

Workshop on Border Infrastructure and Connectivity in the BBIN Sub-Region (Focus Country: Nepal) Concludes with Emphasis on Regional Cooperation

Lucknow, 29 April 2025:

A high-level workshop on Border Infrastructure and Connectivity in the **BBIN (Bhutan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal)** Sub-Region was held today in Lucknow. The objective of the workshop was to deliberate on enhancing cross-border infrastructure, trade, and socio-economic development in the region—particularly between Uttar Pradesh and Nepal—while also strengthening civilizational and cultural ties with Nepal.

The event brought together officials of NITI Aayog, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) along with officials of state government departments, Invest UP and representatives of industrial associations from the Uttar Pradesh – Nepal border districts.

Uttar Pradesh: A Catalyst for Regional Growth

In his welcome address, **Principal Secretary, Infrastructure & Industrial Development, U.P., Shri Alok Kumar** highlighted the state's pivotal role in fostering connectivity with Nepal. "Uttar Pradesh is leading in infrastructure development—be it roads, railways, or aviation. Over the past eight years, the state has witnessed remarkable progress, with a 15% growth rate in the last fiscal year. A sleeping giant has awakened, and UP is now realizing its full potential," he stated. Shri Kumar emphasized the importance of strengthening **U.P.-Nepal** border connectivity, adding, "Strengthened connectivity with Nepal and other BBIN nations will drive mutual prosperity." He acknowledged the efforts of NITI Aayog, Invest UP, and the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) in organizing the workshop.

NITI Aayog Advocates Collaborative Growth

Additional Secretary & Program Director (Infrastructure), NITI Aayog, **Shri Rajeev Singh Thakur** stressed the need for inclusive regional development. "India must support its neighbours without assuming a 'big brother' role. Enhanced infrastructure, particularly in waterways alongside roads, will be crucial for seamless connectivity," he remarked. Shri Thakur highlighted the shared 600 km border between Uttar Pradesh and Nepal, underscoring collective responsibility in boosting trade and economic integration.

Breakout Sessions Drive Sectoral Development

The workshop included breakout sessions with **three working groups**, focused on **connectivity infrastructure** (roads, rail, air, and digital); **trade and economy** (agriculture, tourism, and FinTech); and **societal development** (health, education, and livelihoods). Discussions revolved around availability, quality, and sustainability, with interventions classified as unilateral, bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral efforts for holistic regional progress.

CSEP Spotlights Strategic Opportunities

Dr. Constantino Xavier-Senior Fellow and Riya Sinha-Assistant Fellow of the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) made a presentation on "Connectivity between Nepal and Uttar Pradesh," underscoring Uttar Pradesh's strategic role in India-Nepal ties. The presentation detailed UP's contribution to connectivity through infrastructure (roads, rail, power) and cultural projects like the Ramayana Circuit. Key initiatives such as the Gorakhpur–Butwal power line and Rupaidiha/Sonauli land ports were discussed. With Nepal's economy

poised for growth, Uttar Pradesh stands to boost trade, tourism, and local industries, fostering mutual prosperity and integration.

Shri Jayant Singh, Chairman of the Land Ports Authority of India, also attended the workshop via video conference.

Feedback and suggestions from the session included proposals for establishing a **Special Economic Zone (SEZ)** in border districts, as well as improving internet connectivity and power supply. Tourism, particularly the Buddhist circuit, holds immense potential and could become a major contributor to the economies of both Uttar Pradesh and Nepal.

The workshop was also attended by representatives from various industry associations, NITI Aayog, trade bodies of border districts, local businesses, district administration officials, and other key stakeholders, along with Invest UP representatives.

In his vote of thanks, the Secretary Infrastructure & Industrial Development and CEO Invest UP expressed that the workshop had been both engaging and insightful, generating numerous ideas that will aid in building improved infrastructure and boost trade and economy.
