

PRESS RELEASE

Commerce Secretary Level Meeting (CSLM) between the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) and the Government of India (GoI)



The CSLM between Bhutan and India was convened from 27-28 September 2024 in Thimphu, with Bhutanese delegation led by Dasho Tashi Wangmo, Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment, and Indian delegation led by Shri Sunil Barthwal, Secretary, Department of Commerce. The meeting focused on

enhancing trade and economic cooperation, acknowledging the challenges posed by the global pandemic.

Key discussions included trade routes, customs cooperation, standards, sanitary measures, and agricultural collaboration. Bhutan emphasized the need for new entry/exit points at Goabari and Samrang, with India agreeing in principle to establish a Land Customs Station (LCS) at Samrang and conducting joint inspections for an Integrated Check Post at Goabari.

Bhutan requested additional transit routes for Bhutan's export to Bangladesh, additional entry points for areca nut and food items export to India. GoI notified Hatisar and Darranga LCS for areca nut exports from Bhutan. Further, GoI approved Darranga LCS for food exports and agreed to deploy plant quarantine inspection services there. Discussions also included exemptions for boulder exports which GoI considered positively. For timber exports, India requested Bhutan to submit technical information for the inclusion of additional timber species.

Both sides agreed to expedite a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) between the Bureau of Indian Standards and Bhutan Standards Bureau. Bhutan also updated India on streamlined visa processes for Indian businessmen.

India, Bhutan's largest trading partner, accounted for 81% of Bhutan's total trade in 2023. The meeting concluded positively, with commitments to strengthen trade relations and explore new opportunities.
