Editorial

On the auspicious occasion of the 22nd Anniversary of the establishment of BIMSTEC, the Secretariat is pleased to bring out a print copy of the BIMSTEC Newsletter, containing the Messages from the BIMSTEC Heads of State/Government and the Ministers of External/Foreign Affairs of the Member States.

A major highlight of this issue is the visit of the Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bhutan to the BIMSTEC Secretariat on 12 April 2019, which is the first instance of a Head of Government of a BIMSTEC Member State visiting the Secretariat since its inauguration in September 2014 by H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh. We hope it will become a practice for BIMSTEC Leaders to pay visit to the Secretariat whenever they are in Dhaka.

BIMSTEC Newsletter was re-launched last year, coinciding with the 21st BIMSTEC Day celebration in 2018, as one of the means to share information on important events and activities of the organization as well as to promote the visibility of the BIMSTEC within and beyond the region. As we celebrate the 22nd BIMSTEC Day, the BIMSTEC Secretariat wishes to express its sincere thanks and appreciation to all the Member States and our valued readers for their continued support and encouragement.

H.E. Dr. Lotay Tshering, Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bhutan visited the BIMSTEC Secretariat on 12 April 2019. He was accompanied by the Hon’ble First Lady Dr. Ugyen Dema, Hon’ble Foreign Minister Dr. Tandi Dorji, Hon’ble Health Minister Ms. Dechen Wangmo and other senior officials from Bhutan. Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman MP, Hon’ble State Minister for Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief of the Government of Bangladesh was present on the occasion. Heads of Diplomatic Missions of BIMSTEC Member States based in Dhaka were also in attendance during the occasion.

The Prime Minister and the First Lady of Bhutan were received by the Secretary General M. Shahidul Islam and his spouse Mrs. Jesmeen Islam. In his welcome remarks, the Secretary General expressed his immense pleasure in welcoming the Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, the First Lady Dr. Ugyen Dema, and all the accompanying delegates to the BIMSTEC Secretariat. The Secretary General termed the visit of the Prime Minister of Bhutan as a milestone event in the history of BIMSTEC Secretariat and noted that it was the first instance when a Head of Government of a BIMSTEC Member State paid a visit to the Secretariat since its inauguration in 2014 by H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Hon’ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

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The Secretary General expressed his deep gratitude to the Prime Minister of Bhutan for his country's contribution to the BIMSTEC process. He commended Bhutan's success in building a carbon-neutral society and mentioned that other Member States could learn from Bhutan in this regard. The Secretary General further said that the Secretariat was eagerly looking forward to receiving guidance and advice from the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan for better functioning of BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Dr. Lotay Tsherling, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan signing the Visitors Book at the BIMSTEC Secretariat. The Secretary General of BIMSTEC (right) and the State Minister-in-waiting Dr. Md. Enamur Rahman MP, Bangladesh (left) are seen on the picture.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan in his brief address to the dignitaries gathered at the Secretariat thanked the Secretary General, Directors and staffs of the BIMSTEC Secretariat for the warmest welcome extended to him and his delegation and also for excellent arrangements made for his short visit to the Secretariat during his first State Visit to Bangladesh at the invitation of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh H.E. Sheikh Hasina. The Prime Minister assured of his Government's continued support towards strengthening the BIMSTEC process and in realizing the aims and objectives of enhancing the regional cooperation under the framework of BIMSTEC. He added that whatever Bhutan has committed so far will be implemented as per the schedule. The Prime Minister, in particular, said that amongst other, he considered the people-to-people contact (P2P) as one of the effective means to achieve the common goal of greater regional integration in the long run.

The Prime Minister of Bhutan (centre) and other dignitaries with the Secretary General and Directors of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, including the Heads of Diplomatic Missions of the BIMSTEC Member States based in Dhaka, Bangladesh
MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my warm greetings to the Governments and the peoples of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Member States on the happy occasion of BIMSTEC Day 2019. I extend my greetings to the Secretary General and the officials of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

BIMSTEC process achieved some remarkable progress during the last 22 years of existence. However, there are much remains to be done to make the organization an outcome oriented and ready for serving the future. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit was a turning point. I fondly recollect my joining the BIMSTEC leaders in reiterating our commitment to intensify our efforts in realizing the objectives and purposes of BIMSTEC through working collectively towards making it a stronger and more effective organization towards making a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region.

Bangladesh, as a founding Member of BIMSTEC, has been cooperating closely with the Member States on issues like facilitation of trade, enhancing economic development, strengthening energy cooperation, increasing connectivity and people-to-people contact, combating terrorism and extremism, dealing with the adverse effect of climate change, among others. Establishment of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka in 2014, manifests the resolute commitment of my Government to the BIMSTEC Process and to regional cooperation for realizing the shared aspirations of our peoples.

On this very occasion, I wish BIMSTEC all success in its future endeavours. Let us renew our resolve to turn this regional process into a more dynamic, result oriented and mutually beneficial one.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina
PRIME MINISTER

MESSAGE

On behalf of the Royal Government and the people of Bhutan and on my own behalf, I would like to extend the warm wishes and felicitations to the Governments and peoples of the member states of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) on the joyous occasion of the BIMSTEC Day 2019.

As BIMSTEC celebrates 22 years of establishment, it is an opportune time to reflect on the developments and success achieved in the areas of cooperation and to look forward positively to a more robust regional cooperation. We must continue to work together and in harmony to nurture the common bonds of friendship and understanding that bind us together as BIMSTEC.

As we move ahead and work collectively in realizing the aspirations and interests enshrined in the Bangkok Declaration, I wish to reaffirm the commitment of the Royal Government and the people of Bhutan to BIMSTEC.

( Dr. Lotay Tshering)

Prime Minister
Republic of India

MESSAGE

On behalf of the people of India, I convey my warm greetings to fellow citizens of BIMSTEC on the occasion of 22nd BIMSTEC Day.

We, the people of BIMSTEC countries are bound together by our intertwined cultures and histories, and have come even closer in recent years through our common purpose of building a peaceful and prosperous Bay of Bengal region. We are committed to the goals of delivering better opportunities and economic prosperity to our people, especially the youth. We have drawn strength from our vibrant and ever deepening regional cooperation in this endeavor.

In the recent years, BIMSTEC member states have intensified their efforts to enhance regional connectivity, deepen economic ties and achieve regional security. The resounding success of the fourth BIMSTEC summit, held last year in Kathmandu, is a testament to the region's enduring commitment to result-oriented, multifaceted regional cooperation. For India, BIMSTEC remains a natural platform to fulfill our key foreign policy priorities of 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East'.

I thank the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, and congratulate the Government of Sri Lanka as the new Chair of BIMSTEC.

I am certain that BIMSTEC would continue to pave way for a brighter future for its people, built on strong and enduring partnerships among its member states.

New Delhi
May 24, 2019

(Narendra Modi)
MESSAGE

State Counsellor
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

It is my pleasure to convey my best wishes and warm felicitations to the governments and peoples of BIMSTEC member states on this auspicious day of the 22nd Anniversary of the founding of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

The Bay of Bengal region's strategic location serves as a bridge linking South and Southeast Asia. An abundance of natural and human resources, together with its deep historical linkages and rich cultural heritages, buttress the great potential of the BIMSTEC regional grouping.

Since its inception in 1997, BIMSTEC has been transforming itself into an efficient platform for cooperation to foster peace, prosperity and sustainable development in the region. I believe that unity, friendship and mutual understanding among the member states will enable BIMSTEC to achieve substantial progress in its journey towards the goals enshrined in the 1997 Bangkok Declaration.

On this special day, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar reiterates its continued commitment to contribute to the advancement of the BIMSTEC cooperation framework.

I wish BIMSTEC success in its collective efforts to promote peace and prosperity for all peoples in the region.

Nay Pyi Taw
6 June 2019

( Aung San Suu Kyi )

MESSAGE

Prime Minister of Nepal

Kathmandu, Nepal
29 May 2019

I am delighted to learn that the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation (BIMSTEC) is completing twenty two years of its existence on 6 June 2019. On this occasion, on behalf of the Government and people of Nepal and on my own, I would like to extend my best wishes for its continued success in achieving its aims and purposes for the common benefit of the peoples of the region.

BIMSTEC region is full of potentials. Human resources of one billion and half with a large number of young and dynamic work force, abundance of natural resources, rich history, culture and civilization, and friendly and cooperative relations among the member countries and peoples all make it a resourceful and dynamic region. The mesmerizing white snow-capped Himalayas and beautiful mountains are connected with fertile plain lands and deep blue oceans. Moreover, great ancient philosophies and rich civilizations thrived in this part of the world, spreading knowledge to the external world. It is a region that links both South Asia and East Asia, opening avenues for furthering cooperation with countries of these regions. There is an increasing trend of intra-regional movement of peoples, goods and services for trade, tourism, investment and people-to-people contact.
In view of above, BIMSTEC has good prospects for achieving economic growth, social progress, sustainable development and prosperity in the region. What it requires is the deepening of cooperation and result-oriented activities on a broader scale with the full utilization of the existing potentials. The regional cooperation is also essential for addressing various challenges of regional and international dimensions, such as poverty, socio-economic inequalities, climate change, natural disasters, trans-national crimes, and so on.

I believe that our dedicated efforts towards exploring the potentials and expanding cooperation in mutually beneficial areas, especially trade, transit, energy development, investment, connectivity, technology, and tourism, will make the regional bond more productive in the days ahead. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Nepal last year concluded with important decisions that need to be sincerely implemented to make our cooperation more fruitful to our peoples.

At the national level, while the Government of Nepal has been working towards realizing the national aspiration of Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepal at the regional level Nepal is always ready to work hand-in-hand with other Member States. On this occasion of BIMSTEC Day, I wish to express Nepal’s full support to the regional cooperation process for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region.

May 25, 2019

K P Sharma Oli

MESSAGE

President of Sri Lanka

It gives me great pleasure to extend greetings on the 22nd anniversary of the signing of the Charter that established the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Since its establishment in 1997, our collective will and concerted efforts have manifested regional economic integration, connecting South Asia and South East Asia through BIMSTEC. Sri Lanka is proud to have been a founding member of the BIMSTEC and to be the lead country in Technology.

BIMSTEC has made significant progress during the last 22 years and there is a greater need to work collectively to ensure tangible results to our people.

Sri Lanka remains fully committed to the principles and objectives of the BIMSTEC Charter and will continue to play a constructive role as in the past. I reiterate our fullest support to BIMSTEC in its efforts of promoting and fostering regional cooperation in the region. As the present Chair, Sri Lanka hosted the 1st Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee in January 2019 under its chairmanship and reiterates its commitment to host the core BIMSTEC Meetings.

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to reiterate Sri Lanka's strong commitment to working towards greater regional cooperation through BIMSTEC.

May 25, 2019

Maithripala Sirisena
MESSAGE

I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to the Governments and the peoples of BIMSTEC on the auspicious occasion of BIMSTEC Day 2019.

Today, BIMSTEC turns twenty-two years old. Over the years, our Bay of Bengal cooperation has matured into an important regional player in the Asian region and is an important connector between Southeast Asia and South Asia. However, with the increasing global challenges and uncertainties, BIMSTEC needs to re-strategize itself to become more focused and relevant. Thailand is of the view that prioritizing BIMSTEC’s 14 areas of cooperation into pillars, finalizing BIMSTEC FTA, drafting a BIMSTEC Charter to create a rules-based BIMSTEC should be our priority this year. These will lead to more concrete outcomes and create a more modern, dynamic and resilient BIMSTEC. This will ultimately shape BIMSTEC’s competitive identity in the international community.

Furthermore, Thailand is a strong advocate of connectivity, which is one of the most important elements for promoting sustainable development. Therefore, we look forward to the conclusion of the BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity to create seamless connectivity, synchronize rules and regulations, foster human resource development and help to realize the sustainable development of all which would add strategic value to BIMSTEC and the related subregions as a whole.

To this end, I wish to reaffirm Thailand’s commitment to and support of BIMSTEC as it serves as an essential platform for cooperation and linkage between South and Southeast Asia.

I am, therefore, pleased to extend my best wishes for the continued success and prosperity of BIMSTEC. May our cooperation continue to go from strength to strength for the peace, stability and sustainability of our region and the well-being of our peoples.

Bangkok
6 June 2019

Don Pramudwinai
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand
MESSAGE

I am very happy to learn that the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is observing the 22nd BIMSTEC Day on 06 June 2019. On this joyous occasion, I wish to convey my warm felicitations to the peoples of the BIMSTEC member states, the BIMSTEC Secretariat and other supporting mechanisms of BIMSTEC.

As a founding member of BIMSTEC, we attach high importance to this regional integration and cooperation process. The Government of Bangladesh led by the Hon’ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina always manifests unwavering commitment towards stronger regional cooperation. Bangladesh has been contributing towards BIMSTEC process with continued and ever-increasing engagements. Hosting of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka is a manifestation of Bangladesh’s firm commitment to the BIMSTEC process.

Since its inception in 1997, BIMSTEC has been working to create an enabling environment for economic development, acceleration of social progress and promotion of collaboration on matters of common interest of the member states which represent two of the fastest emerging regions of the world. In advancing the common visions and shared endeavours of the Bay of Bengal Region, we need to focus on undertaking more realistic and result-oriented mutually beneficial partnership to earn collective economic and social prosperity of the peoples.

I wish BIMSTEC forum all success on this auspicious day. I would reaffirm the steadfast assurance of our Government to strengthen the BIMSTEC process in all possible ways and means. It is my firm conviction that the strong political determination and vibrant initiatives of the BIMSTEC member states will make this regional process a more effective and result oriented one to ensure a better future for the people of this region.

Long live BIMSTEC Spirit.
Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu.

( Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, M.P.)

MESSAGE

Today, as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) celebrate the BIMSTEC Day 2019, I would like to extend the warmest greetings and best wishes of the Royal Government of Bhutan and its people to the Governments and peoples of the BIMSTEC member states.

Our shared efforts and collective will has made it possible for the BIMSTEC process to move ahead successfully with developments under various areas of cooperation, which is commendable.

On this joyous occasion, I would like to congratulate the member states, the Secretariat and other mechanisms under the BIMSTEC aegis, for the momentum achieved so far.

As we continue to work together for shared regional prosperity, I avail of this opportunity to reaffirm the support and commitment of the Royal Government and the people of Bhutan to the process of BIMSTEC.

( Dr. Tandi Dorji )
22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the BIMSTEC

Messages from the BIMSTEC Leaders

**MESSAGE**

It gives me great pleasure to know that the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Co-operation (BIMSTEC) is completing its journey of twenty two years on 6 June 2019. On the occasion of the BIMSTEC Day, I would like to express my best wishes for the success of this Organization in attaining peace, prosperity and happiness for the peoples of this region.

The BIMSTEC region, uniquely placed in between South Asia and East Asia, is rich in history, culture, civilization, natural and human resources, biodiversity, and so on. With a population of more than one billion and half and the gross domestic product of about three trillion, the region is blessed with enormous potentials for economic growth and development. If properly utilized, these strengths would help transform the region into a developed part of the world in every respect.

While looking back, the regional cooperation under the framework of BIMSTEC has grown substantially with the establishment of the Secretariat and other institutions, holding of summits and meetings, implementation of various activities in the agreed areas of cooperation, conclusion of agreements in vital areas, and charting out courses of actions for the future. The Kathmandu Declaration adopted by the fourth summit held last year in Nepal has directed a course of action for a number of areas of common interest.

I believe that, building on the past achievements, we need to move forward with more activities that deliver tangible results and provide greater benefits to our peoples. Enhanced connectivity, development of renewable energy, increased intra-regional trade, investment and tourism, agricultural development could be some of the important areas that deserve our serious attention. Our cooperation and collaboration need to be more intense and deep.

The future of BIMSTEC, to me, is bright. Let’s work together to make our regional cooperation productive and beneficial. As a committed member, Nepal will contribute to this process to the utmost. I hope BIMSTEC will continue flourishing in the days ahead.

(Pradeep Kumar Gyawali)

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**MESSAGE**

I am pleased to convey my warm greetings and best wishes on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Charter Day on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Since the establishment of the BIMSTEC, we have witnessed progress in a wide range of areas identified for co-operation, since 1997.

Nevertheless, our regular assessment of BIMSTEC has prompted us to appreciate the need for making the organization more result oriented and people centric. Sri Lanka remains fully committed to the principles and objectives of the BIMSTEC Charter and will continue to play a constructive role. I reiterate our fullest support to BIMSTEC in its efforts of promoting and fostering regional cooperation in South Asia and South East Asia.

As we commemorate this important milestone of the BIMSTEC Charter Day, let us resolve to intensify our efforts to make the organization more vibrant.

06 June 2019

Tilak Marapana, P.C., M.P
Minister of Foreign Affairs
On the occasion of the Twenty-Second anniversary of the establishment of BIMSTEC, I wish to extend my heartiest greetings and felicitations to the peoples and the governments of the Member States of BIMSTEC - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Founded on 06 June in 1997 through the adoption of Bangkok Declaration, BIMSTEC has gained considerable maturity over the last two decades as a regional organisation dedicated to accelerate economic development and social progress in the Bay of Bengal region. Significant progress has been made towards intra-regional trade facilitation, revival of the historical connectivity by land and sea, and promotion of a common perception of human security for the Bay of Bengal region. The BIMSTEC Leaders at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 30-31 August 2018 reaffirmed their strong commitment to make BIMSTEC a dynamic, effective and result oriented regional organization for promoting a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region through meaningful cooperation and deeper integration and also underscored the importance of robust institutional arrangements to effectively steering the process of regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. The Secretariat is fully committed to the realisation of the goals set by the BIMSTEC Leaders.

On this occasion, I wish to record my deep gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh for providing continued support to the Secretariat since its establishment in 2014. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Nepal, former Chair of BIMSTEC for their active leadership role and to Sri Lanka as the current Chair of BIMSTEC. My appreciation goes to all other Member States for their continued efforts towards achieving the goals of BIMSTEC.

I strongly believe that the time of BIMSTEC has come. The Secretariat will work closely with the Member States to ensure that we seize this opportunity to bring tangible benefits to the peoples of the Bay of Bengal region.

Ambassador M Shahidul Islam
Secretary General of BIMSTEC
H.E. M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC made a courtesy call-on to the Hon’ble Prime Minister of Thailand, H.E. Prayut Chan-o-cha, during the Third Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs in Bangkok on 21 March 2019.

H.E. M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC attended the Third Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs in Bangkok, Thailand on 21 March 2019. As the Secretary General of the BIMSTEC, he delivered a special remark during the inaugural session of the above meeting.

Exchange of gifts between Secretary General of BIMSTEC and the General Wanlop Rugsanaoh, Secretary General of the National Security Council of Thailand during the Third Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs in Bangkok, Thailand on 21 March 2019.

H.E. M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC with the Principal of the Foreign Service Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh during his visit to the Academy on 19 May 2019 to deliver a lecture on the BIMSTEC.
H.E. Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC was the Chief Guest in the annual Young Scholar's Forum (YSF), 2019 held on March 18 – 19 in Shillong, India which was organised by Asian Confluence with support from Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, India. The theme of the conference was "Engaging Youth from the Region to Re-envision the regional discourse and action on Water and Rivers". The aim of the conference was to provide a platform and network to young scholars from across the region to ideate, debate, cooperate and synergize towards a common vision which they can then further champion on the themes namely River and coastal connectivity in Eastern South Asia, Rivers as a means of livelihood, Regional Cooperation on Water, Climate Change and rivers and River Tourism.

H.E. M Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC (4th from right in front raw) with the delegates of 2019 Forum of the OECD Southeast Asia Regional Programme on "Connecting Southeast Asia" held on 11 March 2019 at the OECD Headquarters in Paris, France.
Bhutan Marks the 2019 BIMSTEC Day

Bhutan Observed the 22nd Anniversary of The Founding of The Bay of Bengal Initiative For Multi-Sectoral Technical And Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan observed the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Day 2019 with a thousand butter lamp lighting ceremony at Dechenphodrang monastery on 6th June 2019. Hon'ble Foreign Minister graced the event as the Chief Guest. Members of the diplomatic corps, international organizations and regional offices based in Thimphu and RGoB officials attended the event. BIMSTEC Day is observed on 6th June every year to mark the establishment of BIMSTEC through the Bangkok Declaration, as a regional organization. Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand are the seven BIMSTEC member countries.

Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bhutan (3rd from left) along with senior government officials and other dignitaries who attended the BIMSTEC Day Celebration.
The Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs

The Third Meeting of National Security Chiefs of BIMSTEC Member States was hosted by Thailand in Bangkok on 21 March 2019.

Major General (retired) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, rcds, psc, Security Affairs Adviser to the Honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh; Mr. Sonam Topgay, Secretary, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs of Bhutan; Mr. Ajit Doval, National Security Adviser of India; Mr. U Thaung Tun, Union Minister of the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations and National Security Advisor to the Union Government of Myanmar; Mr. Sarbendra Khanal, Inspector General of Nepal Police; Brig H.K.A.C.R Kodithuwakku RWP RSP USP Isc, Director, Military Intelligence of Sri Lanka and Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC participated in the meeting. The meeting was chaired by General Wanlop Rugsanaoh, Secretary-General of the National Security Council of Thailand. They also called on General Prayut Chan-Ocha, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand.

The Meeting reviewed the progress on the Report of the Second Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 28 March 2018 and the functioning of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (JWG-CTTC) and its Sub-Groups.

As way forward of BIMSTEC Security Cooperation, the Meeting agreed to pool their collective resources to upgrade capacities in training, equipment, R&D and sharing of experiences to better deal with emerging threats.

The National Security Chiefs expressed satisfaction on progress made with regard to ratification of BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking. The meeting also noted the readiness of the Member States to sign the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters.
First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Energy

The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Energy (1st EGME) was held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar on 28-29 March 2019 at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. Delegations from all BIMSTEC Member States attended the Meeting. The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency U Win Khaing, Union Minister for Electricity and Energy of Myanmar. On behalf of the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Mr. Han Thein Kyaw, Director (Development Division) of the BIMSTEC Secretariat delivered the Special Remarks at the opening session. The Meeting thanked Myanmar, the Lead Country for BIMSTEC Energy Cooperation, for taking an initiative to host this Expert Group Meeting for the first time.

Delegates from the BIMSTEC Member States at the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Energy (Nay Pyi Taw, 28-29 March 2019)

After extensive deliberations, the Meeting finalized the draft Terms of Reference (TOR) of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Coordination Committee (BGICC), which can be considered as one of the important outcomes of the Meeting. The Meeting also highlighted the importance of having the First Meeting of the BGICC before holding the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Energy (2nd EGME).

The Meeting proposed India to explore possibilities of holding the First Meeting of the Governing Board of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) and recommended that the First Meeting of the Governing Board of the BEC may discuss the overall funding, institutional mechanisms, work plan as well as modalities of the effective functioning of the Centre.

It is hoped that Nepal will host the Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials on Energy (5th SOM-E) and the Third BIMSTEC Energy Ministerial Meeting (3rd BEMM) in the very near future. The Government of Bhutan has already committed to host the Fourth BIMSTEC Energy Ministerial Meeting (4th BEMM) in Bhutan.

**SALIENT FACTS ON BIMSTEC ENERGY COOPERATION**

**BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC)**

On 22 January 2011, the Member States signed the Memorandum of Association (MoA) for the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) in Bengaluru, India. However, the BIMSTEC Energy Centre has not yet been operationalized. Currently, the Member States are trying to develop a set of rules to govern the structure, functioning, financing and reporting of all BIMSTEC centers/entities including BIMSTEC Energy Centre.

**MoU for Establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection was signed on 31 August 2018 at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu, Nepal. The MoU has entered into force on 07 April 2019.

**BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Master Plan Study**

The Joint Ministerial Statement adopted at the Second BIMSTEC Energy Ministerial Meeting (2nd BEMM) held in Bangkok, Thailand on 05 March 2010 decided to commence a BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Master Plan Study. Currently, the Secretariat is in contact with the development partners including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to undertake this Study.
Seventh Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation

The Seventh Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation (7th EGMAC) was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 24-25 April 2019 at the invitation of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. Delegations from all BIMSTEC Member States attended the Meeting. The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency Mr. Md. Nasiruzzaman, Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture of Bangladesh. Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, delivered the Special Remarks at the opening session.

The Meeting reiterated the importance of sharing agricultural information and best practices among BIMSTEC Member States and decided to provide with available information related to Agricultural cooperation to be uploaded on the BIMSTEC Secretariat’s website. The Meeting reviewed the progress made in Agricultural cooperation in relation to the implementation of the nine identified common projects and decided that the number of common projects for implementation in BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation will be reduced to seven (7). The Meeting acknowledged a lack of dedicated funds to implement the common projects and encouraged BIMSTEC Member States to consider contributing to a corpus fund that would be created for funding common identified projects and for deepening agricultural cooperation.

The delegation of Myanmar, the Lead Country for Agriculture Sector, informed the meeting of the arrangements made on the hosting of the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture, preceded by the First BIMSTEC Senior Officials Meeting on Agriculture to be held on 11-12 July 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. The Meeting also discussed ways and means to deepen cooperation in Agriculture sector among the Member States. The Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation will be hosted in India in early 2020.
Volleyball: The National Game of Nepal

by Kunzang N. Tshering

The Government of Nepal declared Volleyball as their National Game replacing the age-old Dandi Biyo, which was there since time immemorial and a unique sport of Nepal alone, until May 2017. Following are some of the reasons for the change among others:

Volleyball is the most popular game in Nepal, loved and played by the people all over the country. It's economically feasible and affordable, requiring a minimal space and a low cost equipment. It can be played anywhere in country and in any terrains by both men and women.

Nepal's National Women's Volleyball team skipper Manju Gurung was quoted as saying that “Majority of the population grow up playing volleyball. It doesn't need big space for playing so we can play it everywhere. Not only players but the whole nation is happy about the government's decision of making volleyball as the national sport.”

Traditionally Dandi Biyo as the national sport of Nepal was developed by the locals with available local tools and practiced by the people of Nepal for centuries. Therefore, it deserves to be quoted here and more so in the history of Nepali National Game. To the outsiders like me, it sounds very unique in nature and more importantly something originated in Nepal should belong to the people of Nepal forever.

Volleyball

In the modern context, Dandi Biyo is very close to Cricket. The starter can be compared to the "batsman" and other player(s) to the "fielders". Today, Dandi Biyo is not known to many urban Nepali youth & children, and it has become a rural phenomena. Therefore, the people of Nepal may wish to preserve their unique & traditional national game of the recent past for future generations to cherish.

A History of Volleyball: (for the benefit of the volleyball lovers, since it is a popular game among both old & young today)

It was in 1895 at Springfield, Massachusetts in the United States that a young Physical Director of YMCA William G. Morgan invented the game of the present day Volley Ball.

Dandi Biyo

To play Dandi Bio, only two wooden sticks Dandi and Biyo are required as shown above. Two or more players can play the game in turns. This is one version & there are some other variations depending where it is being played.
The National Game of Nepal

He termed this new game "Mintonette". He is considered as the Father of the Volleyball. Later, when the game became popular among the people, Dr. Alfred Halstead, a professor at Springfield College, suggested a two-word version of its present name "Volley Ball".

While inventing the game, Morgan borrowed ball from basketball, net from tennis, the concept of innings from baseball and the use of hands from handball. It was quite different from what we're used to. It was played on a smaller court, with an unlimited number of players hitting the ball an unlimited number of times, on either side of a high net. Things tended to get a little crowded, but it became the second most popular team sport in the world at that point of time.

A basketball bladder was used in the beginning and subsequently Morgan designed a special ball - a rubber bladder, encased in leather, 25" or so in circumference in collaboration with A.G. Spalding, a local sporting goods manufacturer. By 1913 the game of volleyball reached the Asian continent and in the same year, it was included in the first Far-Eastern Games, organized in Manila. For a long time, volleyball was played in Asia according to the "Brown" rules with 16 players and by 1918 the number of players per team was limited to six. In 1922, the maximum number of authorized contacts with the ball was fixed at three as done today.

Note: With this article, the writer bought out 5 special features on the national games of the 7 BIMSTEC Member States: Kabadi - Bangladesh, Archery - Bhutan, Hockey - India, Chinlone- Myanmar and the Volleyball of Nepal in this special issue of the BIMSTEC newsletter. Two more articles on the national games of Sri Lanka and Thailand will appear in future BIMSTEC newsletters.

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