



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

Press Release

First BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting

Dhaka, 15 October 2026

The First BIMSTEC Home Ministers' Meeting was held, in New Delhi, India, on 13 October 2026, to deliberate on regional cooperation in security and disaster management sectors. It was preceded by a Meeting of Home Secretaries/Senior Officials of the Home Ministries of the BIMSTEC member States on 12 October 2026.

Delhi Declaration

The First Meeting of BIMSTEC Home Ministers' adopted Delhi Declaration, which is enclosed to this Press Release. It reflects and reaffirms the resolve and commitment of the BIMSTEC member States to deepening and enhancing regional security and disaster management cooperation to realize the goals of a connected, secure, resilient, developed and prosperous BIMSTEC region.

Cooperation in Security Sector

The 8th Meeting of BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers, held in Dhaka, in December 2005, had recognised Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime as a priority area for cooperation under BIMSTEC and had decided to set up a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG-CTTC).

The JWG, supported by its five Sub-Groups, has since served as the principal mechanism for advancing cooperation in security sector for addressing transnational security threats faced by the member States. The Agenda for cooperation in security sector has evolved based on consensus decision by all the BIMSTEC member States, taking into account the shared transnational security threats faced by them, reflecting their belief that, given the transnational and regional nature of the threats to their security, they need to act together to deal with them effectively.

The Five Sub-Groups of JWG have been dealing with the following five specific areas of cooperation: Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism; Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Drugs; Countering Radicalisation and Terrorism; Human Trafficking; and Legal and Law Enforcement Issues.

The 4th BIMSTEC Summit, held in Kathmandu in 2018, had decided to establish a mechanism for Meeting of BIMSTEC Home Ministers. The 6th BIMSTEC Summit, held in Bangkok, in April 2025, welcomed establishment of the mechanism of the Meeting of Home Ministers to

lead, supervise and direct cooperation in security sector. The Agenda of the Home Ministers Meeting also includes cooperation in disaster management sector as disaster management in most of the BIMSTEC member States falls under the purview of Home Ministries.

In field of Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism, BIMSTEC Home Ministers approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Capacity Building for Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, which is expected to be signed after completion of requisite domestic approval procedures by the member States. They also approved the Action Plan to Prevent Illicit Flows of Funds among BIMSTEC Member States. They welcomed that BIMSTEC has been accorded Observer Status at the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), strengthening its external engagement to combat money laundering and terrorist financing.

As regards cooperation in Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Drugs, BIMSTEC Home Ministers approved the Plan of Action on Drug Control. A Work Plan for its implementation is under consideration. They accorded their approval for publication of the Second and Third Editions of BIMSTEC Annual Drug Reports, contributing to regional knowledge-sharing and cooperation in addressing drug-related challenges.

As regards regional cooperation in Countering Radicalisation and Terrorism, BIMSTEC Home Ministers called for early finalization of the Plan of Action on Countering Radicalisation and Terrorism, together with an Action Matrix for its implementation, to strengthen efforts of the member States to address terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism.

As regards cooperation in dealing with the challenges of Human Trafficking, BIMSTEC Home Ministers approved, in a landmark decision, the draft of BIMSTEC Convention Against Trafficking in Persons. The Convention is expected to be signed after completion of the requisite domestic approval procedures by the BIMSTEC member States. The Home Ministers also approved the Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking and its accompanying Action Matrix to facilitate coordinated regional action against the crime of human trafficking.

The Legal and Law Enforcement Issues Sub Group has focused on concluding Legal Instruments to provide frameworks for cooperation in dealing with various threats to security. The BIMSTEC Convention on Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking has been in force since March 2021. BIMSTEC Home Ministers called for early entry into force of the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, which was signed in March 2022, in Colombo at the 5th BIMSTEC Summit. The Sub-Group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues has been mandated by the JWG to focus on finalization of the drafts of the BIMSTEC Convention on Transfer of Sentenced Persons and the BIMSTEC Convention on Extradition. The Home Ministers directed the Sub Group to work expeditiously to complete its work.

Progress in Security Cooperation under the Meetings of BIMSTEC National Security Advisers/Chiefs

The BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat, hosted by PM of India, in Goa, in 2016, had decided to establish a mechanism of the Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Advisers/Chiefs (NSCs). The NSCs have met so far five times; their 5th Meeting was held in New Delhi in July 2026. The National Security Chiefs have advanced cooperation in domains of maritime security,

cybersecurity and space, while also taking initiatives, such as institutionalization of BIMSTEC Track 1.5 Security Dialogue and establishment of Himalayan Science Council.

Significant progress has been made in advancing maritime security cooperation. The 5th Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Advisers/ Chiefs had approved the BIMSTEC Guidelines for the Maritime Component of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and the BIMSTEC Guiding Principles for the Conduct of BIMSTEC Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies (MLEAs). The BIMSTEC Guidelines for Coordinated Marine Oil Spill Response are expected to be finalised soon by the Expert Group. The First BIMSTEC Maritime Security Exercise is scheduled to be held in India from 30 October to 3 November 2026.

The importance of Cybersecurity Cooperation has been underlined by all the BIMSTEC member States. The Five-Year Action Plan for BIMSTEC Cybersecurity Cooperation has been finalized by the Expert Group on Cybersecurity Cooperation. The Concept Note on the BIMSTEC Cybercrime Cooperation Framework will be finalized by the next Meeting of the Expert Group. India has offered to submit a proposal on creating a BIMSTEC Computer Emergency Response Team-to-Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-to-CERT) Cooperation Framework.

The 3rd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on the Himalayan Science Council, held virtually on 24 September 2026, had finalised the Concept Note on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Himalayan Science Council, marking further progress in creation of the Council for leading regional scientific cooperation focused on Himalayas.

As regards cooperation in Space Sector, the Concept Note on Space Cooperation has been approved by all the member States and India has been requested to convene the 1st Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Space Cooperation, which is also expected to consider various initiatives announced by India for space cooperation under BIMSTEC.

The First Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs, held in New Delhi, in 2017, had decided to establish Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue to facilitate exchanges on regional security issues. The 4th Edition of the Dialogue was held in New Delhi in May 2025, hosted by Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF). It has made significant recommendations.

Cooperation in Disaster Management

As regards cooperation in highly relevant area of disaster management, BIMSTEC Home Ministers approved the Plan of Action to Improve Preparedness and Coordination for Responding to Natural Disasters in the Bay of Bengal Region. In order to enable cooperation on the ground four rounds of BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercises (DMEx) have been conducted; the fourth Exercise was held in New Delhi on 14–15 July 2025.

The BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC), established in Noida, India, has been providing specialised early-warning forecasts for natural disasters since July 2017. It has also been engaged in undertaking capacity-building activities. The process for establishment of the BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Disaster Management (BDMC), in Jamnagar, India, is underway.

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 the following areas: Agriculture & Food Security; Blue Economy; Connectivity; Culture; Disaster Management; Energy; Environment & Climate Change; Fiscal & Monetary Policy; Health; Human Resource Development; Fisheries & Livestock; Mountain Economy; People-to-People Relations; Poverty Alleviation; Security; Science, Technology & Innovation; Tourism; Trade & Investment; and Women Development.

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