



BIMSTEC

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



25th Anniversary of BIMSTEC

NEWSLETTER

Special Edition, June 2022

Message from the BIMSTEC Leaders

Editorial



Welcome to the **special edition** of the BIMSTEC newsletter. As we celebrate the **25th anniversary** of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation we are happy to bring you the special messages from the Leaders of our Member States exclusively in this edition.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Member States for your constant guidance as well as our partners who have supported the organisation in its work and in getting us to where we are today. We hope to receive the same support as we continue on the next leg of our journey. The journey hereon can only be more exciting and promising for the Bay of Bengal Region with the renewed vigour and commitment that the organisation is receiving from all the Member States.

With the world slowly coming out of the grips of the pandemic, the Secretariat looks forward to working closely under Thailand's chairmanship to accelerate the speed of progress in the implementation of our programmes so that the people of the Bay of Bengal region see tangible benefits.

The BIMSTEC Secretariat remains committed and looks forward to engaging further with the Member States as well as our development partners in taking the BIMSTEC agenda forward.

We wish everyone a very Happy BIMSTEC Day.

Tenzin Lekphell

Secretary General, BIMSTEC



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

23 Jaistha 1429

06 June 2022

Message

I take this opportunity to extend my warmest felicitations to the Governments and the Peoples of the member states on the auspicious occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the BIMSTEC Forum. I also convey my heartiest greetings to the Secretary-General of BIMSTEC and the officials of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Bangladesh joined the BIMSTEC Forum in 1997 to transcend the spirit of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in achieving collective regional economic and social progress among the neighboring countries through the cooperation of brotherhood and fraternity. The legacy of our Father of the Nation in regional collaboration has since been one of the Foreign Policy priorities of Bangladesh. It is my profound pleasure to reiterate our commitment to the BIMSTEC process to uplift the standard of life of the people in the Bay of Bengal Region.

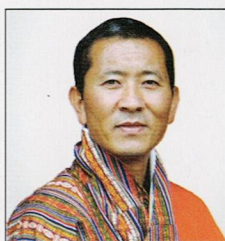
I fondly recollect my participation at the recently concluded 5th BIMSTEC Summit, my interaction with the esteemed BIMSTEC leaders, the signing of the much-coveted BIMSTEC charter, witnessing some legal instruments, and the adoption of the Colombo Declaration of the 5th BIMSTEC Summit. I firmly believe that these steps will provide much-needed impetus to the BIMSTEC process in its accelerated journey ahead. We need to work faster to implement our commitment to turn BIMSTEC into a result-oriented organization to achieve our collective goals. As a founding member and the host country of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, Bangladesh will do everything possible to strengthen the BIMSTEC process. We thank all BIMSTEC member countries for their concerted support and continuous engagements during the last 25 years.

On this auspicious occasion, I would urge the esteemed member states to leverage the BIMSTEC platform to tackle the multi-prong challenges and devastating impact of COVID-19 during the post-pandemic era. This forum also shall act together and stronger by forging partnerships and solidarity, especially in upholding stability in the economic frontiers and financial sectors, including foreign currency reserves, commodity prices, disaster management, and our overall development process by sharing our knowledge, expertise, best practices, and resources in the looming Global Crisis.

On this very auspicious occasion, I wish BIMSTEC Forum all success in its future endeavors.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.
Long live the BIMSTEC spirit.

Sheikh Hasina



PRIME MINISTER
Royal Government of Bhutan

Message

Kuzuzangpo to everyone from Bhutan!

It is my honor to convey the warm greetings of His Majesty The King, Her Majesty The Queen and the people of Bhutan to all the Leaders and peoples of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Region on the historic occasion of our organization's 25th Anniversary.

25 years ago, in 1997, BIMSTEC was brought together by a common vision of a stable and prosperous region. I am pleased to note that BIMSTEC as an organization has grown and come this far. The 25th Anniversary now provides us all with an opportunity to celebrate our achievements, as well as reflect and review our traditional approach to cooperation. In this respect, I am happy that we were able to rationalize our areas of cooperation during the recent Summit, as I am confident it would give the much required focus and attention to priority areas of cooperation within our region. Bhutan was assigned the lead role for the Environment and Climate Change Sector of our region under the rationalized areas of cooperation. Addressing climate change is not a choice but a pivotal priority that needs collective and immediate action. As a doctor, I firmly believe climate change is like cancer and needs early identification and urgent treatment. In this regard, with the support and cooperation of fellow Member States, my government will take appropriate steps to realize the aspirations of our region under this particular sector of cooperation.

I am also pleased to highlight that we were able to sign the BIMSTEC Charter. The Charter establishes the legal and institutional framework for BIMSTEC and outlines how BIMSTEC as an inter-governmental regional organization would function. I am confident that it will give a much needed boost to strengthen our organization.

As home to around 22% of the global population, the economic and social wellbeing of our region is crucial not just for our region but for global progress as well. However, our region has been through two tumultuous years of the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. It has exposed risks and vulnerabilities leaving us with more questions than answers. As our economies open and we move beyond our pandemic footing, we need a compelling narrative of positive change and resilient recovery in an increasingly fragile and uncertain world. I have no doubt that together we will come out of this pandemic stronger, and we will be able to accelerate our region's economic growth.

As for Bhutan, I am happy to share that we are blessed with the farsighted leadership of His Majesty The King. His Majesty's care and guidance is the biggest reason for Bhutan's success thus far. In addition, as my government looks beyond the pandemic phase, I am confidently counting on the friendship, camaraderie and support of fellow Member States!

On this joyous occasion for our region, I take the opportunity to pay tribute to all those who laid the foundation for the establishment of our regional association. As we journey together towards the next decade of friendship and cooperation, I affirm our determination and commitment to work even more closely with the Member States in elevating this partnership for a more promising future for our peoples, our region, and collective prosperity.

Tashi Delek!

Dr. Lotay Tshering



सत्यमेव जयते

Prime Minister

Republic of India

Message

It is heartening to learn about the Silver Jubilee anniversary of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Greetings and best wishes to member states of BIMSTEC on this joyous occasion.

During the last 25 years, BIMSTEC has done appreciable work to bring development and prosperity to people of the region. The BIMSTEC Charter will be the guiding force in expanding cooperation and enhancing our collective potential.

India has taken initiatives towards capacity building in vital sectors such as knowledge sharing between scientific institutions, education, disaster response and management, as well as facilitating trade. Such actions reflect our commitment to strengthen cooperation in different areas for the larger benefit of people.

The Silver Jubilee celebration of the organisation's establishment is an occasion to strengthen the resolve to take our cooperation to even higher levels. Established 25 years ago with the signing of Bangkok Declaration, the chairmanship of BIMSTEC has come to Thailand this year.

My best wishes to Chair Thailand for leading the organisation in this milestone year.

I am sure that with sincere efforts and cooperation, we will succeed in bringing about positive and meaningful changes in the lives of our people.

Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to all on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of BIMSTEC.

Narendra Modi

New Delhi
03rd June, 2022



**Chairman
State Administration Council
Republic of the Union of Myanmar**

Message

On this auspicious and historic occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), I would like to extend, on behalf of the Peoples and Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, warm felicitations and best wishes to the Peoples and Governments of BIMSTEC Member States as well as to the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Since its inception in 1997 by the Bangkok Declaration, BIMSTEC has been recognized as an intergovernmental organization with great potential for facilitating development and socio-economic wellbeing of the Bay of Bengal Region. Throughout its twenty five years journey of cooperation, the success of BIMSTEC cooperation has been vividly manifested by the tangible and outstanding achievements, especially the adoption of the BIMSTEC Charter and the conclusion of several legal instruments among the Member States.

While the threat of COVID-19 pandemic remains, the global economic recession had been impeded by the negative consequences of conflicts and political instability. BIMSTEC region has no exception to escape from such blow of global challenges. However, I am strongly confident that our cooperation under the BIMSTEC mechanism with solidarity and mutual understanding will be able to lead the way to have effective economic resilience and recovery.

On this special day of 25th Anniversary, I wish BIMSTEC every success for the future endeavours in promotion and protection of peace and prosperity in the Bay of Bengal Region.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

Nay Pyi Taw, 6 June 2022



The Prime Minister of Nepal

Message

On the happy occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), I extend my warmest greetings and felicitations to the peoples and Governments of BIMSTEC Member States.

BIMSTEC has reinvigorated the age-old cultural and civilizational links between South Asia and South East Asia and made significant strides towards enhancing meaningful cooperation among the Member States. With the signing of the Charter, adoption of the important legal instruments, and restructuring of sectors and sub-sectors of cooperation, the Fifth Summit reiterated an unequivocal message of collaboration and partnership for peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable Bay of Bengal region. A time-bound implementation of these instruments will certainly bring fresh momentum to the BIMSTEC process.

However, BIMSTEC is far from effectively addressing the challenges facing our region. The COVID-19 pandemic has added further strain to our countries which are already facing the endemics of poverty, unemployment, rising inequality, and climate crisis. With the severe fallouts of the pandemic on lives, livelihoods and economies, these challenges have only compounded.

In this context, the urgency to speed up regional cooperation has never been so critical and the need to translate our commitment into action never so compelling. There is no alternative to unity, solidarity, and cooperation. So, we must ensure that BIMSTEC is able to deliver on the regional aspirations of peace, development, and prosperity.

As a staunch supporter of regionalism, Nepal remains committed to contributing constructively towards reenergizing the BIMSTEC process. We are pleased to lead the people-to-people contact sector and look forward to engaging with other Member States and the Secretariat for building strong bonds at the level of the peoples.

On this historic day, let us rise to the responsibility and recommit to work together for the sake of our peoples, our countries, and our region!

Sher Bahadur Deuba

Kathmandu, 6 June 2022



**President
of the Democratic Socialist
Republic of Sri Lanka**

Message

It is my honour and privilege to extend warm wishes on the happy occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), which is commemorated on the 6th June 2022.

Sri Lanka as a founding member of the BIMSTEC remains committed to the objectives and principles of the organisation. Since its establishment in 1997, BIMSTEC has grown to be one of the important regional bodies synchronising great economies of the South Asia and South East Asia.

Sri Lanka is certain that our collective effort will lead to greater cooperation among countries in our region for economic prosperity and in building a resilient region. I am confident that under the able guidance of the Secretary General of BIMSTEC and the work programme that was adopted in the recently concluded 5th BIMSTEC Summit in Colombo in March this year, the BIMSTEC, will become more robust and relevant to the peoples of the region.

While celebrating this momentous occasion, I extend my very best wishes for the achievement of all objectives and goals of the BIMSTEC.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa

June 06, 2022



**Message
from
His Excellency General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.)
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand**

.....

On behalf of the Royal Thai Government and people of the Kingdom of Thailand, I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations to the BIMSTEC Member States on the special occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of BIMSTEC.

Since the signing of the Bangkok Declaration in 1997, BIMSTEC has become a prominent framework for cooperation and friendship among the seven countries in South and Southeast Asia.

The BIMSTEC Charter, adopted during the 5th BIMSTEC Summit, laid a foundation for the institutional architecture of BIMSTEC. Member States have identified seven priority sectors to drive our cooperation towards fruition. These milestones clearly reflect our strong commitment to elevate BIMSTEC into a prominent regional institution that can positively contribute to global growth, development, and cooperation.

As the Chair of BIMSTEC during 2022 - 2023, Thailand has introduced the Prosperous, Resilient, and Open BIMSTEC or "PRO BIMSTEC" as the theme in our work to revitalise economies, reconnect people-to-people ties, and revive our communities after the COVID-19 pandemic. As we collectively tackle unprecedented challenges of the post-pandemic world, I hope this theme would serve as impetus for us to build a more resilient and sustainable future in the years ahead.

BIMSTEC has enduringly stood as a resilient and progressive mechanism for inter-regional cooperation for 25 years. With strong commitment and dedication from all Member States, I am confident that BIMSTEC will continue to grow and bring South and Southeast Asia even closer than before.

General Prayut Chan-o-cha (Ret.)

Message from the Foreign Ministers



لِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



GOVERNMENT OF THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
DHAKA

FOREIGN MINISTER

Message

It is with immense pleasure; I would convey my sincere felicitations to the Governments and the peoples of the Member States on the auspicious occasion of Silver Jubilee Anniversary of BIMSTEC on 06 June 2022. I would also take this opportunity to extend my greetings to the BIMSTEC Secretary General and the officials of the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

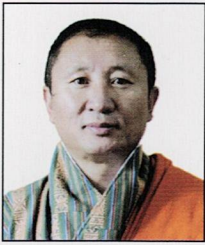
Bangladesh as one of the founding members of the BIMSTEC Forum and the host country of the Secretariat attaches high importance to the BIMSTEC process as a Regional Organization for collective economic and social progress of the peoples of the Bay of Bengal Region. We are deeply committed to strengthening the areas of cooperation and expediting our endeavours in all avenues to bring out results for the benefits from the BIMSTEC process. I recollect with utmost satisfaction my participation at the 18th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting in Colombo on 29th March this year preceding the 5th BIMSTEC Summit held virtually which ushered a new chapter in BIMSTEC movement through signing of the BIMSTEC Charter by our leaders, adoption of 5th BIMSTEC Summit and the leaders' witnessing of conclusion of 3 other legal documents. It is now imperatives on our part to expedite the implementation of those commitments and the directives of the 5th BIMSTEC Summit. Backed by more mandates by our leaders, we should now spare no time and opportunities to engage in the quick implementation process of BIMSTEC Free Trade Area, BIMSTEC Mater Plan on Transport Connectivity, strengthen Agriculture cooperation, energy cooperation, technology transfer and all other commitments to make the regional cooperation under BIMSTEC truly meaningful.

Hit heavily by a prolonged COVID-19 menace, the world is now affected by a Global Economic Crisis emanated from the Ukrainian War from which our region is not excluded. It is during this crisis time, the regional cooperation is more relevant to work together to find solutions and overcome the crisis. On this special occasion of celebration of 25th Anniversary of BIMSTEC, I would, therefore, urge upon the distinguished member states to make BIMSTEC Forum to work together, create and exploit the synergies of our engagements in addressing the long-term impacts during the post-COVID-19 and the emerging global financial and economic crisis through proactive collaboration and partnership.

On this joyous occasion, I would reiterate my sincere wishes for all success of the BIMSTEC process.

Long Live the BIMSTEC Spirit
Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu.

Dr. A K Abdul Momen, MP



Foreign Minister
Royal Government of Bhutan

Message

I am pleased to convey my warm greetings and best wishes on the joyous occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Bhutan became a Member of BIMSTEC in 2004, and since then we have actively worked with fellow Member States to uphold the founding principles of BIMSTEC, and in realizing its goals and objectives. While we have made some significant progress in the 25 years since our organization's founding, much still remains to be achieved.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only wreaked havoc on our health systems but has also battered our economies and disrupted our daily lives. The pandemic has, however, brought our region closer as we helped each other in overcoming it. Countries with better resources helped those with less, and I am confident that our cooperation will grow from strength to strength as we enter into the next phase of dealing with the pandemic. I wish to convey my personal prayers to all the lives lost to the pandemic, and call upon all governments and peoples of our region to enhance and continue our cooperation as we begin rebuilding our economies and livelihoods.

As our region is home to more than one fifth of the global population, we must strive hard to realize our true potential as a region and secure a prosperous and happy future for ourselves and our future generations. Keeping these in mind, to accelerate economic progress and cooperation of our region, we have streamlined the areas of cooperation in our region to focus on seven priority areas. I am confident that we will be able to progress towards our shared goals at a faster pace under this new arrangement of cooperation.

Having taken over as the lead country for environment and climate change on the eve of our organization's 25th Anniversary, Bhutan commits to work vigorously to ensure that our environment is preserved and the adverse impacts of climate change are addressed and mitigated. We are confident of and look forward to the full support and cooperation of all our fellow Member Countries in realizing this dream for our region.

I wish to conclude by wishing everyone a healthy and prosperous 25th Anniversary!

Tashi Delek!

Dr. Tandi Dorji



**Union Minister for Foreign Affairs
Republic of the Union of Myanmar**

Message

It is my great honour and privilege to extend the warmest greetings and felicitations to the Peoples and Governments of the Member States and the Secretariat on this auspicious day of the 25th Anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

I am pleased to recall that Myanmar joined BIMSTEC on 22nd December 1997 with the aspiration of peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region. It is obvious to recognize by the world that BIMSTEC cooperation has been able to prove itself as a rule-based, competent and progressive mechanism throughout its Silver Jubilee of cooperation in facilitating regional sustainable inclusive development.

Furthermore, I am proud to mention that the BIMSTEC Charter signed at the 5th BIMSTEC Summit provides enhanced legal personality to the organization with reaffirmed principles enshrined in the Bangkok declaration of 1997 in particular of the principles of sovereign equality and peaceful coexistence.

Since our world has been infested with multiple threats in economic stability, food and energy security induced by the pandemic, armed conflicts and global paradigm shift, I am firmly confident that BIMSTEC will continue to organize our collective efforts to address the threats as such based upon the solidarity, mutual understanding and mutual assistance.

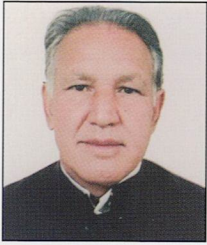
On this auspicious day, while reiterating Myanmar's active cooperation as a responsible Member State, I wish to express my best wishes for the success of BIMSTEC in addressing regional challenges and nurturing solidarity and collective power of the Member States.

**Wunna Maung Lwin
Union Minister for Foreign Affairs**

Nay Pyi Taw, 6 June 2022

Message from the Foreign Ministers

Government of Nepal



**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Singha Durbar
Kathmandu, Nepal**

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Message

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), I wish to extend my heartiest greetings and best wishes to the peoples and the Governments of BIMSTEC Member States.

I commend the BIMSTEC Secretariat for their continued dedicated service in coordinating the Organization's activities.

As a collective embodiment of unity and solidarity, BIMSTEC connects our mountains and oceans, peoples and societies, and markets and minds. It represents the hopes and aspirations of over 1.6 billion people for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable Bay of Bengal region.

With the adoption of the Charter and conclusion of some important instruments, the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit reinforced our collective commitment for closer cooperation and deeper integration. I am pleased to note that the initiatives of institutional strengthening that started during the Fourth BIMSTEC summit held in Kathmandu in 2018 culminated in Colombo. Now it is upon us, the Member States, to ensure the timely and effective implementation of these instruments to realize the aspirations of peace, development and prosperity of the region.

We must muster the requisite political will to reinvigorate the BIMSTEC process. We must pivot away from the business-as-usual approach and act better in line with the new clusters of areas of cooperation. We must make this year a momentous anniversary year, with our renewed resolve, concerted actions, and concrete outcomes.

We are confident that under Thailand's Chairmanship, BIMSTEC will continue to evolve as a dynamic organization and make further strides in strengthening cooperation among our countries. Nepal remains committed, as ever, to engaging constructively with the Member States and the Secretariat towards this end.

Dr. Narayan Khadka

Kathmandu, 6 June 2022



**Minister of Foreign Affairs of
Democratic Socialist Republic
of Sri Lanka**

Message

It is with great pleasure I extend my warm wishes to the BIMSTEC on this momentous occasion of commemorating 25th anniversary of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), on the 6th June 2022.

Since its establishment in 1997, BIMSTEC has grown to be one of the important regional bodies synchronising great economies of the South Asia and South East Asia. Sri Lanka, as a founding member of the BIMSTEC, has always been a steadfast member of the group in its growth and the successful journey over the last 25 years.

BIMSTEC today has become one of the key and important organizations in the region drawing attention of other regions of the world towards its deliberations. It has, over the years, brought peoples of the region together for sharing knowledge, expertise and development through its significant work programmes. The 5th BIMSTEC Summit, which was successfully concluded in Sri Lanka this year, stands testimony for the commitment of all for this organisation.

I am certain that under the able leadership of the Secretary General, this organisation will grow to greater heights bringing prosperity and development to our peoples.

I wish very best in achieving all objectives and goals of the BIMSTEC at this happy occasion.

Prof. G.L. Peiris, M.P.

June 06, 2022



**Message
from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Kingdom of Thailand
on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of BIMSTEC
(6 June 2022)**

I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to the Governments and the peoples of BIMSTEC Member States on the 25th Anniversary of BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC originated from our good intention of bringing together seven countries from two different regions that share a long history and cultural heritage to foster trade and economic cooperation. BIMSTEC Member States work together to facilitate business, enhance people-to-people contacts, and improve connectivity and security.

Today marks a special year for not only BIMSTEC but also for Thailand. As the current Chair, Thailand is committed to working closely with all Member States to propel BIMSTEC towards greater solidarity and dynamism.

The theme of Prosperous, Resilient, and Open BIMSTEC or PRO BIMSTEC in the next two years could be incorporated into every aspect of our cooperation. PRO BIMSTEC concerns post-COVID-19 economic recovery through restarting the economic engine, connecting businesses to the global supply chains, preparing BIMSTEC to deal with future challenges and crises, as well as creating an inclusive environment by placing “people” at the heart of BIMSTEC collaboration. I hope that this theme will inspire us to build back better, stronger, smarter and greener.

Over its 25 years history, BIMSTEC has proven to be a vehicle of friendship that connects the peoples from South and South East Asia together. As we embark on our next chapter, I have faith that BIMSTEC will fulfill its mission in promoting a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal Region for the mutual benefit of all.

Don Pramudwinai
Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

Message from the Secretary General

Secretary General



**BIMSTEC Secretariat
Dhaka, Bangladesh**

Message

Today, as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) marks its Silver Jubilee, I extend warm greetings to the governments and peoples of the seven Member States of BIMSTEC – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Twenty-five years ago, on the 06th of June 1997, the regional cooperation journey of BIMSTEC began with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration. Since then, BIMSTEC has succeeded in working towards getting its institutional framework in place to facilitate regional cooperation as envisioned by the BIMSTEC Member States. Establishing the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka in 2014, and the adoption of the BIMSTEC Charter at the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit in Colombo on 30th March this year (2022) are two important milestones in this regard.

BIMSTEC marks its twenty-fifth year at a time when the world and the region are emerging from a devastating pandemic that has impacted the economies of all countries. At the same time, events unfolding in Europe have created disruptive ripple effects across the world including the BIMSTEC region, worsening the condition of our already battered economies.

Crises, however, also create opportunities, and BIMSTEC holds much promise as a platform for cooperation to achieve a prosperous future for the peoples of our region. With the disruption in global supply chains due to COVID-19, the need and opportunity to create intra-regional trade has emerged stronger. Therefore, Member States are now emphasizing on trade facilitation measures to increase intra regional trade.

Thailand, the current Chair of BIMSTEC, leading the connectivity sector of BIMSTEC has chosen “Prosperous, Resilient and Robust, Open BIMSTEC” as the theme for its chairmanship. BIMSTEC stands well poised to take on the implementation of the Master Plan for Transport Connectivity that holds the potential of transforming the Bay of Bengal region from one of the least integrated to the most well-connected and networked engine of economic growth in the Indo-Pacific in times to come.

As we look forward with optimism, I wish to express deep gratitude to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the BIMSTEC Secretariat and committing to provide a new modern iconic building for the smooth functioning and proper representation of the Secretariat. I also thank Sri Lanka for hosting the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit this year on 30th March, and the current Chair, Thailand, for guiding us as BIMSTEC steers forward in its twenty-fifth year to implement important decisions and directives of our leaders.

On this important occasion, I wish to reaffirm the Secretariat’s commitment to work hand-in-hand with all Member States, at all times, to pursue the goals and objectives of BIMSTEC, as envisioned by the Member States.

Tenzin Lekphell



The BIMSTEC Journey

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) marks its 25th anniversary this year after its establishment on 6 June 1997 by the Bangkok Declaration. Therefore, this year is a milestone for the organisation that comprises five Member States from South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) and two from South-East Asia (Myanmar and Thailand). As we celebrate this milestone in the journey of the organisation we take a look back at the important events in its history.

Bangkok Declaration, 6 June 1997

On 6 June 1997, the Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand signed the Bangkok Declaration that agreed on the establishment of Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation known as BIST-EC. BIST-EC was formed with the objective to accelerate economic growth and social progress through implementation of projects in identified areas of cooperation. The identified areas of cooperation were a) Trade and Investment; b) Technology; c) Energy; d) Transportation and Communications; e) Tourism and f) Fisheries.

Bulleed below are some of the major decisions and events in the journey of BIMSTEC since the Bangkok Declaration.

Special BIMST-EC Ministerial Meeting 1997, Bangkok, Thailand

- Myanmar joined BIST-EC
- Organisation renamed as BIMST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation)

Fifth BIMST-EC Ministerial Meeting, 20 December 2002, Colombo, Sri Lanka

- Declared 2004 as a Visit BIMST-EC Year.

Sixth BIMST-EC Ministerial Meeting, 8 February 2004, Phuket, Thailand

- Bhutan and Nepal joined the organisation
- Member States signed the Framework Agreement for a BIMSTEC Free Trade Area.

First BIMSTEC Summit, 31 July 2004, Bangkok, Thailand

- The organisation was renamed as BIMSTEC (the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation)
- The BIMST-EC Centre is established in Bangkok

Eighth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, 18-19 December 2005, Dhaka, Bangladesh

- Added 7 more areas of cooperation under BIMSTEC.
 - a) Poverty Alleviation
 - b) Agriculture
 - c) Culture
 - d) Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime
 - e) Environment and Disaster Management
 - f) Public Health
 - g) People-to-People Contact

Second BIMSTEC Summit, 13 November 2008, New Delhi, India

Decided to establish a

- BIMSTEC Energy Centre in India
- BIMSTEC Weather and Climate Centre in India
- BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and a BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory in Bhutan
- BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Exchange in Sri Lanka
- Permanent Secretariat

Twelfth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, 11 December 2009, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

- Included Climate Change as the 14th area of cooperation under BIMSTEC
- Endorsed the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study conducted by ADB
- Member States signed the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking

Thirteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, 22 January 2011, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

- Member States signed the Memorandum of Association for the establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Centre



Third BIMSTEC Summit, 4 March 2014, Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

- Member States signed the Memorandum of Association on the establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat
- Member States signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO)
- Member States signed the Memorandum of Association among the BIMSTEC Member States concerning the establishment of a BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate

13 September 2014

- BIMSTEC Secretariat established in Dhaka, Bangladesh

BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat, 16 October 2016, Goa, India

Decided to

- prepare a Master Plan for BIMSTEC Connectivity
- conclude BIMSTEC Framework Agreement on Transit, Trans-shipment and movement of Vehicular Traffic
- expand BIMSTEC Energy Trade

Fourth BIMSTEC Summit, 30-31 August 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal

Decided to

- establish the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Group
- establish a BIMSTEC Development Fund
- review and rationalise the areas of cooperation
- develop the Rules of Procedure (RoP) for the BIMSTEC Mechanisms

Sixteenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, 31 August 2018, Kathmandu, Nepal

- Member States signed the Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection

16 March 2021

- BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking entered into force

Fifth BIMSTEC Summit, 30 March 2022, Colombo, Sri Lanka

- Adopted the BIMSTEC Charter
- Approved the rationalized areas of cooperation each to be led by a Member State
 - a) Trade, Investment and Development (Bangladesh)
 - b) Environment and Climate Change (Bhutan)
 - c) Security (India)
 - d) Agriculture and Food Security (Myanmar)
 - e) People-to-People Contact (Nepal)
 - f) Science, Technology and Innovation (Sri Lanka)
 - e) Connectivity (Thailand)
- Member States signed the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters
- Member States signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Mutual Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies/Training Institutions of BIMSTEC Member States
- Member States signed the Memorandum of Association on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) in Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Adopted the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity

Looking Ahead

The vision espoused by the Leaders of the BIMSTEC Member States is for a more connected, prosperous, peaceful and sustainable Bay of Bengal region. While economic and technical cooperation were initially considered as the key components of this regional collaboration, the Member States decided to include sectors like culture, climate change and people-to-people contact amongst others in its areas of cooperation. Today, BIMSTEC has seven core areas of cooperation, each led by a Member State.

As BIMSTEC celebrates its 25th anniversary it gives the organisation an opportunity to reflect on its performance so far and chart a way forward with clear goals and objectives along with the strategies in achieving those in an efficient and effective manner. As an organisation it also needs to keep up with the rapidly changing world around us and ensure that it stays relevant and current in its purpose and operation.

BIMSTEC as an institution has now fully come into its being with the adoption of the Charter by the 5th BIMSTEC Summit on 30 March 2022 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. With the immense potential that the Bay of Bengal region has it is an opportune time for the Member States to further strengthen and collaborate to ensure successful results. Such collective effort can not only benefit the people of the region but will also provide BIMSTEC with the opportunity to be looked up to as a model organisation for regional cooperation. Therefore, it is hoped that BIMSTEC will take these opportunities and work collectively towards achieving the goals and objectives with which the organization was founded and are enshrined in the Bangkok Declaration and the BIMSTEC Charter - that of working together collaboratively in the identified areas of cooperation to create a better, more peaceful and sustainable future for the people of the Bay of Bengal region.

BIMSTEC SECRETARIAT

House No-N.W.(I)-06, Road No-53,
Gulshan-02, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh
Tele : +880-2222290096-98, Fax : +880-2222287565
Email: info@bimstec.org, media@bimstec.org
Website : www.bimstec.org

Follow us



[www.twitter.com/BimstecInDhaka](https://twitter.com/BimstecInDhaka)



www.facebook.com/BimstecInDhaka/



www.instagram.com/bimstec_secretariat