



Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

Press Release

Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health held in Colombo on 12-13 May 2026

The Second Meeting of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 12–13 May 2026. It was chaired by Dr. Asela Gunawardena, Director General of Health Services of Sri Lanka. It reviewed the progress in implementation of the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health (2023–2025) and discussed the revised BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health for the next phase of cooperation. The Group deliberated on a wide range of issues relating to regional public health cooperation, including strengthening disease surveillance, pandemic preparedness and response, One Health approaches, antimicrobial resistance, digital health systems, climate-related health risks and regional coordination mechanisms.

The Group also discussed establishment of BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Public Health, proposed by Sri Lanka, BIMSTEC Regional Early Warning Observatory proposed by Bangladesh and operationalization of the Project Management Unit (PMU) at the BIMSTEC Secretariat with support from the World Bank. The Expert Group emphasized the importance of practical, implementation-oriented cooperation and agreed to further strengthen regional collaboration in the health sector through coordinated activities, capacity-building initiatives and enhanced engagement with development partners.

About BIMSTEC

BIMSTEC comprises seven countries of the Bay of Bengal region: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It pursues regional cooperation in 7 broad sectors: Agriculture & Food Security; Connectivity; Environment & Climate Change; People-to-People Contact; Science, Technology & Innovation; Security; and Trade, Investment & Development. The cooperation also covers 8 sub-sectors: Blue Economy, Mountain Economy, Energy, Disaster Management, Fisheries & Livestock, Poverty Alleviation, Health, and Human Resource Development.

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