

BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement Regains Momentum

Bangladesh, India and Nepal agree on operating procedures for movement of Passengervehicles More trial runs to be conducted for cargo vehicle movement

Bangladesh, India and Nepal have agreed on the text of the operating procedures for passenger vehicle movement in the sub-region under the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) signed in June 2015, and will soon complete the internal approval processes for signing of the passenger protocol. The participating countries have also agreed to conduct more trial runs for cargo vehicles under the agreement. High-level officials of the three countries discussed the implementation of the MVA at a meeting held on 10-11 January in Bengaluru, convened and chaired by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) of the Government of India. A Bhutanese official delegation also attended the meeting as observers.

The landmark MVA was signed by Transport Ministers of the BBIN countries in Thimphu, Bhutan on 15 June 2015. Trial runs for cargo vehicles under the MVA were conducted along the Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka routes in the past. The trials were successful in establishing the Agreement's economic benefits. Bangladesh, India, and Nepal have already ratified the MVA and have agreed to start implementation of the MVA among the three signatory countries, with Bhutan joining after it ratifies the Agreement.

"I am encouraged by the strong commitment of the BBIN countries to move forward on the MVA initiative", says Ms. Dakshita Das, MoRTH Joint Secretary and chair at the Bengaluru meeting. "India will do its best to make the MVA successful, making it a key instrument in accelerating cross-border trade and economic integration in the subregion," she said.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been providing technical, advisory, and financial support to the BBIN MVA initiative as part of its assistance to the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program, a projects-based economic cooperation initiative that brings together the BBIN countries, Maldives, Sri Lanka and more recently, Myanmar. ADB is the secretariat of SASEC.

Meeting participants—which included delegations led by Mr. Safiqul Islam, Additional Secretary from the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges of Bangladesh, and Mr. Keshab Kumar Sharma, Joint Secretary from the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport of Nepal, agreed on the text of the passenger protocol, the document detailing procedures for cross-border movement of buses and private vehicles, to be signed by the three countries after completing necessary internal approval processes in their government. The delegations also agreed to continue to conduct trial movement of cargo vehicles along scheduled routes from April 2018 onwards, before finalizing the protocol for cargo vehicular movement. All participating country delegations described the meeting as a major milestone in regaining the momentum of transport facilitation in the subregion.
