



Editorial

Welcome to the October-December 2023 Edition of the BIMSTEC e-Newsletter!

A series of BIMSTEC core & sectoral meetings, along with conference and workshop events unfolded in the closing quarter of 2023, deepening cooperation and interaction among Member States and key stakeholders.

A notable highlight was the convening of a special BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee Meeting. The meeting, among others, finalized a notable number of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with external partners. These MoUs are poised to facilitate collaborative efforts in the areas of mutual interest, taking BIMSTEC partnership to new heights.

A conference on environment and climate change preceded the Joint Working Group Meeting on the same subject. Bringing together regional academics, experts and policy makers, the conference delved into pressing issues related to climate change, underscoring the imperative for concerted efforts to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change and achieve sustainable development.

While H.E. Tenzin Lekphell completed his three year term with enduring legacy as the 3rd BIMSTEC Secretary General, BIMSTEC eagerly anticipates the stewardship of H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, who will assume the role of the 4th BIMSTEC Secretary General from January, 2024. The leadership of Secretary General is crucial and stands as a linchpin in advancing BIMSTEC cooperation.

The year 2023 has been very engaging for BIMSTEC, marked by meaningful engagements among Member States and with external partners. Each engagement has served as a stepping stone, elevating BIMSTEC to a higher level of cooperation. With optimism, BIMSTEC looks ahead to another year of fruitful and enriching engagements.

Wishing all the readers a joyous and prosperous year 2024!

(Mosharaf Hossain)
Officer-in-Charge of the Secretariat

Special Meeting of BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee



A Special BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee Meeting was convened in hybrid mode on 05-06 October 2023 in Paro, Bhutan. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Cherdchai Chaivaivid, Director General/National Focal Point, Department of International Economic Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand with the participation of National Focal Points from the Member States.

The meeting's deliberated on a series of administrative and financial matters and BIMSTEC's external relations. The meeting, among other matters, endorsed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between BIMSTEC and several international organizations, namely; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Office for Project Services, The World Bank, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Indian Ocean Rim Association. These MoUs will be submitted to the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting for consideration.

The BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee comprises National Focal Points from the Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs of the Member States.



Second Meeting of BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change



The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change was held on 12 October 2023 in Paro, Bhutan, with the participation of delegations from all the BIMSTEC Member States. The meeting finalized the Concept Note on BIMSTEC Areas of Cooperation and Plan of Action on Environment and Climate Change.

The Concept Note and Plan of Action will be submitted to the BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting consisting of the Foreign Secretaries of the BIMSTEC Member States, for consideration. The meeting also entrusted the BIMSTEC Secretariat with the task of drafting an Action Matrix detailing activities for implementation of the Plan of Action based on the objectives and priorities identified in the Plan of Action.

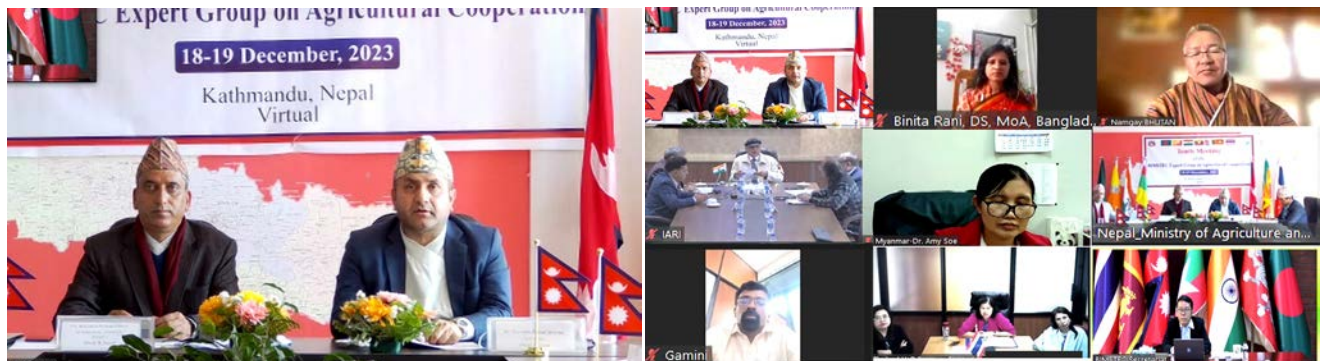
The meeting of the Joint Working Group was preceded by a Capacity Development Program and Conference on Environment and Climate Change from 09-11 October 2023. The program and conference were jointly organized by the BIMSTEC Secretariat, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Department of Environment & Climate Change, Ministry of Energy & Natural Resources of the Royal Government Bhutan.

The conference was inaugurated by H.E. Lyonpo Tandi Dorji, Minister of Foreign Affairs & External Trade of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The Secretary General of BIMSTEC, H.E. Mr. Tenzin Lekphell, Director of IFPRI-South Asia, Dr. Shahidul Rashid, senior officials from international organizations and the BIMSTEC Member States, as well as officials of the BIMSTEC Secretariat participated in the conference.

While the conference deliberated on climate vulnerability, climate markets and actions, adaptation, mitigation, green climate fund and food security; the capacity development program focused on enhancing understanding on environment and climate change and its impacts, food security in the region, carbon trading, and the global environmental regime.

The conference and the capacity development program brought together more than seventy participants, regional academics and experts in the field of climate change and officials from BIMSTEC Member States and international institutions dealing with environmental and climate change issues.

Tenth Meeting of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation



The Tenth Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Agricultural Cooperation was held virtually on 18-19 December 2023. The meeting was inaugurated by the Secretary, Agriculture Development, Ministry Agriculture and Livestock Development of the Government of Nepal, Dr. Govinda Prasad Sharma, and chaired by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Mishra. Representatives from all BIMSTEC Member States attended the meeting.

The meeting took stock of the progress made in agriculture cooperation since the 9th Meeting of the Expert Group, as well as the 2nd Senior Officials' Meeting on Agriculture, and the 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture held in November 2022. A key focus of the meeting was discussion on the progress made in implementing the Plan of Action on Strengthening BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation (2023-2027). The meeting updated the Implementation Plan, outlining specific projects and activities designed to carry out the actions identified in the Plan of Action.

The meeting also took note of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BIMSTEC and the International Food Policy Research Institute on 05 March 2023, and agreed to formulate proposals for the implementation of the MoU.

Second Meeting of Expert Group on Maritime Security Cooperation

The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Maritime Security Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal was held on 12 October 2023 in New Delhi, India, with the participation of representatives from all the BIMSTEC Member States.



Among numerous issues discussed during the meeting, the Expert Group considered the Drafts Guiding Principles for Law Enforcement Agencies for Interaction at Sea and BIMSTEC Guidelines for Maritime Component of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

Workshop on Implementation of BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity

The BIMSTEC Secretariat in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) organized a workshop on the 'Implementation of the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity' on 02-03 October 2023 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Officials representing the governments of the BIMSTEC Member States, ADB officials, and representatives of Development Partners and International Financial Institutions attended the workshop.



The workshop was aimed at creating greater awareness and understanding among the participants regarding the BIMSTEC

Master Plan's framework, projects and activities. The Workshop also reviewed the current implementation status of the BIMSTEC Master Plan policies and projects.

Further, the workshop discussed on the possibility of financing options for regional transport connectivity projects and steps to facilitate seamless connectivity. A series of recommendations mooted during the discussions will be presented to the next Meeting of the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group for consideration.

Secretary General pays farewell call on Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand



The BIMSTEC Secretary General H.E. Tenzin Lekphell paid a farewell call on the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand H.E. Sihasak Phuanketkeow at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand in Bangkok on 24 October 2023. H.E. Tenzin Lekphell completed his three-year term as the Secretary General in November, 2023.

Thailand currently holds the Chairmanship of BIMSTEC.

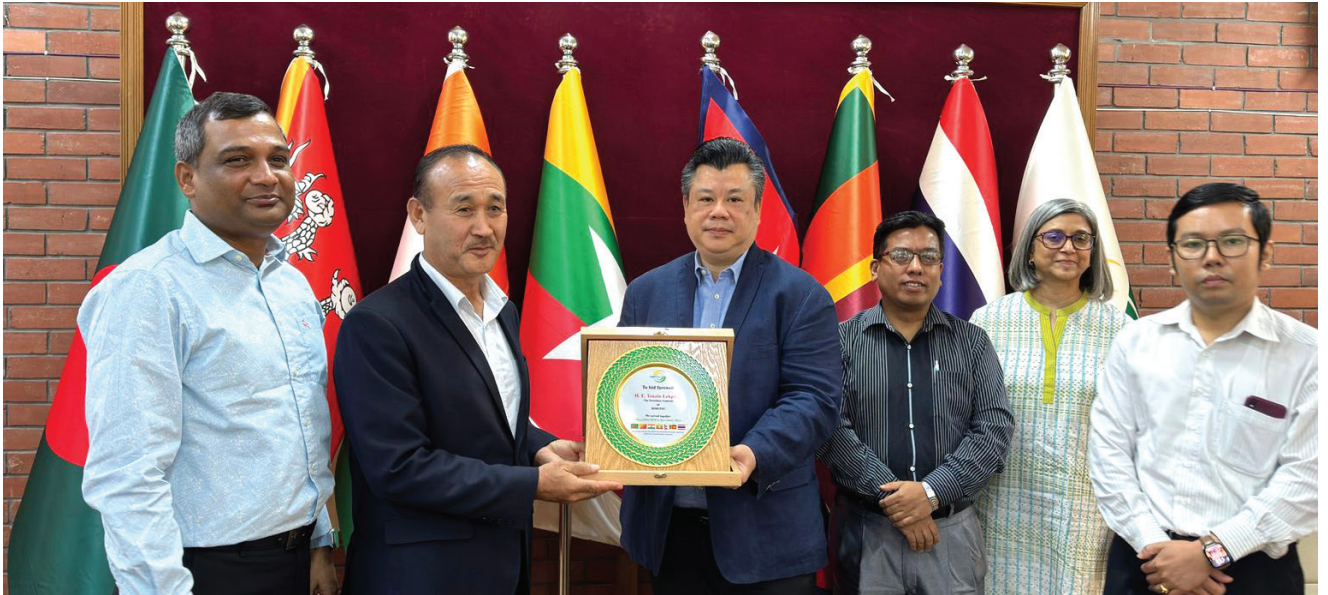
Secretary General-designate visits Dhaka



The BIMSTEC Secretary General H.E. Tenzin Lekphell received the Secretary General-designate H.E. Indra Mani Pandey at the BIMSTEC Secretariat on 26 October 2023 when the latter visited Dhaka.

During the visit, the Secretary General-designate also met with the staff of the Secretariat and briefly interacted with them.

H.E. Tenzin Lekphell completes his term at BIMSTEC



H.E. Tenzin Lekphell concluded his three-year term as the 3rd Secretary General of BIMSTEC on 05 November, 2023.

During his tenure, H.E. Lekphell left an enduring legacy in BIMSTEC's journey, a legacy that will be cherished by the Secretariat and the Member States. Among the notable contributions and milestones, BIMSTEC witnessed the signing of its Charter & Maritime Agreement, along with the rationalization and reconstitution of the Areas of Cooperation at the 5th BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2022. BIMSTEC also finalized the Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms and External Engagements and organized the first-ever BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat in 2023.

Under H.E. Lekphell's leadership, meetings and events were meticulously organized both in virtual and physical formats, ensuring the continuous momentum of BIMSTEC processes and engagements. Several Memoranda of Understanding were signed or initiated between BIMSTEC and the external partners, strengthening the collaboration and partnership with the partners and taking the BIMSTEC process forward.

To commemorate his successful tenure, the Secretariat officials hosted a farewell lunch in honour of the Secretary General. A humble token of a memento was also presented to H.E. Lekphell, expressing gratitude for his stewardship and dynamism.

During the farewell lunch, H.E. Lekphell expressed his appreciation, stating, "I enjoyed working at the Secretariat with full support and goodwill from the Secretariat officials and all the Member States." He extended his gratitude to all officials of the Secretariat and the Member States for their support and cooperation during his tenure.

The officials congratulated the outgoing Secretary General for his successful term and conveyed him best wishes for his future endeavors.



Meeting of Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate



The Third Meeting of the Governing Board of the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate was held at the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting on 13 December 2023 in Noida, India, with the participation of Governing Board members from all the BIMSTEC Member States. The Governing Board, among other matters, finalized the Rules of Procedure for the Centre.

Third Meeting of Scientific Advisory Committee of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate



The Third Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee(SAC) of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate was held on 14 December 2023 in Noida, India with the participation SAC members from the Member States.

During the meeting, the SAC members presented the technical issues related to the research & development and operational weather/climate & ocean activities in their respective Member States. Further, a panel discussion on the priority of science research & development and operation was held after the presentation and several recommendations were proposed at the panel discussion for submission to the next Governing Board Meeting for consideration.

The recommendations, among others included, dissemination of model forecast products(atmosphere and ocean); providing model-based guidance related to disasters, extreme weather events and cyclones over the BIMSTEC Region; common data portal; and sharing of real-time data for research and development at university level.

The meeting also endorsed the Minutes of the Second SAC Meeting held in 2022.

UNOPS-BIMSTEC Roundtable Discussion on Impact of Climate Change and Girls



The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) organized a roundtable discussion on the "Impact of Climate Change on Women and Girls" on 19 December, 2023 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The event was aimed at fostering insightful discussions, sharing knowledge, and initiating the development of strategies to mitigate and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change on these demographics. Addressing the pressing global issue of climate change, the roundtable delved into the unique challenges faced by women and girls, as well as other marginalized groups like people with disabilities while battling climate change.

Notable presentations included an overview of the impact of climate change on women and girls by Professor Munir Khasru, Chairman, Institute for Policy, Advisory and Governance; and by other experts on inspiring tales of women and girls navigating environmental change, health challenges faced by women and girls amidst climate change, and navigating livelihood disruptions in the face of climate change.

The roundtable discussion was attended by over seventy participants, that included senior officials from the Government of Bangladesh, and representatives from the United Nations Offices, Diplomatic Missions, private sector & Non-government Organizations based in Dhaka.

Audit Procedure for BIMSTEC Secretariat

The Audit Procedure of the BIMSTEC Secretariat was finalized at a meeting held virtually on 22 November 2023. The meeting was hosted by the Secretariat with the participation of delegates from all the BIMSTEC Member States.

The finalized Audit Procedure will be submitted to the next meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee for consideration.





BIMSTEC AT A GLANCE

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation is an inter-governmental regional organization comprising seven Member States in South Asia and Southeast Asia. It aims to foster cooperation in multiple sectors for the common benefit of the member countries. Read more: www.bimstec.org.

STRUCTURE

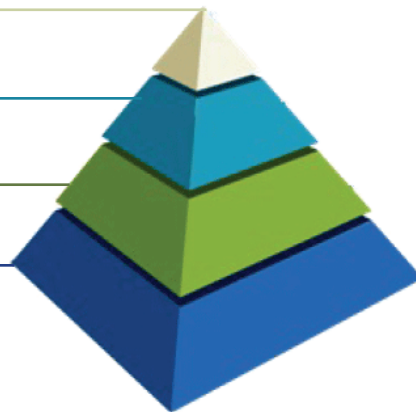
CORE MECHANISM

BIMSTEC Summit

BIMSTEC
Ministerial Meeting

BIMSTEC Senior
Official Meeting

BIMSTEC Permanent
Working Committee



SECTORAL MECHANISM

Sectoral Ministerial
Meeting

Sectoral Senior
Officials' Meeting

Working Groups/Expert
Groups/Other Organs

Follow us

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



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