

**Welcome Remarks by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, BIMSTEC Secretary General
at BIMSTEC Day Reception Programme 2025**

Your Excellency Wahiduddin Mahmud, Honorable Adviser, Ministry of Planning, Excellencies, Hon'ble Advisers, Secretaries, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Heads of International Organizations, Distinguished Guests

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

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to our celebration of 28th Anniversary of BIMSTEC. On this auspicious occasion, I extend, on behalf of the Secretariat, our warm greetings and felicitations to the Governments and People of the BIMSTEC member States.

I convey our gratitude to His Excellency Wahiduddin Mahmud, Honorable Adviser, Ministry of Planning, for gracing our celebration with his esteemed presence. We are also thankful to all the esteemed dignitaries and distinguished guests for their presence.

I congratulate, on behalf of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, the Government of Bangladesh for assuming the Chairmanship of BIMSTEC, since the 6th BIMSTEC Summit, which held in Bangkok on 4th April 2025.

I take this opportunity to also thank BIMSTEC Leaders and Foreign Ministers for their congratulatory messages. We have displayed excerpts from the congratulatory messages received from our member States and I invite you to take a look at them.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

The signing of Bangkok Declaration, on 06 June 1997, 28 years ago, marked the birth of BIMSTEC. It was a momentous initiative by the then Leaders of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Initially known as BIST-EC, it was renamed as BIMSTEC, with Myanmar joining it 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, since its inception, has made significant progress in forging regional cooperation in various sectors, underlining its relevance for regional security and development. BIMSTEC has succeeded in creating the institutional framework that it needs to function as an efficient and effective regional Organization. It has its own Charter and well-established core and sectoral mechanisms, including Senior Officials Meetings, Ministerial Meetings and Summits.

BIMSTEC has a vast and clearly defined Agenda, comprising 16 Sectors, which have been organized into 7 Groups. Each BIMSTEC member State has been designated as the lead State for pursuing cooperation in one of the 7 Groups, which has ensured that each member State considers itself an equal stakeholder in BIMSTEC and contributes equally to its success. BIMSTEC has remained focused on its core mandate of technical and economic cooperation and has avoided placing political issues on its Agenda.

As Honourable President of Sri Lanka has noted in his message, BIMSTEC has evolved into a vibrant and forward-looking organization, promoting partnerships across a broad spectrum of sectors, including trade, connectivity, energy, climate change, technology, tourism and cultural exchange.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

Let me take this opportunity to share with you significant outcomes of the 6th Summit. At the 6th Summit, BIMSTEC Leaders, apart from their comprehensive Summit Declaration, adopted BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, providing a roadmap for building a prosperous, resilient and open BIMSTEC. They proposed a number of steps in order to enhance regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. They adopted the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) Report, beside the Rules of Procedure of BIMSTEC, paving the way for reform and revitalisation of BIMSTEC. In addition to signing and adoption of the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation, MoUs between BIMSTEC and its developmental partners IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) and UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) were also signed.

As Honourable Prime Minister of India has noted in his message, it is a matter of great satisfaction that 6th BIMSTEC Summit has infused fresh momentum into our collective efforts to build a peaceful, prosperous, and inclusive Bay of Bengal region.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

As Honourable Prime Minister of Bhutan has reminded us in his message, 28th Anniversary of BIMSTEC is not only an occasion for celebration, but also an opportunity to renew our commitment to deepening regional integration and delivering tangible benefits to our peoples.

As Honourable Chairman of State Administration Council of Myanmar has emphasized in his message, BIMSTEC Day also reminds us of the immense potential that lies within our region and the power of collaboration to achieve our common goals.

As Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal has mentioned in his message, we are facing common challenges, such as climate catastrophe, natural disasters, geopolitical uncertainty, economic and digital inequalities, and transnational organized crimes and BIMSTEC's role in fostering robust regional diplomacy, deeper integration and meaningful partnerships among the Member States has become even more pronounced.

As Honourable Chief Adviser of Bangladesh, the current Chair of BIMSTEC, has stressed, BIMSTEC must now move decisively toward implementation. The time has come for impact-driven cooperation that delivers real benefits to the people of our region.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

There is no denying that BIMSTEC could have achieved much more and could have done so in a more timely, effective and efficient manner. We are committed to do so in future. The decision of BIMSTEC member States to move forward with implementation of the Report of the EPG reflects their collective commitment to reinvigorate and reform BIMSTEC.

The importance of regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal cannot be overstated and BIMSTEC provides a promising platform for doing so. BIMSTEC stands ready to collaborate with like-minded partners, including non-member States and UN, International and Regional Organisations to realise its goals.

We have already established partnerships with UNODC, IORA, ADB, WB and IFPRI and we have been exploring the opportunities for cooperation with UNESCAP, UNOPS, UNDRR, UN Women, WHO, ITU, WIPO, ISA, CDRI etc.

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. I am grateful to the Embassies and High Commissions of the BIMSTEC member States in Dhaka for their continued cooperation with the Secretariat, including in organization of this Reception.

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 BIMSTEC. I wish you a joyful evening.
