



### Editorial



Welcome to this edition of the BIMSTEC Newsletter, the last one for the year 2020. The year 2020 has been very difficult for all the people across the world and even more for the people of our region. The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted not only the health care systems of the region but also robbed normal livelihood from millions of people.

In 2021, we look forward to recovering from the devastating effects of the pandemic considering the availability of the vaccine of Covid-19. Further, we need to accelerate our efforts in enhancing collaboration and regional integration under the framework of BIMSTEC in order to forge ahead together.

The Secretariat is pleased to inform that most of our scheduled meetings are now being held virtually. While virtual meetings cannot really replace in-person meetings, nonetheless important decisions have been taken in order to move forward the BIMSTEC activities.

I took over the responsibilities of the Secretary General on 06 November 2020. However, I formally joined the office after observing the required protocol of a two-week home quarantine. Although the pandemic has made traveling difficult, I hope that I will have the opportunity of meeting our Leaders in person sometime this year to seek guidance as we progress to the next decade of BIMSTEC's establishment.

I would like to wish all our readers a very happy and safer 2021.

**Tenzin Lekphell**

Secretary General, BIMSTEC

### Third BIMSTEC Secretary General-designate calls on the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan



The Third BIMSTEC Secretary General-designate, Mr. Tenzin Lekphell called on the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, H. E. Dr. Lotay Tshering on 04 November 2020 at the Gyalyong Tshokhang, before his departure for Dhaka, Bangladesh to formally assume the responsibilities as the Secretary General. They discussed on a wide range of issues particularly on furthering the aims and objectives of BIMSTEC in enhancing collaboration in the Bay of Bengal region.

### The Third BIMSTEC Secretary General assumes charges



After arriving in Bangladesh on 6 November 2020 and observing a two week home quarantine protocol set by the Government of Bangladesh, H.E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell formally took over the charges of the BIMSTEC Secretariat. On arrival in Dhaka, he was received by Mr. Md. Shamsul Haque, Additional Foreign Secretary (SAARC & BIMSTEC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh and the Directors of the Secretariat.

## Webinar on Harmonization of Curricula for Mutual Recognition of Traditional Medicine Degrees of BIMSTEC Countries



A Webinar on Harmonization of Curricula for Mutual Recognition of Traditional Medicine Degrees of BIMSTEC Countries was held virtually on 03 November 2020, hosted by the Ministry of Ayush of the Government of India. The Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Ayush, H.E. Shripad Yesso Naik graced the opening of the Webinar. Delegates from all BIMSTEC Member States attended the Webinar to understand the system and process in the respective Member States in order to explore the strategies of establishing a harmonized system for mutual recognition of the traditional medicine degrees offered.

## The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Poverty Alleviation



The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Poverty Alleviation was held virtually in New Delhi, India on 12 November 2020. Delegations from all BIMSTEC Member States attended the Meeting. The Meeting deliberated on the implementation of BIMSTEC Poverty Plan of Action (PPA) as well as relevance of other priority sectors with respects to Poverty Alleviation in the BIMSTEC region.

### Workshop on “Leveraging Thematic Circuits Toward a BIMSTEC 2030 Strategy”



A Consultation Workshop entitled “Leveraging Thematic Circuits Toward a BIMSTEC 2030 Strategy” was held virtually in Manila, Philippines on 25 November 2020, jointly organized by the BIMSTEC Secretariat and the Asian Development Bank. Participants from all BIMSTEC Member States attended the workshop. The workshop deliberated on a preliminary study report prepared by ADB for promotion of tourism in the BIMSTEC region.

### Fourth South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals: Fostering Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from Covid-19 in South Asia



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC, H. E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell attended the “Fourth South Asia Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals: Fostering Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from Covid-19 in South Asia”, jointly organized by the UN-ESCAP and the Government of Maldives on 2 December 2020. In his remarks, the Secretary General briefed the forum on the initiatives in the various cooperation areas undertaken by BIMSTEC that aligns with the SDGs and their implementation. He emphasized the need for cooperation and collaboration among all stakeholders to achieve the SDGs and recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

### The Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group



The Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) was held virtually on 08 December 2020 in New Delhi, India. The Meeting finalized the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity that was developed with the technical assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Master Plan is a ten-year strategy and action plan that will guide the development of transport connectivity as well as its synergies with other areas of connectivity.

### The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Tour Operators



The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Tour Operators was held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 08-09 December 2020. Delegations from all BIMSTEC Member States attended the Meeting. The Meeting deliberated on the progress and status of the recommendations of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Tour Operators and Plan of Action on Tourism Development for BIMSTEC Region.

## The Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks



The Fifth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) was held virtually on 21-22 December 2020, hosted by the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, New Delhi, India. The BNPTT Members discussed a wide range of issues on progressing the BIMSTEC agenda forward and made recommendations to the Member States in various sectors towards realization of the BIMSTEC common vision.

## The Secretary General of BIMSTEC calls on the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC, H.E Mr. Tenzin Lekphell paid a courtesy call on H.E. Mr. Masud Bin Momen, Foreign Secretary (Senior Secretary) of Bangladesh on 24 December 2020 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka and discussed on advancing the BIMSTEC agenda.

## The High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh calls on the Secretary General of BIMSTEC



H. E. Mr. Vikram Doraiswami, the High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh paid a courtesy call on the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, H. E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell on 27 December 2020 at the BIMSTEC Secretariat. They discussed the BIMSTEC Start-up Conclave to be hosted by India on 15-16 January 2021 as well as the appointment of the next Director from India to the BIMSTEC Secretariat among others.

## Host country starts initial discussions on the construction of a new BIMSTEC Secretariat Building



On 14 October 2020, a representative of the host country gave an initial presentation on the construction of the new building for the Secretariat. The representative presented the initial plans to the Directors and other officials of the Secretariat where they sought clarification and provided suggestions for consideration by the host country, Bangladesh.



## Chief Editor



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