The BIMSTEC Secretariat remained busy during October-December 2018 to follow-up on the decisions taken by the leaders at the 4th BIMSTEC Summit held on 30-31 August 2018 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The most notable follow-up event was the holding of the 21st Meeting of the BIMSTEC Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) in Dhaka on 18-19 November 2018 towards the finalization of agreements related to BIMSTEC Free Trade Area. The 21st TNC held after a long gap of three years was highly productive in developing consensus on the Rules of Origin Criteria which is at the heart of the Agreement on Trade in Goods of the BIMSTEC FTA.

To make further progress on the FTA negotiation, Bhutan is expected to host the 22nd round of trade negotiation as soon as possible.

An article by Mr. S.M. Nazmul Hasan, Director, Trade & Investment Division of the BIMSTEC Secretariat has been incorporated in this issue.

I sincerely hope that the BIMSTEC FTA will become operational by 2019, thanks to the renewed interest and commitment expressed by the Member States during the 4th BIMSTEC Summit.

The Twenty-First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 18-19 November 2018. His Excellency Mr. Tofail Ahmed M.P., Hon’ble Commerce Minister, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh inaugurated the Meeting as the Chief Guest. Delegates from all the BIMSTEC Member States, i.e., Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand attended the Meeting.

The 21st Meeting of the BIMSTEC TNC made significant progress in finalizing the draft texts of three (3) important agreements relating to BIMSTEC FTA, namely Agreement on Trade in Goods, Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters, and Agreement on Dispute Settlement Procedures and Mechanisms. The Meeting also made progress on developing texts of three other agreements relating to Investment, Services and Trade Facilitation.

The Secretary General expressed hope that the BIMSTEC FTA will come into operation with the signing of the Agreement on Trade in Goods by 2019. He also expressed deep gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the 21st Meeting of the TNC.
The Secretary General of BIMSTEC H.E. M. Shahidul Islam visited Myanmar from 5-10 November 2018, accompanied by the Director of Development Division Mr Han Thein Kyaw.

While in Myanmar, the Secretary General called on to the Union Minister for Planning & Finance H.E. U Soe Win and the Union Minister for Electricity & Energy H.E. U Win Khaing, of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar at Nay Pyi Taw on 06 November 2018 to discuss on the progress of the regional cooperation and provided up-date on the BIMSTEC activities.

On the same day, the Secretary General met with H.E. U Thar Oo, Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications to discuss about the BIMSTEC Connectivity, particularly on the progress of draft Master Plan for transport & communication project financed by the ADB.
On 8 November 2018, the Secretary General met with H.E. U Hla Kyaw, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation to discuss the issues related to BIMSTEC cooperation on agriculture as Myanmar is the Lead Country for BIMSTEC Agriculture Sector. As the lead in this important social development sector, Myanmar has offered to host the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in 2019.

The Secretary General called on to H.E. U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister for International Cooperation/State Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on 8 November 2018. The Secretary General apprised the Minister on the overall progress of the BIMSTEC process and also updated on the current activities and follow up actions on the 4th BIMSTEC Summit Declaration.
Mr. Nagesh Kumar, Office-in-Charge, Sub-regional Office for South and South-West Asia, UNESCAP, New Delhi, India called on to the Secretary General of BIMSTEC on 22 November 2018. During this meeting they discussed on BIMSTEC-UNESCAP collaboration in advancing the SDG 2030 agenda and beyond.

A team of SARI/EI called on to the Secretary General of BIMSTEC at his office on 11 December 2018. They expressed their continued cooperation with BIMSTEC.
The Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT)

The Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) was held on 27-28 December 2018 in Thimphu, Bhutan at the invitation of the Royal Government of Bhutan. BNPTT Members from all the BIMSTEC Member States participated in the Meeting. The Secretariat was well represented by Mr. Kunzang N. Tshering and Mr. Han Thein Kyaw, Directors at the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

The BNPTT was established in 2010 as a Track-II forum, comprising of the following Constituent Members to promote the People-to-People Contact among BIMSTEC Member States:

i. Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh  
ii. Royal Institute for Governance & Strategic Studies (RIGSS), Bhutan  
iii. Research & Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS), India  
iv. Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies (MISIS), Myanmar  
v. Centre for Economic and Development Administration (CEDA), Nepal  
vi. Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Sri Lanka  
vii. Indian Studies Centre (ISC), Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

The 4th BNPTT Meeting noted with satisfaction the past work of the BNPTT towards strengthening of the BIMSTEC cooperation. The meeting welcomed the 4th Summit Declaration adopted in Kathmandu, Nepal on 31st August 2018 and recommended to use the Declaration as the guiding document to further the cooperation among the Member States.

The Meeting also welcomed the initiative of rationalization of the existing BIMSTEC sectors of cooperation. However, the Meeting felt that such effort should specify the priority areas rather than simply regrouping them under the five pillars. Further, the BNPTT Members agreed to produce innovative ideas and pragmatic recommendations to facilitate early realization of the Summit Declarations and to continue dialogue on setting up of the Trust Fund for financing the BNPTT prioritized projects with possible support from the Member States, as well as from ADB and other multilateral organizations with similar mandate.

Since its inception, the BNPTT has held 4 Meetings in India (2010), Thailand (2015), Bangladesh (2017) and Bhutan (2018). India will be hosting the 5th Meeting in 2019.
The Meeting was held in pursuance to the decision taken in the First and Second Meetings of the National Security Advisers and Security Chiefs of BIMSTEC Member States held on 21 March 2017 at New Delhi and 21 March 2018 at Dhaka respectively.

Mr. Pankaj Saran, Dy. National Security Adviser, Government of India in his inaugural address underlined the need for cooperation amongst the security institutions in the region to deal with the common challenges of terrorism, radicalization, trans-national crimes, cyber security, climate change, and maritime security. He emphasized the importance of connectivity in regional integration & stated that besides physical connectivity, there should be connectivity between people, organizations and security agencies.

The Meeting emphasized that for regional stability, growth and prosperity, security challenges must be addressed cohesively and therefore, there is need for continuous dialogue among the security agencies and Think Tanks in the region. The Meeting made the following recommendations:

i). Future course of action on security cooperation should be based on sound evidence-based research undertaken by Think Tanks, individually and collectively. Think Tanks have a crucial role to play through deliberations on complex issues and offer independent advice to the governments
ii). The capacity of BIMSTEC Secretariat should be strengthened to facilitate research on security issues.
iii). As a way forward, such dialogues, which involve diverse actors, should be held on a regular basis to promote interaction among Think-Tanks, academia, civil society and experts to build greater awareness about regional security issues and develop concrete suggestions and action plans.

The Meeting underscored the importance of convening of the BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security on annual basis. The BIMSTEC Secretariat has been requested to hold consultations with the Member States to decide the timing and venue for the Second Meeting.

The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security was held at New Delhi on 13-14 November 2018. Delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the BIMSTEC Secretariat was represented by Mr. Kunzang N Tshering & Mr. Pankaj Hazarika Director at the Secretariat based in Dhaka.

The Meeting was held in pursuance to the decision taken in the First and Second Meetings of the National Security Advisers and Security Chiefs of BIMSTEC Member States held on 21 March 2017 at New Delhi and 21 March 2018 at Dhaka respectively.

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Tenth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism

Tenth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (SGAML-CFT) was held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 19-20 November 2018. Delegations from all the Member States attended the Meeting. The Secretariat was represented by Mr. Pankaj Hazarika, Director of the BIMSTEC Secretariat. The Meeting finalized the modalities for developing an Action Plan to prevent the Illicit Flow of Funds (IFF) among the BIMSTEC Member States.

Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues

Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Sub-Group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues was held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 29-30 October 2018. Delegation from all the Member States attended the meeting. The Secretariat was represented by Mr. Pankaj Hazarika, Director of BIMSTEC Secretariat. The Meeting negotiated the BIMSTEC Convention Against Trafficking in Persons.
PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS ON BIMSTEC FTA

The 21st Meeting of the BIMSTEC Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC) was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 18-19 November 2018 with the intention to finalize some Free Trade Area (FTA) related agreements where the Member States had reached consensus and also to fix timeline for their implementation. The Meeting was able to make remarkable progress in FTA negotiations and also in developing consensus among the Member States on number of issues including the Rules of Origin (ROO) criteria, which is at the heart of the Agreement on Trade in Goods of the Framework Agreement on the BIMSTEC-FTA.

Earlier, the Leaders of the 4th BIMSTEC Summit, held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 30-31 August 2018, renewed their commitment to an early conclusion of BIMSTEC-FTA negotiations and directed the BIMSTEC Trade and Economic Ministerial Meeting (TEMM) and its subsidiary bodies including the Trade Negotiating Committee to expedite finalization of all related Agreements of the BIMSTEC-FTA as early as possible.

When we speak about BIMSTEC, we speak about possibilities-the untapped potentials that our people and region could harness for the fulfillment of dreams. The region offers a market of 1.7 billion people, about a-fifth of global population. The BIMSTEC economies together stand 3 trillion which accounts for only about 5 per cent of global GDP and 4 per cent of global trade. As a region, BIMSTEC has grown faster than the world average in output, including high income economies in recent years. The intra-regional trade (US$ 40.84 bn., 2017) has also enhanced to 6% from nearly 2% in the 1990s. FDI inflows to BIMSTEC Member States have been growing in magnitude. The following diagram represents BIMSTEC Intra-regional Trade Share:

![Fig: BIMSTEC Intra-regional Trade Share (%)](source: IMF Directions of Trade Statistics)

The Framework Agreement on the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area was signed in Thailand on 08 February 2004. Soon after, the TNC was established to carry out the programme of negotiations as set out in the Framework Agreement. From September 2004 till June 2009, the TNC had been very active in terms of making substantive progress in FTA negotiations as well as number of holding the forum’s Meeting. During this period, the TNC had met as many as 18 times, while the 19th Meeting was held in 2011 with the aim to conclude the Agreement on Trade in Goods of the Framework Agreement on the BIMSTEC-FTA. However, due to delay in the decision making process by one Member State, the Agreement could not be concluded and the TNC process slowed down. The 20th Meeting was convened only in 2015 where the delegates were divergent in building consensus due to elapse of four years.

TNC consists of several Working Groups, i.e.: Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Investment, Legal Experts and Customs Cooperation. In the interim, the TNC and its Working Groups had been able to finalize the draft texts of the Agreement on Trade in Goods; Agreement on Dispute Settlement Procedures and Mechanism; Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters and Protocol to the Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC-FTA.
The 21st Meeting of the TNC is a breakthrough since it was held after a long gap of more than 3 years, wherein the Member States have taken renewed interest in concluding the FTA negotiations as early as possible. The Meeting primarily focused on developing consensus among the Member States and further update the finalized draft text of the Agreement on Trade in Goods (including Rules of Origin and Operational Certification Procedures) with a view to operationalize it within 2019, while further progress were made in the negotiations of the draft texts of the Agreements on Trade in Service and Investment simultaneously. The major recommendations of the Meeting include *inter alia:*

- The Member States will prepare their offer list as per modalities agreed at the 19th Meeting of the TNC on the basis of HS2007 version and will transpose into HS2017 version;

- The Member States who wish to revise their offers shall have the opportunity to do so within the agreed modalities provided that Member States may interchange tariff lines among the tracks up to 10% of the tariff lines from the schedules submitted earlier.

- After transposition, the Member States will prepare the schedules of concessions in HS2017 version on the basis of tariff applied as of 01 August 2017 using the format agreed at the 19th Meeting of the TNC and exchange the schedules by 28 February 2019.

- The Base Rate of Tariff Elimination/Reduction would be tariff applied on 01 August 2017.

- In order to implement the PSR of 147 tariff lines as agreed at the 19th Meeting of the TNC, Bangladesh will transpose the list into HS 2017 version and circulate by 10th December 2018.

- The Agreement on Trade in Goods will enter into force on 1st September 2019.

- The Working Groups under TNC may hold Meetings as and when convenient to make progress on specific agreements.

- Bangladesh to host the Second Meeting of the Working Group on Trade Facilitation (newly formed Working Group) in the first quarter of 2019.

- India to host the 19th Meeting of the Working Group on Rules of Origin in the third week of December, 2018.

- Sri Lanka to host the 9th Meeting of the Working Group on Investment within first half of 2019.

- Bhutan was requested to explore the possibility of hosting the 22nd Meeting of the TNC.

- The Meeting agreed to move forward as per the directives of the leaders of the 4th BIMSTEC Summit to conclude the FTA negotiations as soon as possible.

Bangladesh has demonstrated its commitment to the BIMSTEC process by providing, for the first time, local hospitality to the delegates of the 21st TNC Meeting. However, in order to accomplish the directives of the Summit Leaders, more frequent TNC Meetings would be necessary. It is expected that, Bangladesh, as the Lead Country for the Trade and Investment sector, would play proactive role in promoting trade and investment in the region by means of holding more Meetings of the TNC as well as its Working Groups. It is further expected that, the next Meeting of the Working Group on Rules of Origin will be able to finalize the text of the Rules of Origin and Operational Certification Procedures with a view to conclude the Agreement on Trade in Goods by 2019. The Secretariat is relentlessly working to this direction.

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Mr. S.M. Nazmul Hasan is currently posted as Director at the BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is in-charge of Trade and Investment Sector. He is a career diplomat and belongs to Bangladesh Foreign Service.
Hockey: The National Game of India :  Contributed by Kunzang N. Tshering

History : The Field Hockey is the National Game of India. It is one of the ancient games played in modern times. The simplistic of guiding a ball with the help of a stick has been in existence for over thousand years.

The earliest mention of the hockey game dates back to 1527, when the Galway Statutes in Scotland prohibited the game of ‘hokie‘- the hurling of little ball with the aid of sticks or staves. The current version of the game was developed by the British in the 19th century as a popular school game. The London Hockey Association was established in the 1921 and the International Hockey Federation in 1924.

Legacy : The Game of Hockey was introduced in India by the British Raj. The first hockey club in India was founded in Kolkata in 1855 and the Bengal Hockey Association in 1908. The Indian Hockey Federation was established in 1925 and the Indian hockey took its first international trip to New Zealand where they played 21 matches, won 18, lost 1 and drew 2. This trip marked the emergence of the legendary Dhyan Chand.

The ball is small and made of hard plastic. The players are not allowed to hold, kick or carry the ball. Two umpires officiates the match and monitor the play. Scoring must be taken from within the Striking Circle to qualify as the score or the goal.

Indian Hockey Team’s stellar performance in the Olympics held in Amsterdam for the first time in 1928 and winning the Olympic Gold Medal has been the focus of their national pride. From 1928 to 1956, the Team India won six consecutive Olympic Gold Medals. This period has been marked as the Golden Era of Indian Hockey.

The Team India again won the Gold Medal in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and 1980 Moscow Olympics. The Indian Hockey Team was also the winner of the Hockey World Cup held in Malaysia in 1975.

Rules: For so long, the game of hockey was played in two halves of 35 minutes each, until in 2014, when 4 halves of 15 minutes each were introduced. There are 11 players, including the Goal-Keeper. Each player has a hockey stick, 150-200 cm long slender shaft, ending in a flattened extension known as the Blade. Maximum weight of the hockey stick is 737 grams and it is generally made of hickory or mulberry wood.

Kunzang N. Tshering from Bhutan is one of the Directors at the BIMSTEC Secretariat based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is the officer in-charge for Social & Cultural Affairs and the focal point for the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT)

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