

BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Press Release, 15 September 2024

BIMSTEC Secretariat Celebrates its 10th Anniversary

The Secretariat of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in Dhaka celebrated today the 10th anniversary of its establishment on 13 September 2014.

Chief Guest, H.E. Mr. Md. Touhid Hossain, Hon'ble Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Interim Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was joined by ambassadors and high commissioners of BIMSTEC member States, other distinguished invitees and members of BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Welcoming the guests, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey underscored the critical role of the Secretariat in implementing the regional cooperation initiatives under BIMSTEC in accordance with its mandate, pointing out that the role of the Secretariat has evolved over the years and will expand further in future. He thanked the Government of Bangladesh for hosting and extending its full support to the Secretariat.

The Chief Guest, H.E. Mr. Md. Touhid Hossain, stated that BIMSTEC has made remarkable strides in advancing the shared vision and common interests of the people of the Bay of Bengal region. He called upon BIMSTEC member States to engage in result-oriented cooperation, delivering tangible benefits on the ground. He reiterated the commitment of Bangladesh to BIMSTEC and assured its unwavering support to the Secretariat.

The signing of the Memorandum of Association of the establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat at the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit in held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar in March 2014 and the subsequent ceremonial inauguration of the Permanent Secretariat in September 2014 marked the birth of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Attached:

- (i) *Remarks by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of BIMSTEC*
- (ii) *Remarks by the Chief Guest, H.E. Mr. Md. Touhid Hossain, Hon'ble Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Interim Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*
- (iii) *BIMSTEC Secretariat: At a Glance*

Remarks by the Secretary General of BIMSTEC

15 September 2024

- Excellency Md. Touhid Hossain, Hon'ble Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh
- Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners of BIMSTEC member States;
- Distinguished Guests, members of the Secretariat, Ladies and Gentlemen

A very Good Afternoon to you all, Namaskar, Assamualaikum!

I wish you all a Happy 10th Anniversary of the inauguration of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to our celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the BIMSTEC Secretariat. I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the BIMSTEC Secretariat at this premises. On behalf of the Secretariat and member States of BIMSTEC, I want to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh for its abiding support to the Secretariat, since its establishment in 2014. We are grateful to Hon'ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh for taking time out of his busy schedule to be our Chief Guest at today's Celebration. We are thankful to all other distinguished guests for their presence at our celebration, including esteemed Ambassadors and High Commissioners of the BIMSTEC member States.

The signing of the Memorandum of Association of the establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat in March 2014 and the subsequent ceremonial inauguration of the Permanent Secretariat in September 2014 marked the birth of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, a momentous occasion. The BIMSTEC Secretariat has since emerged as the anchor for implementation of regional cooperation initiatives under BIMSTEC in accordance with its mandate.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

As you are aware, 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 its own Charter and well-established institutional mechanisms, including Summits and Ministerial Meetings. It has clearly identified areas of cooperation, covering 7 Sectors & 8 sub-Sectors, with each member States taking lead in one of the 7 Sectors and 1 or 2 sub-Sectors. 7 Member States of BIMSTEC are located in strategic Bay of Bengal, which connects the Sea lines of communications (SLOCs) between Indian and Pacific Oceans. Further, BIMSTEC enjoys the requisite political support of its members, it focuses on technical and economic cooperation and it stays away from political issues. BIMSTEC is poised to emerge as a vibrant and capable Regional Organization in Bay of Bengal.

The year 2024 has been a milestone year for BIMSTEC. The BIMSTEC Charter entered into force in May this year, providing the requisite impetus for expanding and deepening regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal region. The Eminent Persons' Group on future directions of BIMSTEC has completed its work and has submitted its final Report last Thursday. The Report contains a number of recommendations to reform and revitalize BIMSTEC. The first ever BIMSTEC Business Summit was hosted by the CII last month. We may have next the very first Meeting of BIMSTEC FMs on the sidelines of the UNGA.

In view of the expanding cooperation within BIMSTEC, the role of the Secretariat has evolved and will expand further in future. In line with the growing role of the Secretariat, expanding the physical space available to the Secretariat has become essential. I am delighted to share with you all that the Government of Bangladesh has committed to construct an iconic building for the BIMSTEC Secretariat at this very premises. I am assured that it will take all necessary steps to expeditiously complete the project during its chairmanship, which will follow the conclusion of the Thai chairmanship, in order to have the iconic building inaugurated in the presence of the esteemed BIMSTEC Leaders in Dhaka on the occasion of the 7th BIMSTEC Summit.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

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

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

The BIMSTEC Secretariat, located in Dhaka, since September 2014, has been committed to support the member States in implementation of the decisions taken by them towards forging regional cooperation, in accordance with our mandate. I would like to reiterate that we are immensely grateful to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the Secretariat and providing all the necessary support to enable it to function efficiently and smoothly.

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 to be a part of our celebration and for your unwavering support to the success of the BIMSTEC. Have a joyful evening!

**Suggested Statement for the kind use of Hon'ble Adviser for Foreign Affairs,
on the occasion of 10th Anniversary of the establishment of the BIMSTEC
Secretariat.**

H. E. Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of BIMSTEC
Ambassadors and High Commissioners from BIMSTEC Member States
Ambassadors/High Commissioners/ representatives from the diplomatic corps
Senior Officials of the Government,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Assalamu Alaikum and a very good afternoon to you all!

I am delighted to be here with you today to celebrate the 10th anniversary of establishing the BIMSTEC Secretariat. I offer my heartfelt congratulations to the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Directors and other officials of the Secretariat, and Governments and people of the BIMSTEC member states on behalf of the government and the people of Bangladesh, as well as on my own behalf. My appreciation goes to everyone present here for participating in this event and for your unwavering support for the BIMSTEC process.

Distinguished Guests,

In 1971, millions of ordinary women and men, children and youth made their supreme sacrifices in a nine-month-long War of Independence. Our people aspired for an inclusive, just and free society where every person could materialise his or her own dream. Sadly, over the past fifteen years, our people, especially the youth, saw their spaces and rights curtailed increasingly. They witnessed the deep erosion of almost every State institution and trampling of all civic rights. The common mass brought an end to the brutal authoritarian regime at the expense of over eight hundred innocent people, including 37 children.

The people of Bangladesh witnessed a rebirth in her history.

As the student leaders who led the uprising and freed the country from the corrupt regime of Sheikh Hasina bestowed their trust on Professor Muhammad Yunus to form an Interim Government to lead the country during this crucial juncture of our history, we took the infallible responsibility for the sake of our people.

The Interim Government is pledge-bound to undertake robust, far-reaching reforms to restore economic stability and sustained growth. We are committed to good governance, curbing corruption and bringing order to every sphere of affairs, including the economy. These are at the core of the reforms we have planned. Our government has assured the countrymen that once our mandate is fulfilled in the conduct of elections and the judiciary – executive – security apparatus – public space is reformed, we shall hold a free, fair, participatory election.

Excellencies,

Allow me to express some thoughts on what brings us here today. The BIMSTEC Secretariat was formally inaugurated in Dhaka 10 years back on 13 September 2014. Today, I reiterate here the commitment that Bangladesh, as a founding member and the host country of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, will continue its utmost efforts to ensure well-equipped and state-of-the-art facilities for the Secretariat. The concerned agencies are working relentlessly to this end.

Over the past two and a half decades, BIMSTEC has made remarkable strides in advancing the shared visions and common interests of the people of the Bay of Bengal region. Since its inception, BIMSTEC has been a crucial platform for the region to address and overcome shared challenges. Bangladesh is committed to maintaining its proactive role in fostering trust and friendship with neighbouring and regional countries for the betterment of the region's people.

The BIMSTEC process has now been shaped with the signing of the Charter and the formulation of all relevant Rules of Procedures. It is time for the BIMSTEC nations to shift their focus towards tangible and result-oriented cooperation, driving the process forward and delivering tangible benefits to our region.

Dear Friends,

Bangladesh is committed to ensuring collective peace, progress, and prosperity in the region through a shared BIMSTEC vision. Bangladesh stands ready to pursue closer cooperation with the BIMSTEC countries for faster growth and the socio-economic prosperity of the people.

The Bay of Bengal region comprises two vibrant areas of South Asia and South East Asia. The region has enormous potential for forging substantive multi-sectoral cooperation for the socio-economic development of the people.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The areas of cooperation under BIMSTEC have been restructured and brought down to seven sectors of cooperation, with a lead country for each sector. Trade, Investment and Development is one of the most critical sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation. Bangladesh is the lead country in this sector. Bangladesh needs the support of all Member States for the conclusion and effective implementation of the BIMSTEC FTA, which has been negotiated for over two decades. Bangladesh wants closer cooperation among the BIMSTEC nations to finalize concomitant agreements as soon as possible. I am hopeful that the BIMSTEC FTA will contribute significantly to increasing intra-regional trade and will also open up new areas of cooperation in trade and investment.

As I mentioned, BIMSTEC is the only cooperation framework connecting South Asia and Southeast Asia to promote economic and technical cooperation in the Bay of Bengal. As most of the BIMSTEC Member States are facing economic challenges, the resumption of trade on a larger scale will be critical for a return to stability.

I am happy that the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity was adopted at the 5th BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo. Bangladesh believes that timely implementation of the Master Plan will be crucial for the countries of the region.

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the lead countries for their diligent preparation of the 'Action Plan' for all the reconstituted seven areas of cooperation in BIMSTEC. This comprehensive plan is a testament to their commitment and will undoubtedly accelerate the BIMSTEC process.

Excellencies,

Apart from the Trade, Development and Investment sectors, Bangladesh is the Lead country in the Blue Economy sub-sector. Bangladesh had to postpone the first Expert Group meeting on the Blue Economy, scheduled for 6-7 August 2024 due to unavoidable circumstances. As the line Ministry concerning the Blue Economy sub-sector, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will propose fresh dates and host the meeting soon. I am confident that formulating a plan of action and its timely implementation in the field of blue economy will unleash enormous potential for the region.

Excellencies,

Under the globally respected figure and a renowned global change-maker, Professor Muhammad Yunus, the Interim Government will remain committed to the BIMSTEC Process. BIMSTEC will remain a cornerstone of Bangladesh's foreign policy.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you all.

Long Live the Spirit of BIMSTEC

BIMSTEC Secretariat: At a Glance



The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organization established in 1997, comprising seven member States: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The organization serves as a bridge between South and Southeast Asia, fostering regional cooperation in seven key sectors with each member State leading a sector.

BIMSTEC is home to approximately 1.8 billion people and represents a combined GDP of around USD 4.5 trillion. It has a well-defined agenda for promoting security and sustainable development in the Bay of Bengal region. The organization is unique, focused on fostering technical and economic cooperation among its member States, and it enjoys the full support of its member States.

The BIMSTEC Secretariat was established following the signing of the Memorandum of Association at the 3rd BIMSTEC Summit held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, in 2014. Inaugurated on 13 September 2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the Secretariat marked its 10th anniversary of its establishment on 13 September 2024.

The Secretariat's primary mandate is to ensure efficient, effective and timely implementation of the decisions made by the member States in close consultation and coordination with the member States. It also engages with development partners to mobilize technical and financial support for BIMSTEC initiatives. Over the years, the Secretariat has played the key role of anchor in forging regional cooperation among the member States.

The Secretariat, headed by the Secretary General, carries out the directives of the member States and coordinates, monitors & reports on the progress in their implementation. The present Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, is a distinguished diplomat from India. He is the 4th Secretary General of BIMSTEC.

With BIMSTEC's strategic location and growing influence, the Secretariat is poised to support the member States in strengthening regional cooperation for realizing security and sustainable development in the Bay of Bengal region. Looking ahead, it aims to expand its institutional and human capacity to ensure that it meets the expectations of the member States.
