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Editorial



An important event that marked the beginning of the current quarter is the holding of the First meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 17-18 January 2019. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal (30-31 August 2019) decided to establish the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) to deal with administrative and financial matters and draw the calendar of meetings of the Organization.

At its first meeting, the BPWC endorsed the Secretariat's annual budget proposal for approval by the Member States. The Committee also worked out a concrete schedule for raising the number of Directors at the Secretariat to seven (7) by deploying one Director from each Member State. Already, Dr. Damaru Ballabha Paudel from Nepal has joined the Secretariat last month. The meeting also initiated deliberation on some of the key issues such as drafting of the BIMSTEC Charter, finalization of Rules of Procedures for the BIMSTEC mechanisms, the establishment of BIMSTEC Development Fund (BDF) and rationalization of Areas of Cooperation.

The BPWC has addressed the long-felt absence of a working level body that would conduct the day-to-day affairs of the Organizations between annual Ministerial Meetings. The Secretariat is happy to provide necessary support to the work of this newly created body to bring dynamism to the work of the Organization.



Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam
Secretary General of BIMSTEC

The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC)



Delegations from the BIMSTEC Member States at the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) was held in Colombo on 17-18 January 2019 with the participation of representatives from all Member States and the Secretary General of BIMSTEC. The Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka inaugurated the Meeting.

The BPWC was established following the directives of the Leaders of BIMSTEC at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal in 30-31 August 2018 with a view to dealing with administrative and financial matters of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, BIMSTEC Centres and Entities. This was the first BIMSTEC Meeting hosted by Sri Lanka after assuming the chair of BIMSTEC.

During the inaugural address His Excellency Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka reaffirmed Sri Lanka's commitment towards achieving the objectives of BIMSTEC and to pursue the common goals of the organization by strengthening its institutional framework.

His Excellency Mr. M Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC expressed deep gratitude to the Government of Sri Lanka for hosting the Meeting. He underscored the importance of the Meeting since it would deliberate on key issues such as the BIMSTEC Charter, Rules of Procedure for the BIMSTEC Mechanisms, BIMSTEC Development Fund (BDF), rationalization of areas of cooperation and strengthening BIMSTEC Secretariat.

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The Meeting agreed to the modalities to raise the numbers of Directors at the Secretariat to seven, one from each Member State, in a staggered manner. The Meeting made progress on the preliminary draft of the BIMSTEC Charter as well as on the rationalization of sectors and sub-sectors of BIMSTEC. Meeting also recommended the Secretariat's revised budget for FY 2018 and estimated budget for FY 2019 for approval of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM).

Among others the First Meeting of the BPWC deliberated on the following issues:

- Administrative and financing mechanisms for the establishment of the BIMSTEC Centres and finalization of the template of the Memorandum of Association (MoA) on the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Centres/Entities
- Procurement Procedure of the Secretariat
- Administrative and Disciplinary Rules of the Secretariat
- Modalities for the establishment of the BIMSTEC Development Fund (BDF)
- Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Mutual Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies/Training Institutions of BIMSTEC Member States
- Terms of Reference (ToR) of BIMSTEC Eminent Persons' Group (EPG)

The Second Meeting of the BPWC will be held in 2019 prior to the 20th Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM).



H.E. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka delivering a speech at the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The **Secretary General of BIMSTEC** called on the newly appointed Hon'ble Commerce Minister of Bangladesh **His Excellency, Mr. Tipu Munshi , MP** at his office on 06 February 2019. They discussed about ways and means to enhance intra-regional trade in the Bay of Bengal region.



Ms. Mia Seppo, UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh met the **Secretary General of BIMSTEC** at his office on 04 February 2019. They discussed possible collaboration between the two organizations.

H.E. Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC called on **Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha**, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka on 17 January 2019.





Mr. Ronald Antonio Butiong, Director, Regional Cooperation and Operations Coordination Division South Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Manila, Philippines met the Secretary General of BIMSTEC at his office on 30 January 2019. They discussed the progress of BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity, finalization of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BIMSTEC Secretariat and ADB and the development of BIMSTEC Grid interconnections Master Plan

The Secretary General of BIMSTEC addressed the faculties and students of the Independent University of Bangladesh (IUB) on 29 January 2019. He was also invited as the Chief Guest at the Launching Ceremony of the book “Geopolitics of the South China Sea in the Coming Decades” authored by Mohd. Aminul Karim at the IUB auditorium, Dhaka.





The Secretary General at the *Launching Ceremony of the book "Geopolitics of the South China Sea in the Coming Decades"* at IUB, Dhaka on 29 January 2019.



Dr. Prabir De, Professor, RIS and Coordinator ASEAN-India Centre, New Delhi, India with **Secretary General of BIMSTEC** at his office on 17 February 2019.



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC & Directors of BIMSTEC with **Mr. Nagesh Kumar**, Office-in-Charge, Sub-regional Officer for South and South-West Asia, UNESCAP, New Delhi, India during their meeting at BIMSTEC Secretariat on 17 February 2019.

H.E. M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC visited Bhutan on 11-14 February 2019. He was accompanied by Mr Kunzang N. Tshering, Director Social & Cultural Division and Mr Pankaj Hazarika, Director, Security & Connectivity of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Upon arrival in Bhutan on 11 February 2019, the Secretary General and his delegation met with the Hon'ble Foreign Secretary of Bhutan Ambassador Sonam Tshong and also called upon the Foreign Minister of Bhutan Dr. Tandi Dorji. Among others, the meeting covered a wide range of issues related to the BIMSTEC process, including the initiatives to be taken on the establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) in Bhutan. Towards this, the Secretary General suggested that the process for its establishment to begin with an identification of an office space and to initiate collecting the material for the observatory locally, as well as from other Member States, wherein the Secretariat could also facilitate and extend support in its due process.

Further, the Secretary General requested Bhutan to expedite on Ratification of the Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking as the Secretariat has received the instruments of ratification from rest of the Member States. He mentioned that with ratification by Bhutan the Convention will come into force with immediate effect. The BIMSTEC delegation also requested Bhutan to explore the possibility of hosting the 9th Meeting of the JWG on CTTC.

Further, the Secretary General updated the Minister and Foreign Secretary on the status of hosting the 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting Culture by the Government of Bangladesh and sought their views on the matter as Bhutan is the lead country for this cross-cutting important social sector of the BIMSTEC Cooperation.



H.E. the Secretary General of BIMSTEC & his Delegation with the Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bhutan.

The Secretary General thank the Royal Government of Bhutan for considering his proposal to visit to Bhutan and for the warm hospitality extended to his delegation. The Meeting concluded with the Royal Government assuring its commitment towards building a secured, peaceful and progressive society in the region as a whole.

On the same day, the Secretary General and his delegation also called upon the Hon'ble Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs of Bhutan, Dasho Sherub Gyeltshen to brief him on the status of the BIMSTEC Cultural Cooperation and to discuss on the proposal of holding the 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Culture as early as possible. The Secretary General informed the Minister that although Bangladesh has proposed to host this meeting, the Secretariat would welcome if Bhutan as the lead country for culture wishes to take over the responsibility of holding the said meeting within 2019. The delegation also apprised the Minister on the establishment of the BCIO in Bhutan. In this connection, the Minister said that culture is one of the four pillars for achieving Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and therefore, he said that his Ministry would like the discuss the issue with all the stakeholders on priority basis and begin the process for its operationalization.



His Excellency the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam with the Hon'ble Minister of Home & Cultural Affairs of Bhutan, H.E Dasho Sherab Gyeltshen during the former's call-on to the Minister on 11 February 2019 in Thimphu.

The Secretary General also requested the Minister to explore the possibility of hosting either the 9th Meeting of the BIMSTEC JWG on CTTC or the first BIMSTEC Home Minister's Meeting on the regional security as per the 4th BIMSTEC Summit declaration. To this effect, the Minister informed that he will discuss the matter internally and convey the decision in due course.

On 13 February 2019, the Secretary General and his delegation made a courtesy call-on to His Excellency Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering, Prime Minister of Bhutan.

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H.E. the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam with the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, H.E Dr Lotay Tshering during the former's call-on to the Prime Minister in Thimphu on 13 February 2019.

At the outset, the Secretary General expressed his gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan for extending the continued support towards taking the BIMSTEC process forward. He also thanked the Prime Minister for welcoming his second visit to the Kingdom and agreeing to meet his delegation in spite of the busy schedule.

The Secretary General briefed the Prime Minister on the implementation status of the 4th BIMSTEC Summit Declaration, followed by the discussion on the BIMSTEC Cooperation on Culture for which Bhutan is the lead country. In this regard, the Prime Minister said that his Government will look into this on priority basis and see what can be done in consultation with Secretariat. The discussion continued on the importance of the regional connectivity for the BIMSTEC to achieve its development priorities, such as trade and investment, energy, including combating international terrorism for regional peace, stability and progress towards deepening of the regional integration. On the BBIN, the Prime Minister informed the delegation that the Government of Bhutan wishes to review the issue with other stakeholders as it has to be endorsed by the Parliament. Further, on the issue of connectivity, the Prime Minister said that the BIMSTEC should take care of the special needs of the Member States, particularly the landlocked nations like Nepal and Bhutan. In case of Bhutan, he said that the Government will communicate its special needs if any through the proper channel, including its stand on the BBIN in due course of time.



H.E. the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, & his Delegation with the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan.

Recent BIMSTEC Events

The Second Meeting of BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine

The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine (BTFTM) was held on 24 -25 January 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw at the invitation of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Delegations from all Member States attended the meeting, including from the Secretariat of BIMSTEC.



H.E. the Union Minister of Health & Sports of Myanmar (centre) with the heads of delegation from the BIMSTEC Member States during inaugural session of the Meeting on 24 January 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw.

The Meeting deliberated on Base Paper on Protection of Genetic Resources (GR) associated with Traditional Medicine Knowledge (TMK), Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for Traditional Medicine and Cooperative Work Plan on Development of Traditional Medicine submitted by India and agreed to complete the identification of the Nodal Agency and the Country Specific Nodal Group by 31st of March 2019. The Member States agreed to provide up-dates on protection of GR and TMK to the Secretariat within May 2019 and advised the Secretariat to request the Government of Bangladesh to host the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Nodal Group on TMK, GR & IPR within 2019, in accordance to the BIMSTEC practice of holding its meetings on alphabetical order.

The Meeting welcomed the readiness of India to host the Workshop on Harmonization of Curricula for mutual recognition of the Traditional Medicine Degrees by March 2019, for which India will circulate a Concept Note before the Workshop to the Member States through the Secretariat. Further, the Meeting requested Nepal to host the 3rd BTFTM Meeting, preferably in October/November 2019.

For the purpose of maintaining proper records of traditional treatments and also to project the potentials of Traditional Medical System to the outside world, the Meeting agreed to induct the WHO International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) coding system by the Member States for their Traditional Medicine System on priority basis.

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As a way forward, the Meeting recommended the establishment of a BIMSTEC Ayurveda and Traditional Medicine University (BATMU) in the near future to act as a model institution in the region and help the Member States to develop their own Ayurveda and Traditional Medicine Colleges with affiliation to BATMU for sustainable capacity development related to the Traditional Medicine among the Member States. In this regard, India welcomed the new initiative of BTFTM and agreed to submit a proposal for establishment of the said University to the Government of India for its consideration.

The Meeting in principle agreed to adopt the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model for development of Traditional Medicine System (TMS) and integrated hospitals in future for sustainability, as proposed by the Delegation of Myanmar and also as emphasized by the Minister of Health and Sports of Myanmar in his Keynote Address.

The 19th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Rules of Origin



Delegates from the BIMSTEC Member States at the 19th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Rules of Origin in New Delhi, India on 21-22 January 2019

The 19th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Rules of Origin was held in New Delhi, India on 21-22 January 2019. The Meeting updated the draft texts of the "Rules of Determination of Origin of Goods for Agreement on BIMSTEC FTA" and the "Operational Certification Procedures" for the Rules of Origin for the BIMSTEC FTA.

BIMSTEC Workshop on Cyber Security Cooperation

BIMSTEC Workshop on Regional Cyber Security Cooperation was held in Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi, India on 05-07 December 2018. Delegations from all the Member States attended the Workshop. The Secretariat was represented by Mr. Pankaj Hazarika, Director of the BIMSTEC Secretariat. The Workshop proposed a roadmap for BIMSTEC Cyber Security Cooperation.



Delegates from the BIMSTEC Member States at the BIMSTEC Workshop on Cyber Security Cooperation in New Delhi, India on 05-07 December 2018.

Chinlone: The National Game of Myanmar : *by Kunzang N. Tshering*

Background :

Chinlone is the Traditional Sport of Myanmar. Chinlone in Burmese means a rounded basket and therefore it is also known as Cane-ball, which is made from rattan. It is a combination of sport, music and dance with more focus on fitness and creativity rather than competitiveness.

Traditionally considered as the men's daily pastime, is a way of life today, particularly among the locals for practical reasons vis-à-vis to take a break for exercise when they are struck with cramps on their back or limbs due to over working, sitting or standing for too long.



Traditional Cane –Ball used for the game of Chinlone.

History :

Chinlone co-existed with the people of Myanmar since the time immemorial and as such it has been a part of their daily lives touching deep into their hearts. However, no one is really aware of its emergence, except that it is believed to have been derived from the ancient Chinese game of “tsu chu”, which is recognized by FIFA (football's world governing body) as the oldest form of football in recorded history of the world.



Game of Chinlone in progress

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Rules of Game :

Chinlone can be played by any number of players, from 3 to 10, forming a circle. In ideal situations, it's played between two teams with six players in each team. They use their hands to toss the ball and as the game progress, the players move around the circle, preventing the ball from dropping on the ground. They use their feet, knees, and heads to keep the ball in the air to the extent possible. Unlike soccer, there is no goal scoring business and no fixed number of players required.

To the outsiders, Chinlone is seen as a kind of musical game, with rhythm of the music harmonizing the mood and movements of the players. There's a full of joy & fun in the game of Chinlone with no hurry and worry to win or lose. No complicated rules to follow either. In deed, it's an opportunity for both men and women to show-off their beautiful physics, the fashion of tattoos, built-in muscles and the feminine body elasticity through the world of dancing to the rhythms of musical band. It is also a unique musical game to entertain the public during the festivals and special occasions in Myanmar and a better way to promote and preserve Chinlone as the National Game of the people of Myanmar.



Demonstrating the game of Chinlone with skills of balancing the ball

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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