

**Statement by His Excellency Shri Narendra Modi, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India at BIMSTEC
Plenary Session on August 30, 2018**

**Your Excellency, Right Hon'ble Prime Minister Oli Ji,
My fellow leaders from BIMSTEC member countries,**

First of all, I would like to heartily thank the Government of Nepal and Prime Minister Oli Ji for hosting this successful fourth BIMSTEC Summit. Although this is the first BIMSTEC Summit for me, but in 2016 I had the opportunity to host BIMSTEC Retreat with the BRICS Summit in Goa. The Agenda for Action that we had decided in Goa, our teams have taken a commendable follow-up action on that.

It includes,

- Organizing the first annual BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise
- Two meetings of the National Security Chiefs
- Progress in discussions on the BIMSTEC Trade Facilitation Agreement.
- Agreement on the subject of BIMSTEC Grid Inter-Connection.

I congratulate the delegations of all the member countries for this.

Excellencies,

For centuries all of our countries have been linked with civilization, history, art, language, food and unbreakable bonds of our shared culture. On the one side there is this Great Himalaya mountain range and on the other side there is the Bay of Bengal situated between the Indian and Pacific oceans. This area of Bay of Bengal has a special significance for our development, security and progress. And, therefore, it is no surprise that the culmination of both India's "Neighborhood First" and "Act East", happens in this region of the Bay of Bengal.

Excellencies,

We are all developing countries. Peace, prosperity and happiness in our respective countries is our biggest priority. But in today's inter-connected world no one can achieve it alone by themselves. We have to walk with each other. I believe that the biggest opportunity is Connectivity - Trade connectivity, Economic connectivity, Transport connectivity, Digital connectivity, and People-to-People connectivity - We will have to work on all the dimensions. We can also host meetings in future for coastal shipping and motor vehicles agreements in BIMSTEC. India is ready to host BIMSTEC Start Up Conclave to increase connectivity among our entrepreneurs. Most of us are primarily agricultural states and we are facing the threats of climate change. In this context, for cooperation on agricultural research, education and development, India will organize an International Conference on Climate Smart Farming Systems.

In the field of digital connectivity India is already committed to enhancing its National Knowledge Network in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal. We propose to increase it further to include Myanmar and Thailand also. I hope all BIMSTEC countries will be participating in India Mobile Congress being held in New Delhi this year. This Congress also includes the BIMSTEC Ministerial Conclave. India's North-Eastern Region will play an important role in increasing connectivity with BIMSTEC member countries. For the development of North East region of India we have an initiative called Science and Technology Interventions in the North Eastern Region. We propose to extend this program to BIMSTEC member countries. Similarly, we will also provide twenty-four scholarships to researchers, students and professionals from BIMSTEC member countries in the North Eastern Space Application Center of India.

Excellencies,

A special link in our relations is Buddhism and contemplation. India will host an International Buddhist Conclave in August 2020. I invite all the BIMSTEC member countries to participate in it as Guest of Honor. To promote contact among our young people, India wishes to host a BIMSTEC Youth Summit and a BIMSTEC Band Festival. We can also organize a BIMSTEC Youth Water Sports along with them. For the young students of BIMSTEC countries, thirty scholarships at Nalanda University and 12 research fellowships for advanced medicine will also be given at the GIPMER institute. Along with that one hundred short term training courses will also be offered on topics such as tourism, environment, disaster management, renewable energy, agriculture, trade and W.T.O under the ITEC program of India. We will also establish a Center of Bay of Bengal Studies at Nalanda University for research on arts, culture, maritime laws and other subjects in the Bay of Bengal region. In this center we can also research about the links connecting to each other's languages. We can cooperate to revive our historic buildings and monuments in order to benefit from our long history and the tourism potential related to our historic monuments of all countries.

Excellencies,

It is necessary that there is an atmosphere of peace and security in our region for the success of our shared efforts for regional integration and economic progress and prosperity. Our countries, connected with the Himalayas and the Gulf of Bengal, frequently face natural disasters. Sometimes it is flood, sometimes cyclone, or earthquake. In this context, humanitarian assistance with each other and cooperation and coordination during disaster relief efforts is very important. The geographical location of our region is linked to the global maritime trade routes, and Blue Economy also has a special significance in all our economies. Along with that, the importance of cyber economy will significantly increase for our economies in the coming digital era. And therefore, I welcome the upcoming BIMSTEC Multi-National Military Field Training Exercise and the Army Chief's conclave that will be held in India next month. India will also host a Tri Services Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise of BIMSTEC countries. India is also ready to host the second annual BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise. We are also ready to cooperate in capacity building for the officers working in the area of disaster management. India will organize a Hackathon for youth from all BIMSTEC countries on Blue Economy. This will focus on the possibilities and cooperation in the Blue Economy.

Excellencies,

None of us countries is such who have not faced problems of terrorism and transnational crimes connected to terrorism network and drug trafficking. We are ready to organize a conference within the BIMSTEC frame-work on issues related to narcotics. It is evidently clear that these problems are not law and order problems of any one country. We have to be united to face them. And for that we need to establish a framework of required rules and regulations. In this context mutual cooperation of our law-makers, especially women MPs, can be very helpful. My proposal is that we should set up a special forum for BIMSTEC women MPs.

Excellencies,

BIMSTEC has made remarkable progress in the last two decades. But we still have a very long journey ahead of us. There are many opportunities to further deepen our economic integration. And that's what our people expect from us too. This fourth summit is a great opportunity to take concrete steps towards meeting the expectations, hopes and desires of our people. Declaration of this fourth summit encompasses many important decisions in itself. This will give a lot of strength to the organization and the process of BIMSTEC.

Along with that, the success of this summit will prove to be an important milestone and provide strength to BIMSTEC processes. For this I congratulate the leadership of the host country, the government of Nepal, Oli Ji, and the leadership of all the member countries. India is committed to working shoulder to shoulder with you in the future also.

Thank you.

Thanks a lot.

(Disclaimer: PM's Speech was delivered in Hindi. This is an approximate translation of Speech)