

**Welcome Remarks by  
H.E. Indra Mani Pandey  
Secretary General of BIMSTEC**

**BIMSTEC Day Reception  
Dhaka, 06 June 2024**

---

- **Your Excellency Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury**, Bir Bikram, Adviser to Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Affairs
- Hon'ble Ministers; State Ministers; Secretaries; Ambassadors and High Commissioners; Heads of International Organizations; Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

A very Good Evening to you all, Namaskar, Assamualaikum!  
I wish you all a Happy BIMSTEC Day!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our celebration of the 27<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of establishment of BIMSTEC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. On this auspicious occasion, I would like to extend, on behalf of the Secretariat, our warm greetings and felicitations to the Governments and People of the BIMSTEC member States.

I would like to begin by expressing our gratitude to His Excellency, Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Bir Bikram, Adviser to Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Affairs for gracing our celebration with his esteemed presence. We are also thankful to all the other dignitaries and our distinguished guests, for their presence at our celebration.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Guests**

The signing of Bangkok Declaration, on 06 June 1997, 27 years ago, marked the birth of BIMSTEC. It was a momentous initiative taken by the then Leaders of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Initially known as BIST-EC, it was renamed as BIMSTEC, with Myanmar joining 6 months later. When after 6 years, Bhutan and Nepal joined, BIMSTEC with its 7 members, was renamed as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. BIMSTEC is a unique regional organization as it brings together South Asia and South East Asia.

The BIMSTEC has been in existence for 27 years and, during this period, it has made significant achievements in forging economic and technical cooperation among its 7 member States. It has realized remarkable success in promoting regional cooperation in various sectors, demonstrating its immense potentials for contributing to regional growth and development. BIMSTEC has succeeded in creating the institutional framework that it needed to emerge as a dynamic and effective regional organization. It has its own Charter and well-established core and sectoral mechanisms. It has a vast and clearly defined agenda for regional collaboration. Various areas of cooperation have been organized into seven broad Sectors of Cooperation. And each member State of BIMSTEC has been designated as the lead State for pursuing cooperation in one of the 7 sectors, which has ensured that each member State considering itself an equal stakeholder and contributes equally to the BIMSTEC's success.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Guests**

The BIMSTEC Charter, which came into force on 20 May 2024, over two weeks ago, provides the requisite impetus for expanding and deepening regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal region. It

empowers BIMSTEC to engage external partners to foster mutually beneficial partnerships. I am delighted to recall that several regional and international organizations have expressed their keen interest in collaborating with the BIMSTEC. Our Charter also allows us to welcome Observers and new Members, in accordance with the prescribed procedures, and our doors are open now.

There is no denying that we could have done much more and could have done so in a more timely, effective and efficient manner. In this regard, I am happy to inform you that an Eminent Persons Group (EPG), constituted in early 2024, is currently reviewing the existing areas of cooperation, as well as the institutional framework of BIMSTEC to reform and repurpose it. The decision to establish the EPG reflects the collective commitment of our member States to reinvigorate BIMSTEC and to redefine its future. The EPG will soon finalize its Report and its recommendations are expected to transform BIMSTEC, enabling it to deliver tangible benefits to its members.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Guests**

Thailand, the current Chair of the BIMSTEC, has proposed to host the next BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok later this year. It is expected to adopt Bangkok Vision 2030, sign the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation, conclude MoUs with several international and regional organizations and adopt the EPG Report. We are confident that, like the past Summits, the next Summit will also be a milestone in BIMSTEC's journey!

The BIMSTEC Secretariat, located in Dhaka, since September 2014, has been committed to support the member States in implementation of the decisions taken by our Leaders. We are immensely grateful to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the Secretariat and providing all the necessary support to it.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,**

Today, we not only celebrate the auspicious occasion of the founding of BIMSTEC but also reaffirm our commitment to work towards our shared vision of a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal region. Today, we not only celebrate the progress that we have made together but also look forward, with optimism and determination, to a glorious future for BIMSTEC.

The importance of regional cooperation cannot be overstated. The BIMSTEC provides a promising platform for forging regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal. It stands ready to collaborate with like-minded partners, including regional and international organizations.

To conclude, I once again express my heartfelt gratitude to our Honourable Chief Guest and all our distinguished guests for their esteemed presence. Thank you all, once again, for being here and for your unwavering support to the success of the BIMSTEC.

\*\*\*\*\*