

SHRI SONOWAL UNDERLINES IMPORTANCE OF CROSS-BORDER CONNECTIVITY AMONG DEVELOPING NATIONS OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA; ADDRESSES ASEAN SUMMIT ON FUTURE OF INDIA-ASEAN CONNECTIVITY PARTNERSHIPS

Relevant for: Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Ports & Waterways

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH Shri Sarbananda Sonowal has underlined the importance of cross-border connectivity among India and developing nations of South-East Asia. Addressing the ASEAN summit on Future of India-ASEAN Connectivity Partnerships virtually from New Delhi today, the Minister said, greater connectivity between ASEAN nations has long been both an economic and strategic objective for the ASEAN–India partnership. He said, connectivity provides the transmission channels through which development impulses can spread across the region and can add to the dynamism of economic and social progress.

The Minister said, India–ASEAN free trade agreement (FTA) is central to India’s growing engagement with her eastern neighbours. In this direction, he said, extension of the Trilateral Highway to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam will enable greater connectivity and economic integration of India's northeast with its eastern neighbours. He informed that India has helped construct two key stretches of the 1,360-km trilateral highway in Myanmar, but work on several other sections and the upgrade of nearly 70 bridges has been held up by a variety of factors. This highway will allow access to markets across the ASEAN region and boost people-to-people ties.

Shri Sonowal emphasised upon setting up of National Transport Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) of member countries to facilitate cross-border transportation and trade. He said, the physical connectivity between India and Neighbouring south-east Asian countries will enable small and medium-sized enterprises in the border areas to explore new business opportunities.

The Minister also stressed upon the need to realise that India and ASEAN are fast-growing consumer markets with a growing middle class and young population that is increasingly digitally connected. As such beyond movement of goods and physical connectivity, it is also important for two regions to explore ways to enhance digital connectivity. He said, the Government of India has been making efforts to turn India into a “Global Data Hub” through various policies and reforms. India’s data centre industry is expected to add 560 MW during 2021-23 leading to a real estate requirement of 6 million sq ft. He added that the industry is expected to grow exponentially to reach 1,007 MW by 2023 from 447 MW.

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