



### Editorial



This issue of the BIMSTEC newsletter covers the activities of the organization for the period October-December 2019. During this period, some important meetings and events were held to further consolidate BIMSTEC's organizational structure, advance its mandate and reach out to various stakeholders and partners. The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) made concrete progress towards finalization of the BIMSTEC Charter with a view to adoption of the same at the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit.

In November, Ms. Chhimmy Pem from Bhutan joined the Secretariat as the Director for Cultural Division. She takes up this responsibility at a time when BIMSTEC is focusing on reviving the cultural and historical linkages of the Bay of Bengal region in order to promote mutual trust and confidence.



**Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam**  
Secretary General of BIMSTEC



**The Secretary General of BIMSTEC Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam called on the Hon'ble Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2019.** The Secretary General briefed the Hon'ble Speaker on BIMSTEC and its activities and the decision of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit to establish appropriate forums for parliamentarians, universities, academia, research institutes, cultural organizations and media community to expand the scope of people to people contacts. He sought support from Bangladesh for the formation of an Association of BIMSTEC Speakers and Parliamentarians. The Hon'ble Speaker assured the Secretary General of Bangladesh's full support and commitment, and offered to host a forum for the Parliamentarians and Speakers of the BIMSTEC countries to explore common areas of cooperation.



**The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 10-11 October 2019.** Delegations from all the Member States attended the Meeting. The Meeting deliberated on some important issues, including the BIMSTEC Charter, rationalization of the sectors and sub sectors under BISMTEC, the Memorandum of Association for establishment of BIMSTEC Centers/Entities and the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit to be held in Sri Lanka in 2020.

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Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC called on H.E. Mr. Ravinatha Aryasinha, Foreign Secretary of Sri Lanka in Colombo on 10 October 2019 on the sideline of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC).



Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered a Lecture on "Regional and Intra Regional Cooperation in South Asia" at the National Defence College, Dhaka on 27 October 2019.



Mr. Ragnar Gudmundsson, Resident Representative, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Bangladesh met Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC at his office on 28 October 2019. They briefed each other on the roles and initiatives of the respective organizations and held discussions on developing BIMSTEC specific studies/reports on health of the banking sector, debt sustainability, infrastructure financing models, comparative analysis of monetary policies, and investment in environment.



Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, attended the 9<sup>th</sup> Bangladesh-India Friendship Dialogue on "Bangladesh-India Strategic Space" held in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh on 01-02 November 2019 as one of the Special Guests of the Inaugural Ceremony.



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[www.youtube.com/channel/UCMQDUzdRfUeE9ZgCQ3D6ByA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMQDUzdRfUeE9ZgCQ3D6ByA)



The British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, His Excellency Mr. Robert Chatterton Dickson met with the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam on 20 November 2019. The Secretary General thanked the British High Commissioner for the United Kingdom's support in the ADB led studies on trade promotion, trade facilitation and financing of transport connectivity, and discussed potential areas of partnership. The High Commissioner assured the Secretary General of the continuous support of the United Kingdom to BIMSTEC.



*Book Launching by Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General, BIMSTEC at the Second BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security*

Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC attended the Inaugural Session of the Second BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security in New Delhi, India on 27 November 2019.



Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, delivering the keynote speech at the Kolkata Colloquium on “Reimagining BIMSTEC” held in Kolkata, India on 28-29 November 2019. The Secretary General briefed the forum on the evolution of BIMSTEC and the activities that are being carried out in the various sectors. In the context of the theme of the colloquium, Ambassador Shahidul Islam highlighted the important role that media can play and hoped that a forum for a BIMSTEC media community would be established to further strengthen the people to people connectivity of the region.



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC was invited to deliver Special Remarks at the session on “Regional Cooperation for Accelerating Achievement towards the SDGs” in the Third South Asian Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals organized by UNESCAP and the Bangladesh Government on 09 December 2019. In his remarks His Excellency stressed the importance of regional cooperation in trade and investment, climate change, and connectivity to achieve the sustainable development goals. He briefed the forum on the activities being carried out under the BIMSTEC umbrella in these areas. He emphasized the complimentary roles that regional organizations can play in addressing the challenges to achieve the SDGs and the important role that multilateral organizations can play in supporting these regional organizations.



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered the inaugural address as the Chief Guest at the Policy Dialogue on Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Development in South Asia jointly organized by UNESCAP-SSWA and BIIS in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 10 December 2019. In his address the Secretary General talked on the importance of a coordinated regional approach to supplement the national efforts of achieving the SDGs. Against this background he highlighted how BIMSTEC was aligning its activities with the efforts of its Member States to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam met with H.E. Dr. Aung Thu, Hon'ble Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation of Myanmar on 12 July 2019 during the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (1st BAMB). The Secretary General expressed his appreciation to the Government of Myanmar for holding the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture in Nay Pyi Taw. He also highlighted the importance of Agriculture in poverty alleviation and food security in addition to its huge contribution to the GDP of the Member States. The **Joint Statement**, which calls upon BIMSTEC Member States for deepening cooperation in the agricultural and allied sectors in the region, was adopted at the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture. The Member States have agreed to convene the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture once in two years.

**Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana**, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN ESCAP) met Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC at Hotel Intercontinental Dhaka on 10 December 2019. The Secretary General thanked her for the support rendered by UNESCAP during the formative years of BIMSTEC. He expressed keen interest in partnering with UNESCAP in the context of supporting member states to achieve the SDGs. Ms. Alisjahbana expressed UNESCAP's readiness to explore long term partnership with BIMSTEC in areas of mutual interest, specifically in regional and sub regional connectivity, trade and investment, technology and climate change.



Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered the key-note speech as the Guest of Honour at the Inaugural Session of the International Conference on Water, Energy and Biodiversity for Sustainable Development of BIMSTEC Countries held in Agartala, Tripura, India on 12 December 2019. In his address the Secretary General highlighted some of the key areas that BIMSTEC is working on towards development of a collective response to climate change, natural disaster and blue economy.



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC, Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam met H.E. Mr. ITO Naoki, Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh on 27 December 2019 at the BIMSTEC Secretariat. They discussed about the BIMSTEC initiatives for promoting physical and economic connectivity of the region.

## BIMSTEC Ports Conclave



The First BIMSTEC Ports Conclave was held at Visakhapatnam Port Trust, India on 07-08 November 2019. Officials from the Ports Authorities and Ministries/Departments of the Member States participated in the Conclave. The Conclave aimed at providing a platform for maritime interaction, port led connectivity initiatives and sharing best practices among the BIMSTEC Member States.

## Preparatory Meeting for the Second BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise



The Preparatory Meeting for the Second BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise was held in Puri, Odisha, India on 14-15 November 2019. The main objective of the Preparatory Meeting was to work out the modalities and requirement of the Second BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise (BIMSTEC DMEx-2020) which will be held on 11-13 February 2020. The First BIMSTEC Ports Conclave was held at Visakhapatnam Port Trust, India on 07-08 November 2019. Officials from the Ports Authorities and Ministries/Departments of the Member States participated in the Conclave. The Conclave aimed at providing a platform for maritime interaction, port led connectivity initiatives and sharing best practices among the BIMSTEC Member States.



## Coastal Security Workshop for BIMSTEC Countries



The First Coastal Security Workshop for BIMSTEC Countries was held at the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean region (IFC-IOR), Gurugram, India on 20-22 November 2019. The Workshop aimed at providing a forum for sharing expertise and experiences on common areas of concern within the maritime domain by way of deliberating and harnessing mutual interests and goals of the seven BIMSTEC Member States.

## Second BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security



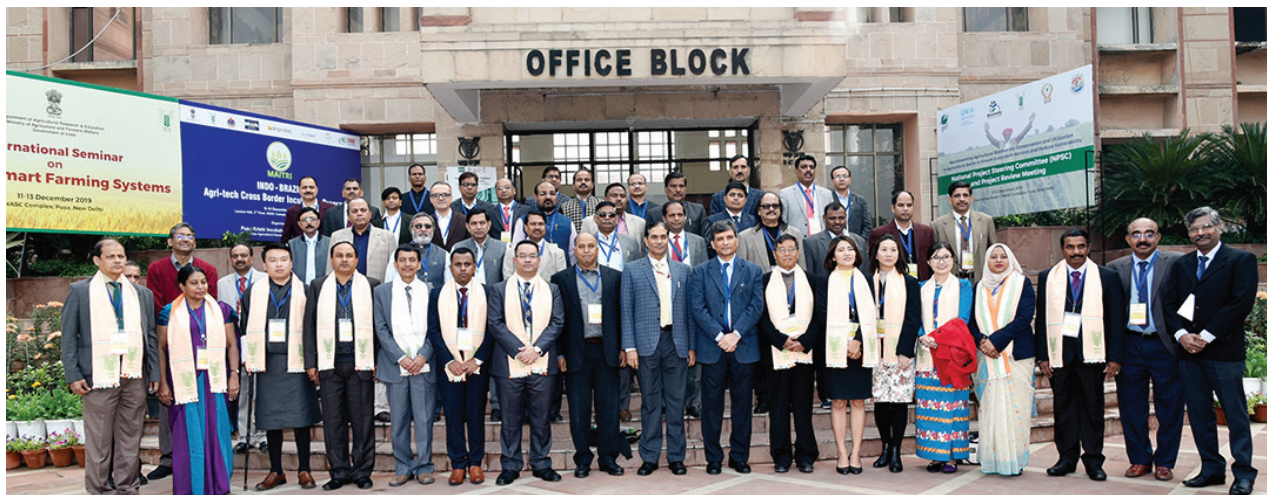
The Second BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security was held at the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi, India on 27-28 November 2019. Pursuant to the successful first meeting in November 2018, the Second BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security aimed to continue the robust interaction and deliberations by regional Think Tanks and strategic communities towards formalizing security cooperation in the BIMSTEC region.

## Workshop of Experts on BIMSTEC Himalayan Science Council



The First Workshop of Experts on Himalayan Science Council was held at the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa, India on 05-06 December 2019. The Experts deliberated on the modalities of establishing the Himalayan Science Council. The Experts also presented Member State specific initiatives in the areas of Glaciology and Hydrology, Geosciences and Hazards, Oceanography and Environmental Studies, and Meteorology and Atmospheric Sciences.

## International Seminar on Climate Smart Farming System



Pursuant to the decision of the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit, the Government of India hosted “The International Seminar on Climate Smart Farming Systems” from 11-13 December 2019 in New Delhi, India. The Seminar highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting knowledge on traditional farming by linking with the modern methods. Delegations from BIMSTEC Member States exchanged views on how to enhance income and mitigate risks for farmers. At the Seminar, delegates also shared their success stories as case studies for the benefit of the peoples of the Bay of Bengal.

## Volleyball: the National Game of Sri Lanka

Almost every nation-state in the world today has adopted a national sport or game, that is considered as an integral part of the culture and a national symbol as well. Likewise, “Elle” a Sri Lankan version of the baseball game had been the national sport of this sea-locked nation, until 1991, when they declared Volleyball as their National Sport based on its popularity among the Islanders. Interestingly, volleyball is also the national sport of Nepal, making it the No.1 game of two BIMSTEC Member States.

Sri Lanka's inherent traditional sport, Elle, pronounced as *el-layis* is today considered as their de facto national sport, upon declaring the modern game of Volleyball as their ‘de jure’ national sport in 1991, along with the announcement of the ‘Na’ or Ceylon Ironwood as the national tree, ‘Nil Manel’ or Blue Lily as the national flower, Fauna as the national animal and Jungle Fowl as their national bird.

One of the reasons for changing their national sport from Elle to Volleyball, I believe was in light of the difficulties in gaining popularity of the sport ‘Elle’ beyond Sri Lanka or at the international arena to be specific.



Game of volleyball in progress

*It may be noted that for the benefit of the volleyball enthusiast, the history or origin of Volleyball in detail was provided in the previous volume of the BIMSTEC e-newsletter of ..... It can be browsed from the BIMSTEC website, [www.bimstec.org](http://www.bimstec.org).*

## MUAY THAI: The National Game of Thailand

*Muay Thai*, the traditional martial art of Thailand, commonly known to many as *kick boxing*, is the national game of the Kingdom of Thailand. It is a spectacular form of unarmed combat, accompanied by the most popular traditional music ensemble. Before a bout, Muay Thai boxers perform the Ram Muay dance for five-minutes to pay tribute to their teachers and to the guardian spirits of Thai –style boxing. In this game a boxer can target and strike any part of the body of the opponent, apart from the head.





**Muay Thai boxing in action**

The game of Muay Thai gained its popularity towards 1930s and revived under the Marquess of Queensberry rule with modernized regulations. It gradually spread towards the western world of boxing in the name of kickboxing. Since then, several standard Thai boxers have won the world boxing championships. In 1996, a Thai featherweight boxer SomluckKamsing earned the country's first Olympic Gold Medal and in 1999, boxer Khaosai Galaxy was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Muay Thai is very popular among Thai people today. In my opinion, one of the reasons for its popularity is because it is not only a thrilling game of talents and skills but also people can gamble with frenzied ringside betting and mint money at the cost of Muay Thai kick boxers.

***Contributed by Kunzang N. Tshering***

*Mr. Kunzang N. Tshering was the first Country Director from Bhutan at the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He served as the head of the Social and Cultural Division from March 2016 to August 2019. With the above two articles, Mr. Tshering covered articles on all the national games of the seven BIMSTEC Member States.*





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