Culture

Culture was identified and proposed as an area of cooperation among the BIMSTEC Member States at the First BIMSTEC Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand on 31 July 2004. Recognizing that the pluralistic nature of societies, shared cultural heritage and the rich diversity of languages, arts, crafts and traditions provide ample opportunity for multi-dimensional cooperation within Bay of Bengal region; the 8th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Dhaka, on 18-19 December 2005 decided to add the Culture as one of the sectors of BIMSTEC Cooperation.

The First BIMSTEC Culture Ministers’ Meeting held in Paro, Bhutan on 23-25 May 2006 adopted the Paro Initiative that called for the establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) to be located in Bhutan. The leaders in the Second BIMSTEC Summit agreed to expand cooperation in culture to include cultural values, diversity, and heritage and decided to support the establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory in Bhutan. Accordingly, the Member States signed the MoU on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory in the Third BIMSTEC Summit held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar in 2014 (link to the MoU).

The leaders in the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit emphasized the need to enhance cultural exchange among the Member States to further strengthen the historic cultural ties among peoples; promote mutual respect and tolerance for cultural diversity; underscore the importance of Buddhism as a connecting thread in the region, and remain committed to giving a clear manifestation to this by establishing a Buddhist Circuit. They agreed to hold meetings of BIMSTEC Cultural Ministers and BIMSTEC Cultural Festival at regular intervals.
As decided during the Seventeenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, the establishment of an **Expert Group on Cultural Cooperation** is in the process of being initiated to examine the scope to deliberate upon all issues to promote cultural values, heritages, diversity, and exchange in the region, including developing Plan of Cooperation and Action in Culture.

The First Meeting of BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) held virtually in Thimphu, Bhutan on 20 September 2021, discussed, negotiated and finalized the draft text of the Procedures and Rules of BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission. It also agreed to prepare a draft Organogram of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) including the Terms of References (TOR) for appointing Director of the Observatory, Professional and General Service Staffs as well as other administrative and financial matters.