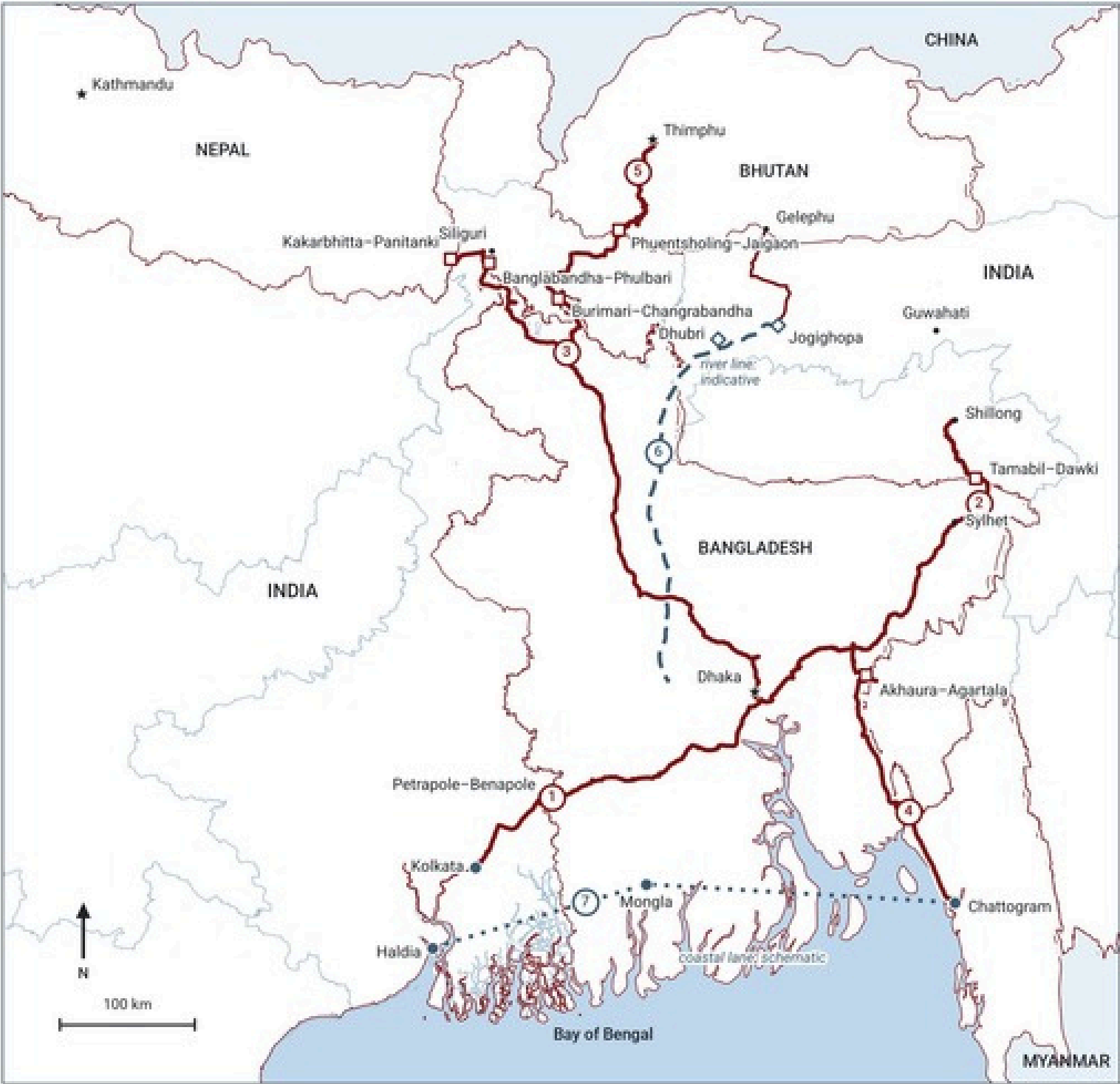


The corridors the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement would open

Road corridors across Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal, with the Brahmaputra waterway and the coastal shipping lane



ROUTES

- 1** Kolkata–Petrapole/Benapole–Dhaka–Akhaura–Agartala
Asian Highway 1 and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Highway Corridor 1 as far as Sarail, then a spur to Akhaura. Route of the November 2015 cargo trial run.
- 2** Dhaka–Sylhet–Tamabil/Dawki–Shillong
Asian Highway 1; SAARC Highway Corridors 1 and 5
- 3** Kakarbhitta–Phulbari–Banglabandha–Dhaka
Asian Highway 2; SAARC Highway Corridor 4. Crosses about 45 km of Indian territory between the Nepal and Bangladesh borders
- 4** Chattogram–Feni–Cumilla–Akhaura–Agartala
SAARC Highway Corridor 6
- 5** Thimphu–Phuentsholing–Jaigaon–Burimari
Asian Highway 48 in India; SAARC Highway Corridor 8
- 6** Gelephu–Jogighopa, then Brahmaputra–Jamuna
National Waterway 2 and the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route; road leg of about 91 km
- 7** Kolkata/Haldia–Mongla–Chattogram
India–Bangladesh coastal shipping

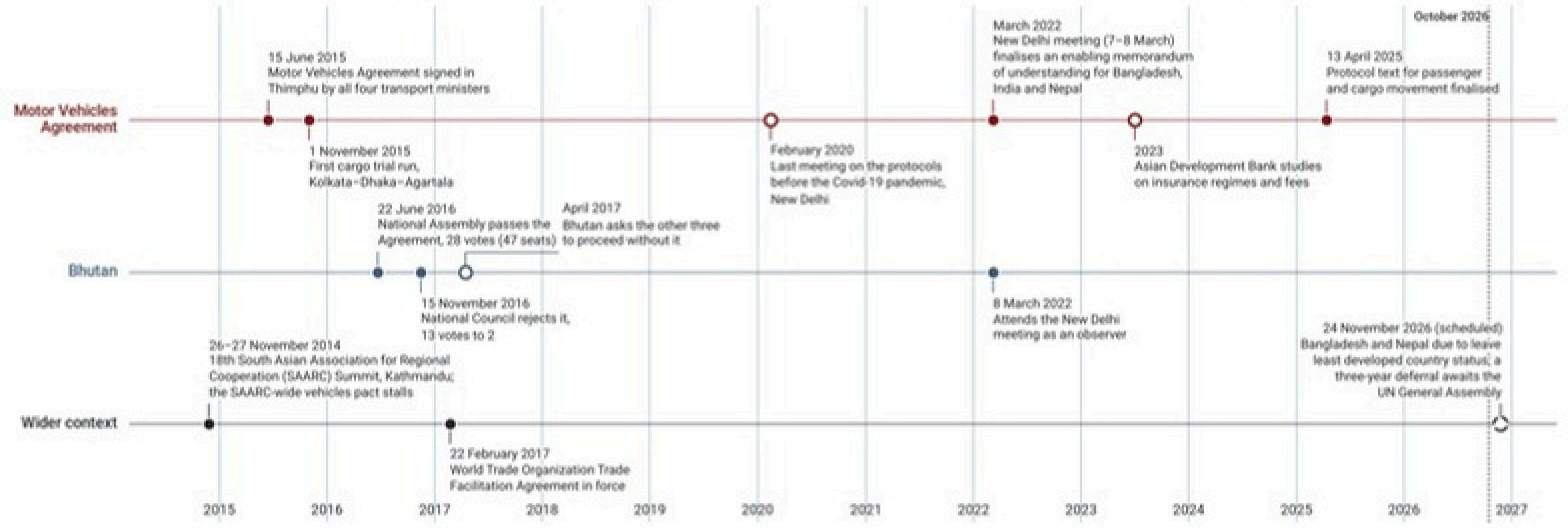
SYMBOLS

- Road corridor, traced on the OpenStreetMap road network
- - - Inland waterway (indicative river line)
- ... Coastal shipping (schematic)
- Land border crossing
- Seaport
- ◇ River port
- ★ Capital

Sources: Roads Division, Government of Bangladesh, presentation to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, March 2014; P. Goel, India country presentation to the same Commission, November 2023; Trade and Export Promotion Centre, Nepal; South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation programme, 1 November 2015. Road lines follow OpenStreetMap. Boundaries: India from the Survey of India; other countries from Natural Earth. Based on Figure 1 in E. Tomar, 'From Ambiguity to Connectivity'. Graphic: Sahasrik Ragani, Stepwell Centre for Asian Futures.

A decade from signature to an agreed protocol text

Signed by four countries in 2015 and rejected by Bhutan's upper house in 2016; protocol text for vehicle movement was finalised only in 2025



Sources: Ministry of External Affairs, India (15 June 2015; 8 March 2022); South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation programme (1 November 2015; 13 April 2025); Dialogue Earth (4 July 2016); The Wire, citing Kuensel and The Bhutanese (2017); The Kathmandu Post (29 April 2017); World Trade Organization; P. Goel, presentation to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (November 2023); UN General Assembly resolution A/76/L.6/Rev.1; The Daily Star; The Financial Express (October 2026).

Filled marker: exact date; hollow marker: month or year only; dashed marker: scheduled. Graphic: Sahasrik Ragani, Stepwell Centre for Asian Futures.

Stepwell Centre for Asian Futures

ASEAN members sell each other nearly 18 times what BBIN members do

Goods exports from each country to the rest of its bloc in 2023, in US dollars; circles are shifted only to avoid overlap



Source: UN Comtrade. Calendar year 2023. *Bangladesh's and Nepal's exports are taken from their partners' records (UN Comtrade) and from the International Monetary Fund's International Trade in Goods statistics. Customs records exclude most of Bhutan's hydropower sales to India.
BBIN: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Boundaries: India from the Survey of India; other countries from Natural Earth. Graphic: Sahasrik Ragani, Stepwell Centre for Asian Futures.

Four countries, four rulebooks

The national laws a truck crossing the borders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal must satisfy, and where they diverge

	India	Bangladesh	Nepal	Bhutan
CUSTOMS	Customs Act, 1962 Stringent, reflecting concerns about smuggling and illegal immigration. The most digitised checks and documentation in the bloc.	Customs Act, 2023 Focused on trade facilitation, with comparatively liberal checks. Mostly manual, with electronic declarations being introduced.	Customs Act, 2064 (2007) Less stringent: Nepal is landlocked and relies on Indian ports. Duties follow an annual tariff schedule; importers and exporters must register.	Customs Act of Bhutan, 2017 Strict rules on non-Indian goods and permits for restricted items; tobacco, drugs and used vehicles are banned. Bhutan has not ratified the Motor Vehicles Agreement.
MOTOR INSURANCE	Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 Liability and cover are written for accidents inside India only.	Road Transport Act, 2018 Replaced the Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1983. Section 60 makes motor insurance optional.	Motor Vehicles and Transport Management Act, 2049 (1993) Liability and cover are written for accidents inside Nepal only.	Road Safety and Transport Act, 1999 Liability and cover are written for accidents inside Bhutan only.
TRANSPORT STANDARDS	Bharat Stage VI emission norms The strictest in the bloc. A two-axle truck may weigh up to 18.5 tonnes gross (Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, 2018).	Emission norms being upgraded Less stringent than India's. No common driving licence or shared axle-load standard across the BBIN countries.	Emission norms being upgraded Being standardised domestically. No common driving licence or shared axle-load standard across the BBIN countries.	Euro 2 emission standard Most vehicles are imported from India, whose norms are stricter. No common driving licence or shared axle-load standard across the BBIN countries.
SANITARY AND PHYTOSANITARY STANDARDS	Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2011 Maximum residue limits for pesticides in tea and rice differ from Bangladesh's; there is no India–Bangladesh mutual recognition agreement.	Bangladesh Food Safety Authority Stricter standards and testing: Indian tea and rice are retested at the border, and rice also needs a radionuclide test.	Department of Food Technology and Quality Control; Plant Quarantine and Pesticide Management Centre Laboratory pesticide tests on all imported fruit and vegetables were ordered on 17 June 2019 and withdrawn on 4 July 2019. Border units test for only two groups of pesticides.	Food Act of Bhutan, 2005; Plant Quarantine Act of Bhutan, 1990; Pesticide Act of Bhutan, 2000 The Bhutan Food and Drug Authority is the enquiry point. Bhutan is not a World Trade Organization member, so the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures does not bind it.

Through Bangladesh, Kolkata to Agartala is less than half the distance

India's road link to its Northeast runs through a corridor about 22 km wide; the 2015 trial run through Bangladesh cut some 900 km



THE CORRIDOR, AT ITS NARROWEST



ROAD DISTANCE, KOLKATA TO AGARTALA



Distances for the November 2015 cargo trial run, as reported by the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation programme.

Sources: South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation programme, 'Cargo Transport Trial Run Starts under BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement', 1 November 2015. Corridor width measured on the Survey of India boundary. Route via Siliguri follows National Highways 12, 27, 6 and 8 on OpenStreetMap. Boundaries: India from the Survey of India; other countries from Natural Earth. Based on Figure 2 in E. Tomar, 'From Ambiguity to Connectivity'. Graphic: Sahasrik Ragani, Stepwell Centre for Asian Futures.

A standing commission to fill the gaps in the agreement

The suggested institutional structure for implementing the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement

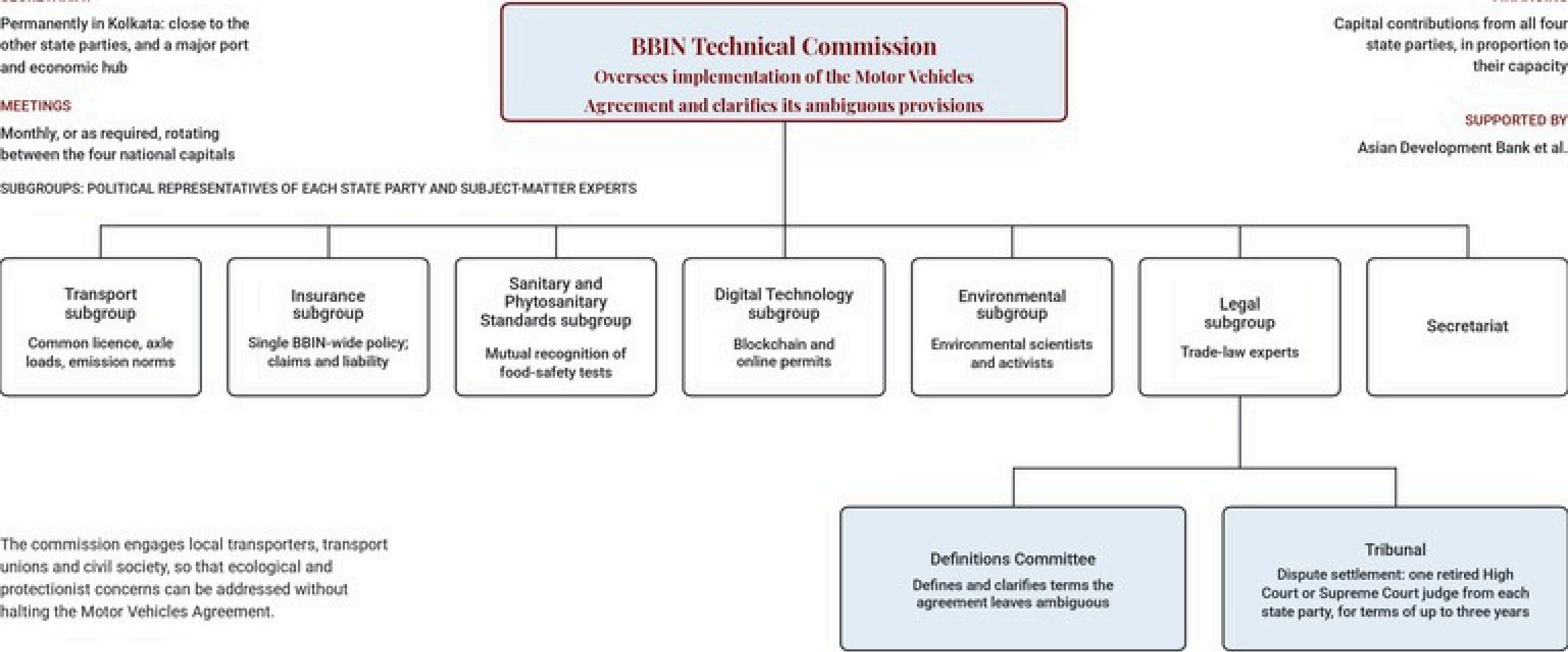
SECRETARIAT

Permanently in Kolkata: close to the other state parties, and a major port and economic hub

MEETINGS

Monthly, or as required, rotating between the four national capitals

SUBGROUPS: POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES OF EACH STATE PARTY AND SUBJECT-MATTER EXPERTS



FINANCING

Capital contributions from all four state parties, in proportion to their capacity

SUPPORTED BY

Asian Development Bank et al.

The commission engages local transporters, transport unions and civil society, so that ecological and protectionist concerns can be addressed without halting the Motor Vehicles Agreement.

Source: E. Tomar, 'From Ambiguity to Connectivity: Policy Recommendations to Ensure Effective Implementation of the BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement', Stepwell Centre for Asian Futures, section 'Institutional Recommendations'. The commission is a proposal, not an existing body. BBIN: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. Graphic: Sahasrik Ragani, Stepwell Centre for Asian Futures.