

# **His Excellency Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Speaks at The Inauguration Ceremony of The BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka**

## **Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim**

Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, daughter of the Father of Nation Bangabandhu  
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman,  
Hon'ble Finance Minister,  
Dear Cabinet Colleagues,  
Foreign Secretary,  
Secretary General of BIMSTEC,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**Assalamu alaikum and a very good morning to you all.**

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all at the inaugural ceremony of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka. I am delighted to be present at this historic occasion as it marks a new journey for BIMSTEC. We are indebted to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, H.E. Sheikh Hasina, for her commitment to the cause of BIMSTEC. It would not have been possible to mark the BIMSTEC Secretariat operational within such a short period without her continued support.

The necessity of a BIMSTEC Secretariat was first broached at the 8<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Dhaka in 2005, which reached its culmination with the signing of the MoA on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014 during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Summit. I would like to convey my deep appreciation to the government and the people of the Member States for their confidence on Bangladesh and selecting Dhaka as the seat of the Secretariat.

### **Distinguished guests,**

Bangladesh attaches high importance to regional cooperation. It is deeply committed to the goals of the BIMSTEC. Established as a bridge between South and South-East Asia, BIMSTEC agenda capitalizes on the potentials of the region through collective efforts. The grouping started its journey in 1997 with only six identified areas of cooperation, which has expanded to 14 in the subsequent years. Its membership has also increased from 4 to 7 during this period.

BIMSTEC holds enormous potentials for the countries of the region. It provided a strong platform to forge cooperative relations in important areas such as agriculture, trade and

investment, energy, connectivity, food security and climate change. I believe, early implementation of the framework Agreement on BIMSTEC free Trade Area signed in 2004 would pave the way for wider economic cooperation in the region.

Connectivity is another key element for regional integration. Improved connectivity could act as a driving force in transforming BIMSTEC into a vibrant regional grouping. BIMSTEC can also play a significant role in exploiting the resources of the Bay of Bengal. We have already demonstrated our keen interest in this area by hosting an international Workshop on Blue Economic this month. The BIMSTEC members States could take up bilateral and multilateral initiatives to harness the vast marine resources such as fish, minerals and other resources for sustainable development of the region.

**Distinguished guests,**

I congratulate Ambassador Sumith Nakandala as the first Secretary general of BIMSTEC. I am confident that he will be able to steer the Organisation in achieving its goals as envisioned by the leaders of the region.

I believe that the activities of BIMSTEC would contribute towards translating the dream of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to transform Bangladesh into a Sonar bangle (Golden Bengal)

**I thank you all**

**Joy Bangla, Joy bangabandhu.**

**May the BIMSTEC spirit live forever.**