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INSIDE

THIS ISSUE:

Paro Taktshang among Asia's top 10 sacred sites 2

India's exports-grow by 34.42% in April 2011 2

Myanmar and Thailand discuss fostering cooperation 3

Sustained growth in international tourist arrivals continue in Nepal 3

Second Expert Group Meeting on BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility 3

Sri Lanka, Bangladesh sign five MoUs 4

Prime Minister of Thailand on a State Visit to India



His Excellency Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva, the Prime Minister of Thailand paid a State visit to India during 4-5 April 2011 at the invitation of H.E. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India.

The Prime Minister of Thailand was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Industry, Deputy Minister of Commerce, the

President of the Thai Trade Representative Office and an official delegation. During the visit, the Prime Minister of Thailand held bilateral talks with H.E. Dr. Manmohan Singh who also hosted a banquet in honour of the visiting dignitary. The Thai Prime Minister called on H.E. Mrs. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, the President of India and H.E. Mr. Hamid Ansari, the Vice-President of India. H.E. Mr. S.M. Krishna, External Affairs Minister of India called on the Thai leader. The Thai Prime Minister attended a business luncheon hosted by the three chambers of commerce. The two Prime Ministers held wide-ranging discus-

sions on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues, including on the need to energize bilateral institutional mechanisms, to enhance cooperation in security matters and to upgrade the bilateral dialogue on defence matters. The two leaders stressed the significance of enhancing connectivity between the two countries and regions, and the importance of further enhancing bilateral trade and investment. The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed the importance attached to the strengthening and enhancement of trade and economic relations through the bilateral and regional frameworks viz. ASEAN-India, BIMSTEC and MGC.

Chittagong port to go for automation

Chittagong Port, Bangladesh's gateway to foreign trade, is expected to go for automation with the installation of a digital Container Terminal Management System (CTMS) by June to modernise its operational activities.

At a view exchange meeting with local media on the occasion of the 124th founding anniversary of the port, Chittagong Port Authority chairman Mr. M. Anwarul Islam hoped introduction of the CTMS would increase the efficiency in handling cargo.

'It will raise the standard of port operation through electronic system instead of paper-based documentation,' he said, adding, 'The automation will transform the port into a world class global shipping hub.' He claimed such automation would also curb corruption and speed up port operation.

CTMS had become a crying need for catering to the global demand and for supporting transit facilities if those are allowed to neighbouring countries, Islam pointed out. 'We must upgrade Chittagong



port to face the global challenge in maritime trade,' he said, adding that cargo traffic through Chittagong port marked a 15 per cent increase every year. He also announced that the control room of Chittagong port would be made more functional and updated.

(<http://newagebd.com>)

Paro Taktshang among Asia's top 10 sacred sites

Taksang Monastery , a prominent Himalayan Buddhist sacred site and temple complex, located in the cliffside of the upper Paro valley, Bhutan



Bhutan's Paro Taktshang monastery has been listed in the 'divine list' of the top 10 Buddhist temples, shrines and places of worship in Asia by Asia Transpacific Journeys, a US-based Asia travel company and Asia Tour Operator. The other nine sites include Varanasi, Dharamsala and Sarnath

in India, Shwedagon Pagoda in Myanmar, Dambulla in Sri Lanka, Borobudur in Indonesia, Kak Ou in Laos, and Wat Phra Kaew in Thailand.

(<http://www.bhutanobserver.bt>)

India's exports grow by 34.42% in April 2011

India's exports continued to be on the upswing, growing by 34.42 per cent to \$ 23.849 billion in April this year from the level of \$ 17.742 billion in the same month of last year, according to a press statement from the Press Information Bureau.

In rupee terms, the exports were valued at Rs 105819.43 crore in April this year, which was 34.03 per cent higher than the level of 78951.58 crore achieved

in the same month of 2010. According to the statement, India's imports during April 2011 were valued at \$ 32.834 billion (Rs 145686.06 crore) as against \$ 28.770 billion (Rs 128025.31 crore) in the corresponding month of last year. Oil imports during April 2011 were valued at \$ 10.186 billion, which was 7.7 per cent higher than oil imports valued at \$ 9.454 billion in the corresponding period last year. Non-oil imports during April

2011 were estimated at \$ 22.648 billion which was 17.3 per cent higher than non-oil imports of \$ 19.316 billion in April, 2010.

The trade deficit for April 2011 was estimated at \$ 8.985 billion which was lower than the deficit of \$ 11.028 billion during April 2010, the statement added.

(<http://netindian.in/news>)
(<http://pib.nic.in>)

Myanmar and Thailand discuss fostering cooperation within the context of BIMSTEC

His Excellency U Wunna Maung Lwin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar met with Foreign Minister of Thailand His Excellency Mr. Kasit Piromya on the occasion of his official visit to Thailand after the Special Informal ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting on East Asia Summit, on 11 April 2010 in Bangkok. During their meeting, the two Foreign Ministers discussed several issues of mutual interest. In this regard, Foreign Minister Kasit reiterated Thailand's wish and determination to enhance bilateral relations with Myanmar as Thailand's close neighbour. He also expressed Thailand's goodwill in particular the sharing of a secure and safe of a 2,400 kilometer border, expressing hope that border talks on demarcation of the land boundary could proceed expeditiously. Thailand wishes to continue fostering cooperation with Myanmar at

both the regional and sub regional levels especially within the context of the ASEAN Community in 2015 and BIMSTEC. The Thai side also reiterated its readiness to extend technical cooperation to Myanmar. Furthermore, both sides agreed that the two bilateral agreements, namely the Agreement for the Avoidance for Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income and the Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investment should enter into force at the earliest opportunity so as to benefit the private sector of both countries.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand)

Sustained growth in international tourist arrivals continues in Nepal

The upward trend which is already seen in January 2011 continues in the fourth month of the year 2011 showing clearly the rising travel demand towards the destination. Nepal has enjoyed a sustained positive growth in the international visitor arrivals since June 2009. The figures released by Immigration Office, Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA) reveal that visitor arrivals in the month of April 2011, compared to the same month last year, have increased by 34.3% to 51,969. All regions have shown positive growth in the second month of

2011. In aggregate, the South Asian segment has registered a positive growth of 32.5%. India which constitutes the major market of Nepal, has recorded positive growth of 38.3%. Also, arrivals from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have increased by 4.9%, 4.1% and 83.9% respectively. Arrivals from Asia (other than South Asia) have also recorded positive growth of 18.4% in aggregate. The visitor arrivals from China have increased by 42.2%. Similarly, the arrivals from Japan, Thailand, Singapore and South Korea have also increased



by 13.1%, 5.6%, 37.3% and 3.7% respectively. Tourist arrivals from Australia and New Zealand have increased by 47.3% and 46.7% respectively. Also, the arrivals from USA and Canada saw positive growth of 25.7% and 36% respectively. Between January to April 2011, international tourist arrivals to Nepal have risen by 18.4% to 168,958.

(www.welcomenepal.com)

Second Expert Group Meeting on BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility

The Second Expert Group Meeting on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility was held from 09-10 May 2011 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Delegations of Experts representing all the BIMSTEC Member States attended the Meeting. The Meeting was chaired by Prof. (Ms.) Nalini Ratnasiri, Chairperson of the National Science and Technology Commission of Sri Lanka.

The Meeting had detailed discussions on the Revised Concept Paper submitted by Sri Lanka on the establishment of the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility and finalized the same. The funding mechanism, budget and the operational aspects of the Facility were also discussed at the Meeting.



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Contact us:

BIMSTEC Newsletter has been compiled on behalf of the BIMSTEC Working Group by the Embassy of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka in Bangkok. For further information, feedback, or events to be covered in the Newsletter, please contact us at:

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www.bimstec.org

Sri Lanka, Bangladesh sign five MoUs



Sri Lanka and Bangladesh signed five memoranda of understanding (MoUs) on agriculture, education, livestock, information, and commerce cooperation on 19th April 2011. The signing followed discussions between His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka and Her Excellency Mrs. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh. The Sri Lankan President was on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh.

The five MoUs include cooperation between Export Development Board of Sri Lanka and Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh; cooperation between Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Development of Sri Lanka and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock of Bangladesh; and cooperation between Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council and Sri Lankan Council for Agriculture Research Policy.

The MoUs also include cooperation between Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh Education Ministry; and bilateral cooperation on cultural, educational and scientific exchange programs. Sri Lankan Minister of External Affairs Hon. Prof. G. L. Peiris signed the agreements on behalf of Sri Lanka while Commerce Minister Hon. Faruk Khan, Information and Cultural Affairs Minister Hon. Abul Kalam Azad, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Hon. Abdul Latif Biswas, Agriculture Minister Hon. Begum Matia Chowdhury and Education Minister Hon. Nurul Islam Nahid signed the respective instruments on behalf of Bangladesh government in the presence of the President Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Hasina at the Bangladesh Prime Minister's office.

Earlier, the two leaders had a meeting where bilateral, regional and international issues were discussed. Two leaders discussed the issue of terrorism and countering terrorism, as well as food security and cooperation in the shipping sector during the meeting.

(www.news.lk)

Upcoming BIMSTEC Meetings:

***BIMSTEC Workshop
on Seasonal Prediction
and Application to the
Society– 22-23 June
2011, New Delhi, India***

***Second Ministerial
Meeting on Poverty Al-
leviation– 23-24 June
2011– Kathmandu, Ne-
pal***

***International Research
Conference and Sym-
posium in Ayurveda–
15-17 July 2011, Co-
lombo, Sri Lanka***

***Twentieth Meeting of
the BIMSTEC Trade
Negotiating Committee
(20th TNC Meeting)-
Bangkok, Thailand***