble Minister for Industry, Commerce and Employment (MoICE) and H.E. Lyonpo Lekey Dorji, Hon'ble Minister of Finance. H.E. Shri Sunil Barthwal and H.E. Dasho Tashi Wangmo, Secretary, MoICE co-chaired the India-Bhutan Commerce Secretary Level Meeting (CSLM) in Thimphu.

2.The two sides held wide-ranging discussions on all aspects of the bilateral trade partnership including measures to further strengthen cross-border infrastructure, enhance connectivity and facilitating trade between the two countries.

3.The two sides positively assessed the progress in bilateral trade, commerce, connectivity and investment partnership. They noted recent signing of bilateral MoU on general supply of Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants (POL) and related products from India to Bhutan; Agreement for recognition of official control exercised by Bhutan Food and Drug Authority (BFDA) by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI); finalization of text of the MoU on establishment of rail-links between India and Bhutan. Both sides expressed satisfaction at bilateral cooperation in ensuring smooth supply of essential commodities to and from Bhutan, including potato, wheat, sugar, non-basmati rice, fertiliser, coal. The two sides reaffirmed commitment to further strengthen trade linkages, boost connectivity and facilitating cross-border movement of goods, services and people.

4.Key discussions held during the CSLM include:

(i)To expedite development of cross-border trade and connectivity infrastructure including establishment of an Integrated Check Post in Jaigaon-Pheunstholing and rail-links between Kokrajhar-Gelephu and Banarhat-Samtse;

- (ii) Notification of LCS Hatisar and LCS Darranga, as additional routes for import of areca nut in India from Bhutan;
- (iii) Notification of LCS Darranga as additional Point of Entry for import of food items in India from Bhutan;
- (iv) GOI agreed to notifying LCS at Samrang, following upgradation of necessary infrastructure;
- (v) Consideration of notification of LCS Jaigaon for import of scrap in India from Bhutan;
- (vi) Establishment of border haats along India-Bhutan border;
- (vii) Facilitation of movement of businesspersons;
- (viii) Consideration of import of boulders from Bhutan to India;
- (ix) Inclusion of three additional species of timber for import from Bhutan to India;
- (x) Deployment of personnel for Phyto Quarantine Inspection Services (PQIS) at LCS Darranga;
- (xi) Early operationalisation of Agreement for recognition of official control exercised by Bhutan Food and Drug Authority (BFDA) by Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), signed in March 2024;
- (xii) Expedite finalization of agreement between National Seed Centre, Bhutan and Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited, India for supply of fertilizers to Bhutan;

5. The two sides agreed to hold the next CSLM in India at a mutually convenient date. The visit of Commerce Secretary to Bhutan is in keeping with the well-established tradition of regular exchanges between Bhutan and India, and to further strengthen the existing close ties of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

Thimphu,
27 September 2024