

Remarks by BIMSTEC Secretary General 29th Anniversary of BIMSTEC

Your Excellency Abdul Awal Mintoo MP, Honourable Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change; Her Excellency Shama Obaed Islam, MP, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; H.E. Mr. M. Iqbal Hossain, Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief; Excellencies; Friends from diplomatic corps; friends from business, culture, media, academia, civil society and think tanks communities; distinguished guests, Namaskar! A very Good Evening to you all!

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to celebration of 29th Anniversary of BIMSTEC. I am grateful to you all for your presence. I am particularly thankful to His Excellency Abdul Awal Mintoo MP, Honourable Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change; Her Excellency Shama Obaed Islam, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs; and His Excellency Mr. M. Iqbal Hossain, Honourable State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief of Bangladesh, for their esteemed presence.

On this auspicious occasion, I extend warm greetings to the Governments and People of 7 BIMSTEC member States. I take this opportunity to thank BIMSTEC Leaders and Foreign Ministers for their congratulatory messages. We have displayed the congratulatory messages received from the Leaders of our member States for your perusal.

As Honourable Prime Minister of Bhutan has noted in his message, This year's celebration carries a special significance, as we not only commemorate 29th Anniversary of the establishment of BIMSTEC but also formally begin a year-long celebration, leading to our historic 30th Anniversary milestone.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

As Honourable Prime Minister of India has noted in his message, "The Bay of Bengal has served as a civilizational bridge over millennia, facilitating the exchange of peoples, trade, beliefs, and traditions." The signing of Bangkok Declaration, on 06 June 1997, marked the birth of BIMSTEC. It was a historic initiative by the then Leaders of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand to create a platform for cooperation between the countries of South Asia and South-East Asia.

Initially known as BIST-EC, it was renamed as BIMSTEC, after Myanmar joined 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, pertaining to regional security and development. BIMSTEC has succeeded in creating the institutional framework that it needs to function as an efficient and effective regional Organization. BIMSTEC has its own Charter and its vision is enshrined in BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030. BIMSTEC has held numerous Summits of Heads of Governments and Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings, including Sectoral Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings.

BIMSTEC has a vast and clearly defined Agenda, comprising 18 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. There are numerous sectoral joint working groups, expert groups and their sub-groups to identify the areas of cooperation in various sectors and monitor their implementation. There are agreed Action Plans for cooperation in various Sectors, which are being implemented. BIMSTEC has remained focused on its core mandate of technical and economic cooperation and has avoided placing political issues on its Agenda.

In order to institutionalize cooperation in various sectors, BIMSTEC has established Centres of Excellence such as BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate and BIMSTEC Energy Centre, both in India. Further, BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory has been set up in Paro, Bhutan, and BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility is being set up in Colombo, Sri Lanka. There are initiatives to establish 10 more Centres of Excellence.

BIMSTEC has already concluded two Conventions: the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking and the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters. 3 more Conventions on Extradition; Human Trafficking; and Transfer of Sentenced Persons are being concluded. The BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation, which was signed in April 2025, has entered into force for 4 member States. Besides, a number of MoUs and MoAs have also been concluded.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

As Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal has pointed out in his message, “BIMSTEC has emerged as a dynamic platform for regional cooperation, reflecting the region’s diversity, vitality, and shared potential.” Honourable President of Sri Lanka has underlined in his message that “BIMSTEC has emerged as a vital bridge between South and Southeast Asia, promoting regional cooperation, connectivity, and shared prosperity across the Bay of Bengal region.”

Honourable Prime Minister of Thailand has reminded us that “In this increasingly volatile environment, the solidarity of the BIMSTEC family stands as our most valuable strategic asset. Unity is no longer merely an aspiration; it is an imperative for safeguarding our regional interests and ensuring sustainable growth.”

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

With measures being taken to reform and revitalize BIMSTEC, including through implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Eminent Persons' Group, it is poised to emerge as a dynamic and successful platform for forging regional cooperation to assist the member States in realising their security and sustainable development goals. It is also emerging as a shining example of South-South cooperation in Indo-Pacific region.

BIMSTEC stands ready to collaborate with the like-minded partners, including non-member States and UN, International and Regional Organisations to realise its goals. We have been partnering and collaborating with UN Organisations such as UNODC, UNESCAP, UNOPS, UNDRR and UN Women; International Organisations such as WHO, ITU, WIPO, IFPRI, FAO, ISA, CDRI; Regional Organisations such as IORA and ASEAN and Multilateral Banks such as ADB and WB.

Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the current Chair of BIMSTEC, has called upon the BIMSTEC member States to renew their collective resolve to build a stronger, more resilient and more effective BIMSTEC.

As Honourable President of Myanmar has called upon the member States to work together to ensure that BIMSTEC continues to evolve into a more effective, results-oriented, and responsive regional organization that delivers tangible benefits to our peoples.

The BIMSTEC Secretariat remains committed to support the member States in implementation of the decisions taken by them. The Secretariat Team is immensely grateful to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the Secretariat and providing all the necessary support to it. We are also grateful to the Embassies and High Commissions of the BIMSTEC member States in Dhaka for their continued support to the Secretariat, including in organising this Reception.

Before I conclude, I once again express my gratitude to our Chief Guest and all our distinguished guests for their esteemed presence. Thank you all for being here and for your unwavering support to BIMSTEC. I wish you a joyful evening.
