

**Cabinet approves SASEC Road Connectivity Investment Program - Tranche 2****Cabinet approves SASEC Road Connectivity Investment Program - Tranche 2**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for upgradation and widening of 65 kms of Imphal-Moreh Section of NH-39 in Manipur at a cost of Rs. 1630.29 crores.

Manipur being a landlocked state with almost 90% of the area under difficult terrain presently has only road transport as a means of mass transport system within the state. Hence development of the road infrastructure is of paramount importance to improve connectivity and progress of the State and to ensure that the administrative set up reaches the isolated and remote habitats. The project will improve connectivity between Imphal with the eastern part of the state. Based on the existing and projected traffic requirements the NH-39 will be widened to 4 lane between Lilong village and Wanginj village, while the stretch between Wanginj village to Khongkhang will be upgraded to 2 lane with paved shoulder.

The project is being developed with ADB's loan assistance under the South Asian Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Road Connectivity Investment Program which aims at upgradation of road infrastructure in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India (BBIN) in order to improve the regional connectivity among BBIN nations. The project corridor is also a part of the Asian Highway No. 01 (AH01) and acts as India's Gateway to the East. Thus trade, commerce and tourism in the region will get a boost.

**Background**

For fulfilling India's "Look East" Policy and to promote and enhance trade link with South East Asia, the Government of India has notified an Integrated Custom Post (ICP) at Moreh. The development of this project is essential in order to support the increased traffic volume due to coming up of ICP. The workers of Manipur who specialize in creating bamboo and wood based handicraft items and uniquely designed hand woven textile items will get a new market among the Myanmar's customers. Small scale industries such as those making farm implements and tools, stationery, plastic extrusion items, carpentry units, could also develop markets beyond the border.

Besides socio-economic development the project will also lead to reduction in average travel time along the project road by nearly 40%. In addition, the new features of road

safety namely vehicular underpasses, crash barriers, road signs & markings, service roads for segregation of slow and high moving traffic, truck lay-by, bus-bays etc. will help in greatly reducing accidents. Improved highway and lesser travel time will lead to savings in terms of fuel cost.

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