

BIMSTEC Newsletter

A Monthly Newsletter from BIMSTEC Centre



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BIMSTEC Event

Investment Opportunity in Bangladesh

Thailand Board of Investment together with the Bangladesh Embassy in Bangkok and Foreign Affairs Club organised a Seminar on *New Vision of Trade and Investment Opportunity in Bangladesh* on 21 February 2007 at the Board of Investment, Bangkok. The Seminar was chaired by Mr. Satit Chanjavakul, Secretary-General of BOI and H.E. Mr. Shahed Akhtar, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Thailand.

In the Seminar, in addition to highlighting the advantages of Bangladesh, be they abundant supply of skilled work force and enriched natural resources, first handed experiences in doing business in Bangladesh were also shared by leading Thai business persons. For more details please contact Thailand Board of Investment (Tel) +66 2 5378111 or www.boi.go.th

Updates on BIMSTEC Agriculture Cooperation



In the light of emerging issues and challenges confronting the agricultural sector in the BIMSTEC region, be they be the threat of animal diseases, global climatic changes, degrading environment, securing biodiversity and food safety, ensuring free and fair global trade, access to new and emerging technologies and increasing demand for alternative sources of energy, collective and concerted efforts are needed. Myanmar, as a lead country in Agriculture Sector hosted the *1st Expert Group Meeting of BIMSTEC on Agriculture Cooperation* on 15-16 March 2007 at Nay Pyi Taw.

The Meeting was organised in both a Plenary and Bilateral Meetings between Member Countries format. Six areas of Cooperation were identified, namely enhancing the competitiveness of agriculture sector, agricultural research and development, promoting public-private (including cooperatives) partnership for the development of agriculture and agro-processing industries, strengthening socio-economic development in rural community, improving agricultural trade and investment, and developing alternative energy crops.

Cooperation with ADB on Transport and Logistics Project



Group in Bangkok. Representatives from BIMSTEC Centre and UNESCAP also attended the Meeting as observers.

One of the BIMSTEC projects on transportation and communication sector is the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) undertaken through the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Technical Assistance. *The 1st Inception Meeting of the BIMSTEC Technical Advisory Committee of the BTILS* was held on 20-21 March 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand. The Meeting was attended by secretaries and senior officials from the respective Transport/Foreign Affairs Ministries of the BIMSTEC member countries and members of BIMSTEC Working

The Meeting was held to discuss primarily the initial findings of the Inception Report for this ADB Technical Advisory; to refine the Study's organization and implementation arrangements; and to outline initially the future courses of action for BIMSTEC transport cooperation upon the completion of the study. The priority of the Study is to identify pioneering and forward looking initiatives which should reduce transport bottlenecks and non-tariff barriers which hamper efficient operations and constrained the overall transport system within the region. The Delegates from every member country presented their country papers discussing their local transport infrastructure and services linkages, where common issues were identified and views / recommendations were shared among the participants.

For future plan of action, after finalizing the study report in December 2007, and endorsed in the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting and/or Ministerial Meeting, the priority projects will be identified and prepared in 2008, and the implementation is expected to commence in 2010.

Trade and Investment Opportunity in India

On 23 March 2007, the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of Thailand in association with Indian Embassy in Bangkok hosted a meeting on *"Emerging opportunities between India and Thailand"* with focus on North Eastern Region of India at Novotel Lotus Hotel, Bangkok.

The North-East of India, comprising 8 states, is a reservoir of rich natural resources and a beautiful amalgamation of different people and cultures. Apart from an abundance of resources, this region offers a huge emerging market of 400 million people including the neighbouring countries. Government of India also offers subsidies for the investors on transport, capital investment, interest on the working capital, excise duty refund and income tax exemption. Thus, the region is virtually a Tax Free Zone. For more details regarding Business opportunities in North-East of India, please contact the Thai Chamber of Commerce (www.thaiechamber.com).



Sri Lankan Drumming, Music and Dance

Stunning Sri Lankan drumming, music and dance was showcased in Thailand at the Rhythm of the Earth Music Festival at Nakorn Sawan for 10 days starting from 11-22 February 2007. Coinciding with the Chinese New Year Celebration in Nakorn Sawan, a 17 member Sri Lankan group under the patronage of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and National Heritage of Sri Lanka, presented the rich variety of Sri Lankan music and dance at the festival.



The showcase was also organised in Bangkok at the Rama IX Bridge on 21-25 March 2007. The next show will be in set up in Hadyai, Songkhla in July 2007. (For more information please call 087-9892301)

Asia's Grandest Pageant in August 2007

Thousands of Buddhist devotees from around the world, and tourists will converge in August this year to Sri Lanka's ancient Heritage City of Kandy to pay homage to the sacred tooth relic of the Buddha and witness one of Asia's grandest traditional pageants—the glittering Esala Perahera. The main Esala festival takes place during 18–28 August in Kandy, the medieval hill capital of Sri Lanka. The glittering Kandy Esala Perahera, parades the streets for ten nights by moon and torch light, in the lake-side mountain citadel.



While the roots of Esala festivals go deep into Sri Lanka's early history, Kandy's Esala Perahera in its present form dates from 1775. The pageant's centre-piece is a majestic, richly caparisoned, tusked elephant, bearing a replica of the relic casket. Large crowds of visitors and devotees, bazaars overflowing with fruits, handicrafts, sweetmeats and souvenirs give Kandy a carnival atmosphere at this time. The climax of the festival is the final night (Esala Full Moon), when the pageant is at its grandest. It ends with the day-time perahera the next morning and the water-cutting ceremony in the Mahaweli river, a ritual symbolizing the triumph of good over evil and to ensure rain in the season and other blessings. For more information, please go to www.slmts.slt.lk.

"BIMSTEC

region represents

one of the most

diverse regions of

the world, be it

climate, race,

culture, language

and ethnicity".

From Paro Initiative of
the 1st BIMSTEC
Ministerial Meeting on
Culture



Next issue : Discover the true Songkran Festival in some of the BIMSTEC member countries e.g. Thailand, Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

Celebrating the National Day



Above : H.E. Ms. Latha Reddy, Ambassador of India to Thailand took a group photo with the distinguished guests.

The Embassy of India in Bangkok celebrated the 57th Anniversary of the Republic Day of India on 26 January 2007. H.E. Ms. Latha Reddy, Ambassador of India to Thailand hosted a Reception at Conrad Hotel to mark the occasion. Thai dignitaries, senior government officials, members of the diplomatic corps, prominent businessmen, media persons, Indian nationals and persons of Indian origin attended the reception. Earlier in the morning, in a ceremony in the Indian Embassy premises, H.E. the Ambassador unfurled the National Flag and read out the message of the President of India to a gathering of nearly 350 Indian nationals living in Thailand.

BIMSTEC upcoming Activities

Date	Activity	Venue
15-16 Mar 2007	1 st Meeting of the Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation	Nay Pyi Taw
20-21 Mar 2007	Inception workshop to discuss initial findings and work plan with ADB	Bangkok
19-20 Apr 2007	JWG-CTTC Sub-group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues	New Delhi
23-27 Apr 2007	14 th Meeting of BIMSTEC Trade Negotiating Committee	Thimpu
8-10 May 2007	Workshop on Fisheries Cooperation	Phuket

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