

Remarks by H.E. Shama Obaed Islam, MP
Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh
Chief Guest at the Reception Hosted by the BIMSTEC Secretariat
on the Occasion of the 29th Anniversary of BIMSTEC

Monday, 08 June 2026 | 1900 hrs
Hotel Sheraton Dhaka

His Excellency Mr. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of BIMSTEC,
Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners from BIMSTEC Member
States,
Esteemed members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Senior Officials of the Government of Bangladesh,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikum and Good Evening.

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to be here with you today to celebrate the 29th Anniversary of BIMSTEC. On behalf of the Government and the people of Bangladesh, and on my own behalf, I extend my heartiest felicitations to the Governments and peoples of our fellow BIMSTEC Member States. I take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to each one of you for being here and for your continued commitment to the BIMSTEC process. I also warmly convey my appreciation to the BIMSTEC Secretary General and his dynamic team for their continued dedication and hard work.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bangladesh attaches high importance to regional cooperation as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. Under the policy orientation of '*Bangladesh First*', our Government approaches regional cooperation with a clear objective, to advance national development while fostering a peaceful, stable and mutually beneficial neighbourhood based on sovereign equality and mutual respect. Our

engagements with BIMSTEC are therefore guided by dignity, pragmatism, fairness and welfare of our people.

Since its inception three decades ago, BIMSTEC has become a unique bridge between South and Southeast Asia, bringing together more than 1.8 billion people. For centuries, our peoples are connected through trade, culture, ideas and faith. Today, BIMSTEC gives that historic connection a modern institutional form.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the current Chair of BIMSTEC, Bangladesh is honoured to take on a proactive and constructive leadership role in guiding the organization through this important phase of institutional consolidation and strategic planning. We are committed to fostering trust, inclusivity, and collaboration among all Member States as we work toward building an open, prosperous, and resilient Bay of Bengal region.

The 6th BIMSTEC Summit held in Bangkok last year gave renewed momentum to our organization. The adoption of the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, the BIMSTEC Rules of Procedure and the Report of the Eminent Persons' Group has provided a forward-looking roadmap for a more robust, rule-based and results-oriented BIMSTEC.

As the lead country in the Trade, Investment and Development sector, including the Blue Economy, Bangladesh remains committed to advancing regional economic integration. The Bay of Bengal offers enormous prospects in fisheries, renewable energy, maritime transport, coastal tourism and marine biotechnology. These opportunities must be developed sustainably and equitably, with due regard to the interests of coastal communities.

Bangladesh Government is also committed to expanding trade opportunities, attracting investment, facilitating technology transfer, diversifying export markets and creating opportunities for our people. The economies of BIMSTEC Member States are complementary, and by reducing barriers, improving regulatory

cooperation and strengthening supply chains, we can unlock new opportunities for inclusive growth.

Excellencies,

Seamless multi-modal connectivity is essential for trade, investment and people-to-people contact. Bangladesh supports practical connectivity through roads, railways, ports, shipping routes, air links, energy grids and digital infrastructure. We continue to attach importance to the timely finalization of the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area, which can help increase intra-regional trade and investment for the benefit of all Member States.

Bangladesh also believes that people-to-people connections are the foundation of lasting regional cooperation. Cultural exchange, education, tourism, sports diplomacy, youth engagement and professional exchanges can bring South and Southeast Asia closer not only through agreements, but through trust and friendship among our peoples.

Distinguished Guests,

Bangladesh envisions a functional, visible, and responsive organization, one defined not by rhetoric, but by results. We reaffirm our unwavering support for the Secretariat and remain committed to ensuring that it is adequately equipped to serve the collective interests of all Member States.

As we mark the 29th anniversary of BIMSTEC, we must also acknowledge that we are at a critical juncture. The global and regional landscapes are evolving rapidly. From climate change to energy security, from public health to geopolitical tensions, our countries are facing complex, interlinked challenges. But within these challenges lie opportunities for deeper cooperation and greater solidarity. In this context, we need to further strengthen the institutional foundations of the organization, operationalize the BIMSTEC Charter, and ensure that sectoral cooperation mechanisms are properly resourced and effectively coordinated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I conclude, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of the Government of Bangladesh, led by Hon'ble Prime Minister His Excellency Mr. Tarique Rahman, and under his able leadership, we will continue to champion regionalism, inclusivity, and sustainable development across all our engagements. Let us renew our commitment to building a stronger and more connected Bay of Bengal community, one that delivers meaningful benefits to our people and advances peace, stability, and prosperity across the region and beyond.

I congratulate all of you once again on this auspicious day.

Long live BIMSTEC.

Long live regional solidarity.

Thank you.