

### Editorial



While the Covid-19 pandemic still rages on amongst most of our Member States and the world over we are happy to report that most of our activities especially scheduled meetings have been able to be held successfully with the participation of all Member States albeit online. Although virtual meetings may not be able to replace physical meetings in terms of the camaraderie and interaction among participants nevertheless the necessary direction and action plans are able to be established thereby enabling the organization to move forward in the implementation of activities.

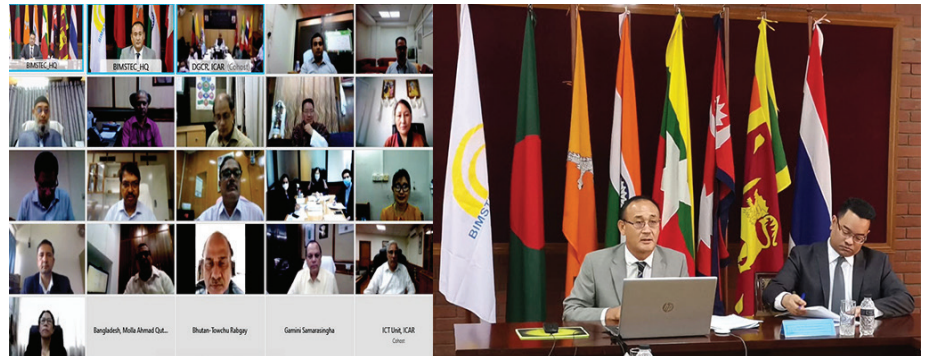
The Secretariat is happy to welcome the two new Directors Ms. Mahishini Colonne and Mr. Veerasakdi Prem-Aree from Sri Lanka and Thailand respectively. We would like to thank the two Member States for fielding them to the Secretariat. With the joining of the two new Directors all Member States except for India are now represented in the Secretariat.

We are also looking forward to the 5<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit scheduled to be held in December 2021 and receiving fresh impetus and directives that would drive the organization towards achieving its goals and objectives. In addition, important and significant documents are scheduled to be signed at this Summit, the BIMSTEC Charter being one of them.

We wish all our Member States a quick recovery from the pandemic.

**Tenzin Lekphell**  
Secretary General, BIMSTEC

### Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation



The **Eighth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation (8<sup>th</sup> EGMAC)** was held virtually in New Delhi, India on 31 August 2021. Delegations from all BIMSTEC Member States attended the Meeting.

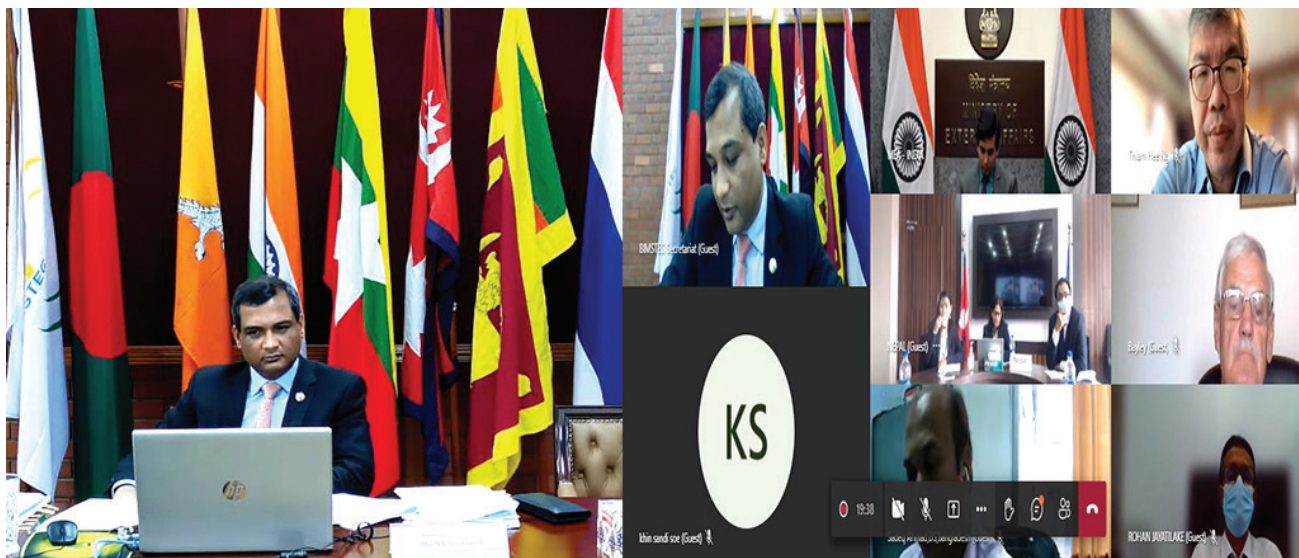
The Meeting was inaugurated by His Excellency Dr. Trilochan Mohapatra, Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research & Education (DARE) and Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare of the Government of India. His Excellency Mr. Tenzin Lekphell, Secretary General of BIMSTEC delivered the Special Remarks at the opening session. The Meeting thanked **India** for taking the initiative to host the 8<sup>th</sup> EGMAC and acknowledged the leadership of **Myanmar** in the BIMSTEC Agriculture Cooperation.

The Meeting reviewed and discussed the progress made in Agricultural cooperation in relation to the implementation of **seven (7) identified common projects**. The Meeting finalized the **Plan of Action** of the BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation, which includes the implementation of seven common projects in a time-bound manner and various agricultural related meetings and workshops to be hosted by the Member States. The Meeting also appreciated the offer by India to extend fully funded **BIMSTEC Scholarships in Agriculture**, one at the Masters level and one at the Ph.D level to each of the Member States.

In his Special Remarks, the Secretary General of BIMSTEC highlighted the importance of holding meetings of BIMSTEC Sectoral Cooperation regularly to ensure a continuous momentum of cooperation among the Member States.

At the Meeting, **India** agreed to host the Second BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture (2<sup>nd</sup> BAMM) preceded by the Second BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting on Agriculture (2<sup>nd</sup> SOM-A) virtually in New Delhi. The Meeting also welcomed the offer of **Myanmar** to host the Ninth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation (9<sup>th</sup> EGMAC) virtually in 2022.

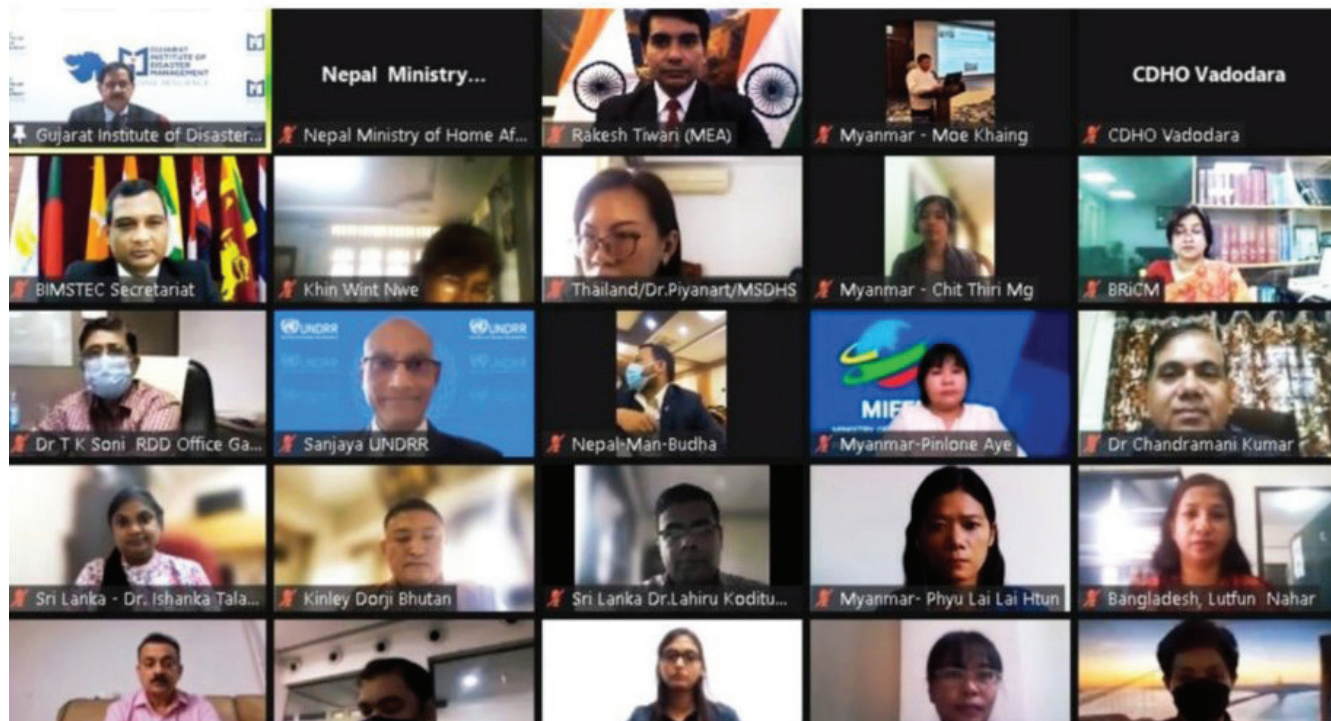
## Virtual Workshop on BIMSTEC Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework 2030



The BIMSTEC Secretariat and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) jointly organized a virtual workshop on BIMSTEC Trade Facilitation Strategic Framework 2030 on 14 September 2021. Delegations from all BIMSTEC Member States, officials of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, ADB and its consultant attended the workshop. The workshop was mainly held to present the findings of the analytical study - “BIMSTEC TRADE FACILITATION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2030” as well as to gather feedback from stakeholders of the Member States on the final draft of the study report.

The workshop created more valuable opportunities on the importance of an integrated and coordinated strategy to elevate trade facilitation as well as to know best practices in the implementation of trade facilitation in the region.

## Virtual Workshop on Disaster Risk Governance in COVID-19: Discussion on Lessons Learnt and the Way Forward



The Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM), India organized a 2 Day Virtual Workshop for the BIMSTEC Member States on Disaster Risk Governance in COVID-19: 'Discussion on Lessons Learnt and Way Forward' on 07-08 September 2021. Delegations from all BIMSTEC Member States and Officials' of the BIMSTEC Secretariat attended the workshop.

The virtual workshop strengthened the understanding and implementation of disaster risk governance by learning from the experiences and knowledge of the delegates of the Member States. It showcased the multi-departmental and multi-sectoral inclusive nature of disaster risk governance, the importance of multi-hazard approaches in dealing with it and the role of science & technology in disaster risk governance. Most notably it has established a platform to exchange in-depth learning from experts and professionals in sharing good practices among participants. The participants from the BIMSTEC Member States also shared their experiences about COVID-19 and exchanged ideas and views on how they could effectively address pandemics like COVID-19.

## Virtual Consultation Workshop on Transport Connectivity Infrastructure Financing



The BIMSTEC Secretariat, in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), jointly organized a Virtual Consultation Workshop on “Transport Connectivity Infrastructure Financing” on 16 September 2021. Workshop participants included delegations from all BIMSTEC Member States, officials and Consultant from ADB, and officials of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

The workshop was held to identify and recommend appropriate actions required to address the financing gap in the BIMSTEC region including private sector participation, and to stimulate and clarify linkages and inter-relationships between financing tools and development stage of BIMSTEC Member States, as well as to gather inputs on current study findings.

The Workshop was able to gather feedback and agree on the next steps to finalize the study report conducted through ADB assistance.

## First BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission Meeting (BCIC)



The First BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission Meeting was held virtually in Thimphu, Bhutan on 20 September 2021. The Commission members from all the BIMSTEC Member States attended the meeting. The Honourable Secretary of the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs H.E. Mr. Sonam Wangyel inaugurated the Meeting as the Chief Guest. As the body overseeing the establishment and functioning of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) to be established in Bhutan, the Meeting discussed and finalized the draft Procedures and Rules of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission as well as the preparatory work towards the establishment of the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory.

### Joining of the two new Directors from Thailand and Sri Lanka



The BIMSTEC Secretariat welcomed Mr. Veerasakdi Prem-Aree and Ms. Mahishini Colonne who joined the organization on 19 May and 30 June 2021 respectively. The Secretary General and the incumbent Directors welcomed the two new Directors on 27 July 2021. Mr. Veerasakdi Prem-Aree worked as the Head of Legalization Office, Mass Rapid Transit, KlongToei Station, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand prior to his appointment as the First Director from Thailand to the Secretariat. Ms. Mahishini was the Director General, Economic Affairs (Bilateral and Economic Diplomacy) in the Foreign Ministry of Sri Lanka before joining as the First Director from Sri Lanka to the Secretariat. With the joining of the two new Directors, all Member States except India (waiting for replacement of the first Director) are represented in the Secretariat and its capacity enhanced.