



BIMSTEC

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

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Editorial



Welcome to our second monthly BIMSTEC E-Newsletter of 2024!

February 2024 witnessed a number of high-level engagements and meaningful interactions, including participation at regional and global platforms. Our interactions at various platforms gave us the opportunities to highlight the significant achievements of BIMSTEC and underscore the immense potential that it holds for expanding and deepening regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region.

It was an honour to call-on H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh. It was a privilege to participate at Indian Ocean Conference 2024, held in Perth, and Raisina Dialogue 2024, a leading platform for dialogue on global issues, held in New Delhi.

As Secretary General, I traveled to Bangkok for my introductory visit to Thailand, the Chair of BIMSTEC. The visit was very useful and fruitful. I am looking forward to my introductory visits in March 2024 to India and Bhutan.

Enjoy reading our e-Newsletter! I am looking forward to receiving your valuable suggestions to further improve it.

Best Regards and Wishes,

(Indra Mani Pandey)
Secretary General

Secretary General calls on Prime Minister of Bangladesh



The Secretary General(SG) Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey called on H. E. Sheikh Hasina, Honourable Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh at the latter's Office on 13 February 2024. SG was accompanied by his spouse Mrs. Sushma Pandey.

SG congratulated Honourable Prime Minister on her historic re-appointment as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the 4th consecutive term and commended the exemplary progress that Bangladesh has achieved under her able leadership. He wished her success in all her endeavours to realize the goal of a developed, prosperous and smart Bangladesh by 2041.

SG apprised Honourable Prime Minister of the achievements made in strengthening regional cooperation through BIMSTEC since the 5th BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2022. SG also thanked the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka and providing it with the requisite support in enabling it to fulfill its responsibilities.

SG sought the Leadership of Bangladesh, as the Lead Country for regional cooperation in Trade, Investment & Development Sector under BIMSTEC, to work closely with other member States to expedite conclusion of negotiations of the six constituent Agreements under BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Agreement. He requested Honourable Prime Minister's indulgence in expeditious completion of the project to construct an Iconic building for housing the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Honourable Prime Minister, referring to the abiding commitment of Bangladesh to BIMSTEC, as one of its founding members, assured SG of her Government's support in realizing the goal of regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal region through BIMSTEC, particularly sustainable development, which is a shared goal of all the BIMSTEC member States.

Hon'ble Prime Minister also assured that the new building for BIMSTEC will be completed in the next three years. She shared her Government's priorities and people-centric policies focused on realization of the goal of sustainable development of Bangladesh including rural development. Stating that the people's support to her is her only source of strength and she reiterated her abiding commitment to democracy in Bangladesh.

Secretary General calls on State Minister for Commerce of Bangladesh



The Secretary General Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey, called on H.E. Ahasanul Islam (Titu), MP, Honourable State Minister for Commerce of Bangladesh on 05 February 2024 at the latter's office in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Secretary General congratulated H.E. Ahasanul Islam on his appointment as the State Minister for Commerce and apprised him of the progress being made in fostering regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework, especially in Trade, Investment and Development Sector, which is led by Bangladesh. The Secretary General also thanked the Ministry of Commerce for its support in leading cooperation in the vital domains of trade and investment.

Hon'ble Minister and the Secretary General underscored the importance of making swift progress in the negotiations under the Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Agreement, which will contribute to more trade and investment within the region and help in realization of sustainable development in BIMSTEC member States. They also stressed on the importance of forging cooperation in digital commerce and promotion of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises among the member States.

BIMSTEC Aquatics Championship 2024



The first ever BIMSTEC Aquatics Championship was held at the Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Swimming Pool Complex with a grand inauguration ceremony in New Delhi, India from 06-09 February, 2024. Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, Honourable Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports of India, in esteemed presence of Shri Dig Bahadur Limbu, Honourable Minister of Youth & Sports of Nepal, inaugurated the championship.

At the opening, the Secretary General Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey expressed his gratitude to the Government of India for hosting the Championship and underscored the significance of organizing such sports and other youth events in fostering regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region.

The championship was also the first sports event being organized within the BIMSTEC framework and over 400 athletes and officials from seven BIMSTEC member States participated in the championship, which included 43 events across 3 aquatic disciplines of swimming, diving and water polo.

The event concluded successfully and has been significant in further enhancing the public recognition of BIMSTEC, especially amongst the youth.

Secretary General at 7th Indian Ocean Conference 2024



The Secretary General Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey attended the 7th Indian Ocean Conference 2024 held from 09-10 February in Perth, Australia and also participated as a Panelist at the **Panel Discussion on Strengthening ties in the Indian Ocean: *How can we better facilitate cooperation through regional architecture, between Indian Ocean countries?***

During the panel discussion, the Secretary General spoke on the importance of regional cooperation in dealing with security and development challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and mentioned that regional organizations, including BIMSTEC do provide a viable framework for forging multifaceted cooperation in IOR.

Further, the Secretary General mentioned that, given the commitment of member States, BIMSTEC is poised to play a leading role in the security and sustainable development of the Bay of Bengal region and has a huge untapped potential which can contribute to the security and growth in the entire IOR.

The Secretary General also underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region through the framework of BIMSTEC and stated that BIMSTEC should be an integral part of any strategy or mechanism to promote security and development in IOR.



Secretary General being interviewed by WION News on 10 February 2024 during the 7th Indian Ocean Conference 2024 in Perth, Australia. View More : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CTJieFnto>

Secretary General meets with Foreign Ministers and Heads of Regional Organization on the Sidelines of 7th Indian Ocean Conference 2024



Secretary General met the Foreign Minister of Nepal H.E. Narayan Prakash Saud. Nepal is one of two Himalayan landlocked BIMSTEC member States for which access, stability & sustainability of IOR is key to reach international markets.



Secretary General met the Foreign Minister of Australia H.E. Senator Penny Wong. They discussed facets of regional cooperation pursued by BIMSTEC.



Secretary General met the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka H.E. M.U.M Ali Sabry . They discussed the role and contribution of Sri Lanka to BIMSTEC and the way forward. Sri Lanka is the only island member State of BIMSTEC.



Secretary General of met with the Secretary General of Indian Ocean Rim Association(IORA) H.E. Salman Al Farisi. They discussed cooperation between BIMSTEC and IORA.



Secretary General met with the Secretary General of Indian Ocean Commission H.E. Velayoudom Marimoutou. They discussed cooperation in dealing with security and developmental challenges in the Indian Ocean Region.



Secretary General met with the Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation H.E. Golam Sarwar.

Discussion on Research on Traditional Medicine Used in COVID-19 and Diabetes



The Expert Group constituted to conduct a systematic review of research on traditional medicine used in COVID-19 and Diabetes, as per the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Development of Traditional Medicine, held a virtual meeting on 13 February 2024.

During the Meeting, the Experts from the BIMSTEC member States held detailed discussions on research methodologies for conducting systematic reviews of research on

traditional medicine used in COVID-19 and Diabetes, and decided that they would work together to prepare, register, and publish Protocols for this purpose, in scientific journals.

The meeting also decided that individual member States would publish their completed systematic reviews of research in scientific journals. India and Sri Lanka serve as the lead countries for this activity relating to the systematic reviews of research in COVID-19 and Diabetes respectively.

International Seminar on Economic Diversification and Global Market



The Secretary General Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey along with other senior officials from different government ministries, members of the diplomatic community, former ambassadors, senior military officials, media, academia, researchers, faculties and students from various universities, business community and representatives from international organizations, attended the International Seminar on **Economic Diversification and Global Market: Bangladesh's Opportunities and Way Forward** on 14 February 2024.

The seminar was organized by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies based in Dhaka.

Workshop on Cross-border Transmission Lines Optimization of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Masterplan



The BIMSTEC Secretariat in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank organized a Workshop on Cross-border Transmission Lines Optimization of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Masterplan on 18-19 February 2024 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Officials from all BIMSTEC member States participated in the workshop.

The workshop was aimed at sharing the initial results of the optimization and seeking inputs for the detailed study of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Masterplan. The Workshop also discussed the way forward in finalizing the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Masterplan.

BIMSTEC Parley at Raisina Dialogue 2024



The Secretary General Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey attended the 9th edition of the Raisina Dialogue 2024 which was held in New Delhi, India from 21-23 February 2024. The Dialogue witnessed participation of representatives from over 100 countries including Ministers, former Heads of State & Government, Technology Leaders, Academics, Journalist, Scholars, Experts from leading Think Tanks, and youth.

The Secretary General also participated in the Conversation over Breakfast – The BIMSTEC Parley: Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development, on 22 February, along with the State Minister of Finance of Sri Lanka, Hon. Shehan Semasinghe; Member of Parliament of Nepal, Hon. Swarnim Wagle; Policy Analyst, OECD, Ms. Moonyung Lee; Chairman, D-8, Chamber of Commerce and Industries of Bangladesh, Mr. Sheikh Fazole Fahim; Director, SELISE Digital Platforms, Bhutan, Mr. Tshering Dorji, and Associate Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress, India, Ms. Riya Sinha. During the deliberations, a number of new ideas were discussed for expanding regional cooperation through BIMSTEC.

The Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship geopolitics and geo-economic forum, is jointly organised by the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the independent think tank Observer Research Foundation.

Secretary General meets with Director for South Asia, IFPRI



Dr. Shahidur Rashid, Director for South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) based in New Delhi called on the Secretary General Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey at the BIMSTEC Secretariat on 25 January 2024. They discussed and agreed to collaborate on specific areas of cooperation for the benefit of the BIMSTEC region.

IFPRI is one of the two international organisations with which BIMSTEC has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to foster partnership.

Secretary General meets with Shri Rahul Patil



Secretary General Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey met with Shri Rahul Patil, Co-Convener, Sri Lanka-India-Nepal Tri-Services Motorbike Expedition, and discussed future expeditions involving all BIMSTEC member States.

Secretary General being interviewed by Journalist



Secretary General in conversation with journalist Purnima Sharma. The full interview can be accessed on youtube.

<https://youtu.be/07P9dTm9SDM?si=4bWsBFBZW3lpUELD>

Secretary General on Introductory Visit to Thailand 28-29 February 2024



Secretary General met with H.E. Mr. Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. They discussed ways to expand cooperation within BIMSTEC under Thai Leadership including the 6th BIMSTEC Summit to be held in Thailand.



Secretary General met with Mr. Montri Dechasakulsom, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport of Thailand. They discussed progress in forging regional connectivity through BIMSTEC and Thailand's role.



Secretary General met with Mr. Cherdchai Chaivaivid, DG of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand.



Secretary General at media briefing session with Director General Mr. Cherdchai Chaivaivid, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand. They briefed the Thai media on the outcome of the Secretary General visit to Thailand, the role of Thailand as BIMSTEC Chair, & matters related to 6th BIMSTEC Summit.



Secretary General attended a Discussion on “**The Prospects of BIMSTEC**” at the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok.



BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

The BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting comprises Ministers dealing with foreign relations of the member States and meets annually, preceded by the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting. So far, 19 Ministerial Meetings were held and the meeting is being hosted by the member State holding the BIMSTEC Chairmanship.

The BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, among others, coordinates overall BIMSTEC cooperation and the implementation of agreements & decisions of the BIMSTEC Summit; endorses the deliberations of the BIMSTEC Sectoral Ministerial Meetings; and approves budget of the Secretariat and BIMSTEC Centres/Entities as proposed by the Senior Officials' Meeting.



16th BIMSTEC Ministerial
Kathmandu, Nepal, 29 August 2018



17th BIMSTEC Ministerial
Colombo, Sri Lanka, 01 April 2021



18th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting
Colombo, Sri Lanka, 29 March 2022



19th BIMSTEC Ministerial
Bangkok, Thailand, 09 March 2023

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