



BIMSTEC

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



April-June 2020 Issue

NEWSLETTER

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Editorial



Welcome to the April-June 2020 edition of the BIMSTEC Newsletter. It has been four months since the COVID 19 pandemic has hit all our countries. Our countries have been working tirelessly in dealing with this invisible enemy since then. Like everywhere else, the activities of BIMSTEC have been stalled or are taking longer than usual to forge ahead. However, it is encouraging to see that trade and connectivity are being eased slowly and that supply of essential goods are being ensured across borders.

As reiterated by our leaders on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of BIMSTEC, we have to fight this pandemic collectively as a region through better collaboration, sharing of resources and expertise. While in-person meetings and workshops may not be possible for the foreseeable future, we foresee some of the BIMSTEC meetings going virtual. We hope that our governments will ensure that the momentum of BIMSTEC that has been gained, especially at the 20th Senior Official Meeting held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 3rd March this year is not lost in terms of forging ahead with the decisions taken. We hope, despite the pandemic, that we keep the spirit of BIMSTEC alive and strive towards a more secure, connected, stable and prosperous region as envisioned by our leaders from the very start of BIMSTEC.

Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam
Secretary General of BIMSTEC

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PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

23 Jaishtha 1427
6 June 2020

MESSAGE

On behalf of the Government and the people of Bangladesh and my behalf, I am delighted to extend the warmest felicitations to the Governments and the people of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Member States on the joyous occasion of 23rd BIMSTEC Day 2020. I also extend my special greetings to the Secretary-General of BIMSTEC and the officials of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

I am pleased to observe that BIMSTEC has come a long way in its commitment to harness shared and accelerated growth through intimate cooperation in different areas of common interests. I firmly believe that BIMSTEC will advance in accelerated pace towards making a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region as we agreed in the 4th BIMSTEC Summit along with the BIMSTEC Leaders.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed the world a serious challenge. It will leave long-lasting multiple impacts on the lives and living of people of this region causing repercussions in the economic and social progress. BIMSTEC forum provides an excellent platform to combat the devastating impact of COVID-19. We should not leave any stone unturned to utilize this platform in addressing the challenges of the post-COVID-19 era.

We are also celebrating the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who for the first time had dreamt of working together with the neighbors in the region for collective progress. Regional cooperation has since been a part of our constitution and foreign policy priorities. As a founding member of BIMSTEC and host of BIMSTEC Secretariat and in the spirit of pursuing regional cooperation, Bangladesh is committed to closely work with all BIMSTEC Members on all areas of cooperation including the promotion of trade and investment cooperation, strengthening energy cooperation, increasing connectivity and people-to-people contact, disaster management, and public health, combating terrorism and extremism, dealing with the adverse effects of climate change and poverty alleviation.



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www.youtube.com/channel/UCMQDUzdRfUbE9ZgCQ3D6ByA

Felicitations Messages from the Leaders of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day

On this very auspicious occasion, I wish BIMSTEC all the success in its future endeavors. Let us all work together with the noble mission to transform BIMSTEC into a strong, effective, result-oriented, and mutually beneficial organization for the 1.5 billion people of the BIMSTEC region.

**Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.
May Bangladesh live forever.**

Sheikh Hasina



Royal Government of Bhutan

June 06, 2020

PRIME MINISTER

MESSAGE

Today, as we observe the founding day of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) amidst the ongoing global battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, I wish to take this opportunity to convey Bhutan's sincere prayers and well wishes to the Governments and more than 1.5 billion citizens of the BIMSTEC Region.

I am pleased to congratulate the Governments of BIMSTEC Member States for their success in dealing with the current public health crisis in their respective countries. As a region, we have shown our support and commitment to the health and welfare of our peoples, and we must continue to strive together until we have overcome this crisis.

On 6th June 1997, BIMSTEC was founded with a vision to foster and enhance mutually beneficial cooperation in the BIMSTEC region. BIMSTEC has come a long way since its inception and today, we can confidently look ahead to further improve cooperation under the various sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation.

In conclusion, on this special day for BIMSTEC, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of the Royal Government of Bhutan to BIMSTEC.

Tashi Delek and Stay safe!

(Dr. Lotay Tshering)

Felicitation Messages from the Leaders of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day



सत्यमेव जयते

PRIME MINISTER
Republic of India

MESSAGE

On the occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day, I convey warm felicitations to the leaders and people of BIMSTEC countries.

Over the years, BIMSTEC has proved to be an effective bridge between South and South East Asia, reinforcing the traditional bonds of mutual goodwill and shared cultural heritage. The continued strengthening of BIMSTEC in recent times has brought our countries even closer together with the common objective of building a more secure and prosperous Bay of Bengal region. For India, BIMSTEC is also a natural choice for its key foreign policy priorities of 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East'.

I warmly recall the presence of leaders from all BIMSTEC countries at the swearing-in ceremony of our Government in May last year. It was a gesture of friendship that I will forever cherish.

The world is currently fighting the common challenge of Covid-19 pandemic. No individual country can, by itself, overcome its huge consequences. In our common endeavour to deal with this unprecedented threat, India stands ready to share its expertise, resources, capacities and knowledge with all countries in the region.

I take this opportunity to thank Sri Lanka, the current Chair of BIMSTEC, for steering various meetings in an extremely productive manner since the BIMSTEC Summit held in 2018. We also appreciate the role of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in coordinating diverse collaborative activities.

BIMSTEC holds great promise for the development and growth of the region. I am confident that our cooperation in diverse areas would grow in the years to come in the spirit of solidarity and mutual friendship.

New Delhi
May 23, 2020

(Narendra Modi)

Felicitations Messages from the Leaders of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day



**State Counsellor
Republic of the Union of Myanmar**

MESSAGE

On this auspicious occasion of the 23rd Anniversary of the founding of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), I take great pleasure in extending my warmest felicitations and best wishes to the peoples of BIMSTEC member states.

With its huge markets and rich natural resources, BIMSTEC has vast potential for contributing towards the socio-economic development of the region. Substantial progress has been made during BIMSTEC's 23-year journey since its inception, but there is much that still needs to be done to achieve its aims and purposes, guided by the principles of the 1997 Bangkok declaration.

Myanmar sees BIMSTEC as a key platform for the achievement of peace, prosperity and sustainability in the Bay of Bengal region, and we have been cooperating with fellow member states of BIMSTEC in many areas of common interests. I believe that we will be able to leverage regional cooperation more effectively, and respond to new and emerging challenges, including the current challenge of combating the COVID-19 pandemic, in a spirit of friendship, unity, solidarity and mutual understanding.

I am confident that our collective efforts to enhance partnerships and cooperation among BIMSTEC member states will bring peace and prosperity to all peoples in the region.

Nay Pyi Taw
06 June 2020

Aung San Suu Kyi

Felicitations Messages from the Leaders of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day



Prime Minister of Nepal
Government of Nepal

MESSAGE

On the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), on behalf of the people and Government of Nepal as well as on my own, I wish to extend warm greetings and felicitations to the fellow Governments and Peoples of BIMSTEC Member Countries. Twenty-Three years ago, on 6 June 1997 our leaders signed the Bangkok Declaration with the aim of building a peaceful and prosperous Bay of Bengal region.

BIMSTEC is a home to about 1.5 billion people. It is a region with huge opportunities. Our common desire to delivering better opportunity and economic prosperity to our people has brought us together to establish this regional organization. Today, BIMSTEC represents our collective hope for achieving economic growth, social progress, sustainable development and prosperity in our region.

These days, we are fighting against the Covid-19 pandemic. It has tested our ability and exposed our vulnerability. This trying time demands us to pool our strengths and build a better resilience across the region. We face an increased level of uncertainty in the midst of this invisible enemy. This is a time to stand united and fight the Covid-19 collectively. We must fight collectively and defeat this enemy.

Regional cooperation is one of the salient features of Nepal's foreign policy. The fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in Kathmandu envisions for a better institutional framework for this regional body. The decision taken in Kathmandu Summit will go a long way in strengthening BIMSTEC through a solid legal and institutional basis. The fifth BIMSTEC Summit to be held in Colombo will be a milestone for furthering regional cooperation. Nepal is committed to working together with fellow member countries towards realizing the objectives we have set for this regional body.

May this special Day inspire us more to further deepen our bond of friendship, amity, partnership and cooperation to build BIMSTEC as a genuine vehicle for achieving peace and prosperity in the region!

Kathmandu, 01 June 2020

K P Sharma Oli

Felicitations Messages from the Leaders of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day



President of Sri Lanka
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

MESSAGE

I consider it a great privilege to convey greetings and best wishes of the Government and the people of Sri Lanka on the happy occasion of the 23rd Anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Sri Lanka, a founder member of BIMSTEC has supported all collective initiatives throughout the years and has been a partner in its progress in facilitating trade, economic development and people to people contact.

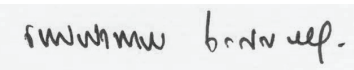
As the current Chair of BIMSTEC, Sri Lanka has endeavored to strengthen institutional capacity of the organization and convened three Permanent Working Committee meetings and the 20th Senior Officials' Meeting in 2019 and 2020 respectively where BIMSTEC Charter and rationalization of sectors and sub-sectors were finalized with a view to adopt at the 5th Summit scheduled to be hosted in Sri Lanka later this year.

Although, BIMSTEC Member States represent 22% of the world's population, it only contributes 4% to the World GDP. Therefore, I strongly believe that as an organization well established and respected within the region, we could play a more proactive role in uplifting the economic development of Member States by way of trade, exchange of technological advancements, and specially by developing human capital which is our collective strength.

Furthermore, as the lead country for Science, Technology and Innovations, Sri Lanka has an important role to play within BIMSTEC during and post COVID-19 pandemic which has affected Member States adversely. I believe that only collective efforts based on cooperation can make the region flourish from the setbacks that has affected the very fabric of life and global supply chains.

I reassure to all Member States, Sri Lanka's continued commitment to BIMSTEC and its objectives and wish the organization all success.

28 May 2020



Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Felicitations Messages from the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day



Minister of Foreign Affairs
Kingdom of Thailand

MESSAGE

On the auspicious occasion of BIMSTEC Day 6 June 2020, I wish to express my congratulations and best wishes to the Governments and peoples of BIMSTEC Member States.

BIMSTEC was founded 23 years ago in Bangkok with the vision of fostering cooperation among countries of the Bay of Bengal, that is, to be a “bridge of friendship” linking Southeast and South Asia. Since then, our small community of nations has worked closely together towards mutual prosperity through promoting trade and economic cooperation, facilitating business, enhancing people-to-people contacts, and furthering connectivity and security, among others.

Today, BIMSTEC has matured into a vital subregional mechanism for cooperation, with a Charter, seven pillars of cooperation, and a Master Plan on Transport Connectivity. It is hoped that a future BIMSTEC Free Trade Area can be realised to further reduce logistics and transaction costs, and encourage more business and people-to-people contacts.

At the same time, we look to further enhance cooperation on current and future challenges, notably those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to ensure our common goal of sustainable growth through food security, sustainable agriculture, MSMEs promotion, and enhanced research and development on health and medicine. BIMSTEC is committed to an open outlook, reaching out to our international partners while reaffirming our support to multilateralism, open trade and investment, and people-centred development.

Thailand is fully committed to realising BIMSTEC's founding vision, and looks forward to our Chairmanship in 2021-2022, when we hope that our community will take forward efforts in achieving sustainable development, while complementing our collaboration with other sub-regional and regional frameworks, such as ACMECS and APEC.

On this happy occasion, I extend my best wishes for the continued success and prosperity of BIMSTEC, for it to continue to serve as a foundation for peace, friendship, and sustainable development for our peoples.

Bangkok, 6 June 2020

Don Pramudwinai

Felicitations Messages from the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day

FOREIGN MINISTER



GOVERNMENT OF THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
DHAKA

06 June, 2020

MESSAGE

On the occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day 2020, I am pleased to convey my sincere greetings to all members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) family.

Bangladesh, as a founding member of BIMSTEC, attaches high importance to this regional platform. Moreover, the Government of Bangladesh led by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stresses on the importance of stronger regional cooperation. Bangladesh has been contributing towards BIMSTEC process with continued and ever increasing engagements. Since its inception in 1997, it has been working to advance the common visions and shared endeavors of the Bay of Bengal Region. Hosting of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka is the manifestation of Bangladesh's firm commitment to the BIMSTEC process.

I strongly believe that in the face of the unprecedented challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the relevance and role of BIMSTEC as a regional group of 1.5 billion people is of utmost importance. With a view to addressing the critical social and economic impacts of COVID-19, the BIMSTEC can play an instrumental role in establishing a strong partnership and solidarity among the BIMSTEC member states. A timely and effective response to COVID-19 can enable the BIMSTEC Member States to limit the potentially devastating impact on its people and economies and find out suitable remedies the pandemic already caused. Bangladesh is ready to extend all support to the BIMSTEC initiatives in this regard.

As a leading country for Trade, Investment and Development under BIMSTEC process, Bangladesh is strongly committed to enhance trade and investment cooperation in the BIMSTEC region by establishing BIMSTEC Free Trade Area. Bangladesh is pledged to collaborate with all BIMSTEC member states to create an enabling environment for facilitating trade, investment and wide range of issues of mutual interests. A result-oriented mutually beneficial partnership under BIMSTEC process can usher in collective economic and social prosperity of our peoples.

On this auspicious day, while reaffirming the firm assurance and support of our Government in bolstering the BIMSTEC process, I wish BIMSTEC forum all success!

Long live BIMSTEC Spirit

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu

(Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, MP)

Felicitations Messages from the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Royal Government of Bhutan
Thimphu

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MESSAGE

On the 23rd anniversary of the founding of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), I would like to extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to the peoples and Governments of BIMSTEC Member States.

Bhutan joined the BIMSTEC family in 2004 and has endeavored in fostering mutually beneficial cooperation in our region under BIMSTEC's various sectors of cooperation. We have made tremendous progress and today is a day to reflect on our journey thus far. It is also a day to look ahead to the future.

As we celebrate this special day, Governments and peoples in our region and around the globe continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Our countries are at different stages of the pandemic. However, I am confident that through enhanced cooperation and solidarity amongst ourselves, we will not only weather this crisis but also grow stronger and more connected. I wish everyone success in the fight against the virus.

The Royal Government would like to reiterate its commitment and continued support for BIMSTEC.

Tashi Delek!

Thimphu, 06 June 2020

(Dr. Tandi Dorji)

Felicitations Messages from the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day

Government of Nepal

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal



Minister for Foreign Affairs

MESSAGE

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is going to complete twenty-three years of its establishment on 6 June 2020. On this happy occasion of the 23rd anniversary, I would like to extend my best wishes for the successful operation of this regional organization towards achieving peace, prosperity and happiness for the peoples of our region.

BIMSTEC is a dynamic region with the abundance of natural resources, rich culture, age-old civilization, a population of over 1.5 billion, and a collective GDP of more than three trillion. It is endowed with enormous potentials for economic growth and development of the entire region. It is a dynamic bridge between South Asia and South East Asia.

The regional cooperation under BIMSTEC has grown consistently with holding of the Summits and other meetings at various levels, the establishment of the Secretariat, conclusion of agreements in vital areas, and the implementation of activities in the areas of cooperation. The Kathmandu Declaration adopted by the fourth BIMSTEC Summit has charted a course of action for in various areas of common interest.

Covid-19 pandemic has brought an unprecedented challenge before us. This pandemic has exposed our shortcomings. An ensuing economic slowdown lies ahead. It is a difficult time that demands us to build a better resilience across the region.

I believe, enhanced connectivity, development of green energy, increased intra-regional trade, investment and tourism, agricultural development, public health partnership, and close cultural and people-to-people contacts merit our serious attention. Nepal is committed to working together with the fellow member countries in the spirit of solidarity.

On this important Day, let us renew our commitment to delivering peace and prosperity to our people by accelerating meaningful cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework. As a committed member, Nepal will make utmost contribution to the cooperation process under BIMSTEC. I hope BIMSTEC will continue to grow as an engine for economic prosperity in the region.

Kathmandu, 01 June 2020

Pradeep Kumar Gyawali

Felicitations Messages from the Ministers of Foreign Relations of the BIMSTEC Member States on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day



Minister of Foreign Relations
Democratic Socialist republic of Sri Lanka

MESSAGE

I convey my greetings to all Member States, on the 23rd Anniversary of the establishment of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

In the past 23 years, BIMSTEC has evolved as a stable organization and Sri Lanka as a founder member has contributed consistently in connecting South Asia and South East Asia through BIMSTEC.

Considering the sizable population and market, BIMSTEC as a regional grouping has an important role to play in the 21st century and this could only be achieved through close cooperation and new working arrangements.

As the world is facing a major economic and social downturn due to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, the collective role of BIMSTEC Member States is vital in overcoming challenges that are common to the region due to its complimentary nature of economic and social integration. Moreover, as the lead country for Science, Technology and Innovations, Sri Lanka will continue to actively participate and add value to initiatives of the organization in overcoming these challenges.

Sri Lanka during its Chair is focusing on institutional building through the finalization of the BIMSTEC Charter and the allocation of defined areas of cooperation among Member States, in order to add focus to future activities of BIMSTEC.

I take this opportunity to thank all Member States, the Secretariat and partners for the continued support extended to Sri Lanka as the Chair of BIMSTEC and reassure Sri Lanka's commitment to strengthen and advance the BIMSTEC process for the prosperity of the peoples in the region.

28 May 2020

Dinesh Gunawardena
Minister of Foreign Relations

Felicitations Message from the Secretary General of BIMSTEC on the Occasion of the 23rd BIMSTEC Day

Secretary General



BIMSTEC Secretariat
Dhaka, Bangladesh

06 June 2020

MESSAGE

On the occasion of the Twenty-Third Anniversary of the establishment of BIMSTEC, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to the peoples and the Governments of the BIMSTEC Member States – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. My thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost their near and dear ones due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established on 06 June 1997 to accelerate economic development and social progress in the countries adjacent to the Bay of Bengal by leveraging geographical proximity and abundant natural resources. Since its inception, BIMSTEC has been actively promoting physical and economic connectivity in the region through trade, transport, tourism, technology and energy cooperation. BIMSTEC is also mandated to promote collective action to address vulnerabilities like climate change, natural disasters, food security, terrorism, transnational crimes and communicable diseases.

Like most other countries of the world, BIMSTEC countries' initial response to the COVID 19 pandemic was to restrict trade, travel and other forms of connectivity. It is heartening to see that they are increasingly opening up trade and transport connectivity to restore essential supply chains. BIMSTEC Leaders are putting renewed emphasis on developing regional transport connectivity resilient to disruptions caused by future pandemic or other calamities with particular focus on coastal shipping, waterways and railways. The economic gains registered by BIMSTEC countries are constantly being threatened by natural disasters, climate change, pandemics, poverty and economic disparity. As we prepare for the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit later this year in Colombo, our Leaders are expected to provide clear directives to invest more to ensure human security. Already, the Member States have expressed their resolve to strengthen cooperation in the area of agriculture and food security.

I wish to record my sincere gratitude to Bangladesh for providing continued support to the Secretariat since its establishment in 2014. I also register my sincere thanks to Sri Lanka, the current Chair of BIMSTEC, for successfully holding a series of important meetings including the 20th Session of BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting early 2020. I express my deep appreciation to all other Member States for their active participation and continued support in advancing the mandate of the organization.

I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm the Secretariat's commitment to work closely with the Member States in fulfilling the goals set by the BIMSTEC Leaders. I am confident that the existing close cooperation among the Member States will be further strengthened in the years to come for the benefit of 1.6 billion population of this region.


(M Shahidul Islam)

Secretary General's Activities



The Secretary General, Ambassador M Shahidul Islam was invited by the National Defence College, Bangladesh to participate in a virtual panel discussion on “Regional security architecture: issues and future of common and cooperative security in South Asia” that was held on 16 April 2020. In his address, the Secretary General shared an update on the initiatives and activities that BIMSTEC is working on towards ensuring security in the region in enhancing economic development which is the main mandate of the organization. He also shared his views on the advancement of security in the region.



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC attended the Virtual Preparatory Meeting on 7 May 2020 with the Additional Secretary (BIMSTEC & SAARC) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh and the Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce of Bangladesh to discuss the virtual meeting on Trade in Goods & its Rules of Origin that was proposed to be held on 08 June 2020. However, the virtual meeting could not be held as proposed and has now been postponed to a later date.

Secretary General's Activities



On 19 May 2020, the Secretary General of BIMSTEC was invited to participate in a virtual brainstorming meeting to discuss the World Bank's draft Approach to South Asia Regional Integration, Cooperation and Engagement (SA-RICE). During the meeting, the Secretary General shared his views on the possible areas of cooperation at the regional level in specific sectors that would bring about positive impact post COVID-19.



His Excellency Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam, Secretary General, BIMSTEC delivered the Keynote Address at the Webinar on "BIMSTEC Cooperation in Post COVID-19 Era" organized by Asian Confluence, Shillong, India on 20 May 2020. His Excellency shared updates on the progress in the BIMSTEC activities and processes with the panelists. He informed the panelists that BIMSTEC was making good progress in ensuring the institutional structure needed in terms of the finalization of the Charter, streamlining processes, development of the BIMSTEC Fund, and rationalization of the sectors amongst others.

He shared that he was looking forward to the 5th Summit to approve all the initiatives so that BIMSTEC could move forward at a faster pace to ensure more and better connectivity in trade and travel for the development of the region. However, the advent of the pandemic has slowed the progress. He shared that despite setbacks it is possible to use technology to ensure that trade is continued. He hoped that Member States would work collaboratively so that efforts are not duplicated and that resources/knowledge are shared to ensure that the region can combat and win over this pandemic together.



His Excellency Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam was invited to deliver the inaugural remarks at the Preparatory Webinar on Policy Responses to Covid-19 Pandemic and Scope for Collective Response by BIMSTEC hosted by Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India on 30 June 2020. He conveyed his appreciation to RIS for initiating this webinar and noted the role that BNPTT plays in enhancing people to people contact. He shared his views on how BIMSTEC needs to move forward in the various sectors ranging from focusing on infrastructure development and employment generation to enhancing connectivity as well as concluding the BIMSTEC FTA and Customs Cooperation Agreement to enhance and increase trade within the region. He recalled the clear directives given by the BIMSTEC Leaders and reminded the participants that the region needs to devote more time, energy and commitment to translate those into concrete actions.



Mr. Pankaj Hazarika, Director, India formally left BIMSTEC Secretariat to continue his service with the Government of India in June 2020. He served as the first Director from India in the BIMSTEC Secretariat from June 2017 to May 2020. While at the Secretariat Mr Hazarika was Director for the Connectivity and Security Division and was responsible for the sectors of Counter terrorism and Transnational Crime, Transport and Communication, Environment and Disaster Management, and Blue Economy. The Secretariat would like to wish him the very best in his future endeavors as he leaves to take up responsibilities with the Government of India. The Secretariat looks forward to welcoming the new Director from India.





Chief Editor



Ambassador M. Shahidul Islam
Secretary General of BIMSTEC

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