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**Press Information Bureau
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Ministry of Road Transport & Highways**

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India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh Sign a landmark Motor Vehicles Agreement for seamless movement of road traffic among Four SAARC Countries in Thimpu

India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh signed a landmark Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) for the Regulation of Passenger, Personnel and Cargo Vehicular Traffic among the four South Asian neighbours in Thimpu, Bhutan today. The MVA agreement between sub-grouping of four SAARC nations, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) will pave the way for a seamless movement of people and goods across their borders for the benefit and integration of the region and its economic development. The BBIN MVA Agreement was signed by the Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping Mr. Nitin Gadkari on behalf of India.

Mr. Gadkari headed the Indian delegation at the Transport Ministers conference of the BBIN. Others who participated included Mr. Obaidul Quader, Minister of Road Transport and Bridges of Bangladesh, Mr. Lyonpo D. N. Dhungyel, Minister of Information and Communications, Bhutan, and Mr. Bimalendra Nidhi, Minister of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Nepal.

Earlier, addressing the BBIN Transport Ministers conference, Mr. Nitin Gadkari said, "This indeed is a momentous achievement for all the four neighbours. This historic agreement will further promote our cooperation in trade and commerce apart from further cementing our age old cultural ties." Mr. Gadkari further said, "The Motor Vehicles Agreement is the "Over arching" frame work to fulfill our commitment to enhance regional connectivity. This will need to be followed through with formulation of the required protocols and procedures in the shortest time possible to realize the ultimate objective of free movement of people and goods in the region. This would further need to be supplemented through building and upgrading roads, railways and waterways infrastructure energy Grids, communications and air links to ensure smooth cross border flow of goods, services, capital, technology and people. Taken together, this provides enormous opportunity for integration and development of our region."

Mentioning about the initiative to strengthen connectivity of the sub-region to ASEAN, the Minister said, "In this regard a major breakthrough has been achieved between India-Myanmar and Thailand. Three nations have agreed to develop a similar framework motor vehicle agreement on the lines of draft SAARC Motor vehicle agreement. Secretary level discussions were successfully concluded in Bengaluru this month and consensus has been reached on the text of Agreement. On conclusion of this Agreement, our sub-region will get access to the larger ASEAN market through seamless passenger and cargo movement."

In a joint statement released on the occasion, the Minister of the four countries acknowledged, "The finalization of the BBIN MVA would allow us to move forward, in an accelerated fashion, with implementation of land transport facilitation arrangements between and among our countries. This, in turn, would enable the exchange of traffic rights and ease cross-border movement of goods, vehicles, and people, thereby helping expand people-to-people contact, trade, and economic exchanges between our countries. We will endeavor to accelerate the

preparatory steps for the effective and sustainable implementation of the BBIN MVA, starting with the formulation, negotiation, and finalization of the necessary legal instruments and operating procedures. We recognize that the BBIN MVA is a complementary instrument to the existing transport agreements or arrangements at the bilateral levels that the Contracting Parties will continue to honor. Implementation difficulties, if any, will be resolved based on provisions of the BBIN MVA.”

Taking note of the finding that transforming transport corridors into economic corridors could potentially increase intraregional trade within South Asia by almost 60% and with the rest of the world by over 30%, the joint statement read, “We acknowledge that apart from physical infrastructure, the development of economic corridors within and between our countries requires the implementation of policy and regulatory measures, including the BBIN MVA, which will help address the nonphysical impediments to the seamless movement of goods vehicles and people between our four countries.”

A BBIN Friendship Motor Rally is planned to be held in October 2015 to highlight the sub-regional connectivity and the scope and opportunities for greater people-to-people contact and trade under the BBIN initiative.

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