

Editorial



Welcome to the January-March edition of the BIMSTEC Newsletter.

While travel is still not possible due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic the Secretariat has been involved in a number of online activities. A Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting was successfully held on 31 March 2021 in preparation for the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and the 5th Summit.

We are happy to report that the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking was effectuated since 16 March 2021 ratified by all Member States. The BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity is ready for adoption and implementation.

The Secretariat also looks forward to the joining of new Directors from Sri Lanka and Thailand in the next couple of months, thus ensuring that all Member States are represented at the Secretariat.

While it seems like a long way before any normalcy can return into our lives, it is comforting to note that Member States have started their vaccination programs vigorously. India's efforts at distributing the much needed vaccines to other Member States is an example of the true spirit of the BIMSTEC solidarity.

Thank you.

Tenzin Lekphell
Secretary General, BIMSTEC

Secretary General of BIMSTEC calls on the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh



On 3rd March 2021, the Secretary General of BIMSTEC Mr. Tenzin Lekphell paid a courtesy call on Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh at Ganabhaban. The Prime Minister congratulated Mr. Lekphell on his appointment as the Secretary General of BIMSTEC.

The Secretary General updated the Prime Minister on the upcoming BIMSTEC activities including the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, which will discuss the modalities and tentative timeframe for convening the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit in Sri Lanka. He apprised on the progress made in the areas of cooperation since the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held in 2018. The Secretary General also congratulated the Prime Minister for leading the emergence of Bangladesh from a least developed country to a developing one.

Mentioning the establishment of BIMSTEC in 1997 during her first tenure as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister stated that many things can be achieved through joint efforts. She assured the Secretary General of her government's full support to BIMSTEC process in making the Organization a dynamic, effective and result-oriented regional grouping. The Prime Minister also spelled out her government's various initiatives stressing equal emphasize on the lives and livelihoods of the people of Bangladesh to fight against the devastating effect caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Secretary General of BIMSTEC hosts lunch in honor of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC hosted a lunch in honor of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, His Excellency Dr. Lotay Tshering on 23 March 2021. The Prime Minister was visiting Bangladesh from 23-24 March 2021 on the occasion of the golden jubilee celebrations of its independence

and the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The Prime Minister also met and interacted with the BIMSTEC Directors.

Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting



A Special Session of the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting was held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 31 March 2021 in preparation for the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and the 5th BIMSTEC Summit. All Member States participated in the Meeting. Besides finalizing the agenda and documents for the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and the 5th BIMSTEC Summit, the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity was also endorsed for adoption by the 5th BIMSTEC Summit.

The Secretary General of BIMSTEC calls on the Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh



His Excellency the Secretary General of BIMSTEC paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, MP, Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Bangladesh on 28 January 2021 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The two held discussions on expediting BIMSTEC activities and in this respect the need for the Ministerial Meetings to be more regular. They also touched on the proposed Ministerial Meeting in April 2021 which is important to be held to discuss matters relating to the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit.

Secretary General of BIMSTEC calls on the Hon'ble Commerce Minister of Bangladesh



His Excellency the Secretary General of BIMSTEC paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Mr. Tipu Munshi, MP, Hon'ble Minister of Commerce of Bangladesh on 28 January 2021. Bangladesh as the Lead Country for Trade and Investment sector is committed to realizing the Free Trade Area Agreement and assured that all the necessary meetings leading up to the signing of the document would be scheduled as early as possible. His Excellency assured the Secretary General of his Ministry's full support to BIMSTEC.

Secretary General of BIMSTEC calls on Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC, H.E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Mr. Md. Shahriar Alam, M.P., Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on 10 January 2021 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka. Discussions were held on prioritization and the possibility of accelerating some of the BIMSTEC activities, construction of the new BIMSTEC Secretariat building as well as the Covid-19 situation among other issues.

Secretary General of BIMSTEC participates in the BIMSTEC Startup Conclave



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC addressed the Inaugural Session of the BIMSTEC Startup Conclave on 15 January 2021. His Excellency expressed appreciation to the Government of India for initiating and hosting the BIMSTEC Startup Conclave. He highlighted the importance that innovation and startups play in finding viable solutions to challenges confronted by the world. He urged the BIMSTEC Leaders to empower startups and other entrepreneurial ventures especially at this time when the world faces unprecedented challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Taking inspiration from the initiative of the Government of India the Secretary General requested the Member States to consider establishing a “BIMSTEC Startup Hub” that could be a forum to share ideas, experiences and best practices. He also urged the BIMSTEC Member States to consider organizing startup conclaves as an annual event that would inspire young entrepreneurs and generate a startup culture in the region.

The BIMSTEC Startup Conclave was part of the Startup India International Summit organized by the Government of India on 15-16 January 2021. This was done as a follow up to the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, His Excellency Mr. Narendra Modi’s announcement at the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu in 2018 to host a BIMSTEC Startup Conclave with the objective of enhancing connectivity among the entrepreneurs of the region. Hon’ble Ministers and Senior Officials from the BIMSTEC Member States participated in the Conclave. Over 100 startups from the BIMSTEC Member States participated in the virtual startup showcase.

Secretary General of BIMSTEC calls on the Commerce Secretary of Bangladesh



On 10 February 2021, the Secretary General of BIMSTEC met Dr. Md. Jafar Uddin, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce of Bangladesh at the Bangladesh Secretariat in Dhaka. The two held discussions on the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area Agreement and agreed on expediting all necessary procedures and meetings to conclude this instrument at the earliest possible.

Ambassador of Nepal to Bangladesh calls on Secretary General of BIMSTEC



On 13 January 2021, His Excellency Dr. Banshidhar Mishra, Ambassador of Nepal to Bangladesh paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Mr. Tenzin Lekphell, the Secretary-General of BIMSTEC at the Secretariat's premises. The two discussed the potential of BIMSTEC to lead the region and the importance of accelerating the pace of activities to achieve progress in the agreed areas of cooperation.

Director General of CIRDAP meets Secretary General of BIMSTEC



On 31 January 2021, His Excellency Dr. Cherdsak Virapat, Director General (DG), Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) paid a courtesy call on His Excellency Mr. Tenzin Lekphell, Secretary General of BIMSTEC at the Secretariat's premises. The two discussed on collaboration between the two organizations in possible areas of cooperation.

Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered a welcome speech at the Inaugural of the Bay of the Bengal Economic Dialogue 2021



Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered a welcome speech at the Inaugural of the Bay of the Bengal Economic Dialogue 2021 in Dhaka, Bangladesh (virtual) on 08 February 2021 organized by the South Asian Network of Economic Modeling.

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh calls on Secretary General of BIMSTEC



H.E. Robert Chatterton Dickson, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh and Mr. Daniel Sherry, Counsellor, British High Commission, Dhaka, Bangladesh called on H.E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell, Secretary General of BIMSTEC at his office on 19 January 2021. The High Commissioner and Counsellor also met the Directors of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Country Director of GIZ, Bangladesh meets Secretary General of BIMSTEC



Dr. Angelika Fleddermann, Country Director, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (of the German Development Cooperation – GIZ), Bangladesh met the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, H.E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell on 25 January 2021 at the BIMSTEC Secretariat. They discussed about the possible cooperation between the BIMSTEC and GIZ.

Country Director of ADB, Bangladesh meets Secretary General of BIMSTEC



Mr. Manmohan Parkash, Country Director, Asian Development Bank, Bangladesh Resident Mission met the Secretary General of BIMSTEC at his Office on 11 March 2021. Directors of the BIMSTEC Secretariat were also present during the Meeting. Discussions were held on the ongoing projects between BIMSTEC and ADB as well as possible future areas of cooperation.

Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered remarks at IUB



The Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered remarks at the “Inaugural of the Regional Conference on The Bay of Bengal as Connectivity Hub in Indo-Pacific Region: Reconnecting peoples, facilitating human development for prosperity of all from the Bay of Bengal” held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 14 March 2014.





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