



# BIMSTEC

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

## BIMSTEC e-NEWSLETTER

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### Editorial



Welcome to our third monthly BIMSTEC e-Newsletter of 2024!

The month of March witnessed an array of high level engagements and meetings, including with Indian Ministers and Senior Officials during my introductory visit to India and potential external partners of BIMSTEC.

It was very useful to meet with dignitaries of the Government of India and seek their guidance for deepening regional cooperation among the BIMSTEC member States.

The Eminent Persons' Group held its 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting in Dhaka. The BIMSTEC Expert Groups on Fisheries & Livestock held its inaugural Meeting, while the Expert Group on Cultural Cooperation convened its 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting after 17 years. These Meeting will contribute to expanding cooperation in their specific sectors.

During the month, I had the opportunity to meet with heads of potential external partners based in Bangladesh and in the region and discuss future cooperation between BIMSTEC and their organizations. I also had the opportunity to visit the BIMSTEC Climate and Weather Centre located at Noida, India.

We sincerely value your continued readership and look forward to receiving your valuable suggestions for further expanding regional cooperation through BIMSTEC.

Happy Reading!

**(Indra Mani Pandey)**  
Secretary General

### Second Meeting of Eminent Persons' Group on Future Directions of BIMSTEC



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) on Future Directions of BIMSTEC was convened, on 11-12 March 2024, at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Meeting was chaired by Dr. Soonthorn Chaiyindeepum, member of EPG from Thailand, which is the current Chair of BIMSTEC. The members of EPG from 5 BIMSTEC Member States participated in the Meeting. The BIMSTEC Secretariat, led by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, facilitated the Meeting and participated in EPG's deliberations.

Over the course of the two-day Meeting, the EPG engaged in discussions on various crucial aspects of BIMSTEC framework, including the functioning of Core and Institutional Mechanisms, BIMSTEC's External Relations and various sectors of cooperation.

The EPG, entrusted with the task of developing an outcome-oriented BIMSTEC 2030 Agenda, has been conducting a comprehensive review of BIMSTEC framework, including institutional mechanisms, with a view to make recommendations to reform and repurpose the BIMSTEC in order to foster a prosperous, resilient and developed Bay of Bengal region.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Eminent Persons' Group on Future Directions of BIMSTEC will be held in Dhaka on 12-13 May 2024; the first Meeting was held on 25th January 2024 in Dhaka. The EPG will submit its Report to BIMSTEC Leaders.

## First Meeting of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fisheries and Livestock



The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fisheries and Livestock (EGFL) was held virtually on 12 March 2024 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

The Meeting was chaired by Dr. Ye Tun Win, Director General, Livestock Breeding and Veterinary Department, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Government of Myanmar, and attended by representatives of all BIMSTEC member States.

The Meeting finalized the Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Fisheries and Livestock, and the Plan of Action on BIMSTEC Fisheries and Livestock Cooperation. The Plan of Action outlines 23 points of action across 4 areas of cooperation to enhance food security, safety, and nutrition. The Meeting agreed to convene EGMFL at least once a year to coordinate cooperation in the field of fisheries, aquaculture, livestock, and fisheries- and livestock-related industries among the BIMSTEC member States.

The EGFL was established following the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 30 March 2022.

## Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cultural Cooperation finalizes the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Culture



The 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cultural Cooperation was held on 31 March 2024 in Lalitpur, Nepal. Addressing the opening session, Dr. Dipak Kaphle, Secretary for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal highlighted the rich cultural diversity and heritage of the region and the importance of regional cultural cooperation for their further promotion and development.

The Meeting discussed and finalized the Draft Plan of Action on Culture which outlines specific actions across five themes for the preservation and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritages of the member States in sustainable ways. The Meeting also finalized the Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Cultural Cooperation.

The Meeting was chaired by Dr. Suresh Suras Shrestha, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal, and attended by representatives from all BIMSTEC member States. It may be noted that the first meeting was held in Paro, Bhutan on 23 May 2006.



## Faculties Exchange Programme of Foreign Service Academies of BIMSTEC Member States



The 1<sup>st</sup> Exchange Programme for the Faculties of the Foreign Service Academies of the BIMSTEC member States was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, from 03 to 07 March 2024. Representatives from Foreign Service Academies/Institutes of all BIMSTEC member States attended the programme.

Ambassador Mashfee Binte Shams, Rector of the Foreign Service Academy of Bangladesh, welcomed the participants at the inauguration of the exchange programme. Ambassador Motaleb Sarkar, DG, SAARC and BIMSTEC, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh, and Ms. Mahishini Colonne, Director, BIMSTEC Secretariat attended the inaugural ceremony.

During this exchange programme, participants had the opportunity to share their experiences and curriculum of foreign service training of their respective countries. The exchange programme included sessions on contemporary issues of foreign service training, country presentations, interactive discussions and brainstorming sessions and a visit to BIMSTEC Secretariat.

Participants also called on the Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh Ambassador Masud Bin Momen. Foreign Secretary expressed satisfaction with the first-ever exchange programme and expressed hope that the programme would open up opportunities for cooperation not only among the training institutions but also other stakeholders in the region.



## Secretary General on Introductory Visit to India 04-08 March 2024

Secretary General paid an introductory visit to India from 04-08 March 2024 and met with the dignitaries of the Government of India. During this visit, he met with H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister; H.E. Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry; H.E. Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister for Health and Family Welfare; H.E. R.K. Singh, Minister for Power, New & Renewable Energy and H. E. Meenakashi Lekhi, Minister of State for Culture. The Secretary General sought guidance and advice from the Ministers on how to further expand and deepen regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region within the framework of BIMSTEC.

He also met a number of relevant Senior officers of India, including H.E. Vinay Kwatra, Foreign Secretary; Mr. Ajay Kumar Bhalla, Home Secretary; Mr. Vikram Misri, Deputy National Security Advisor; Mr. Sanjay Jaju, Secretary for Information and Broadcasting; Mr. Anurag Jain, Secretary for Road Transport and Highways; Mr. Manoj Ahuja, Secretary for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare; Mr. S. Krishnan, Secretary for Electronics and Information Technology; Mr. Apurva Chandra, Secretary for Health and Family Welfare; Mrs. Meeta Rajivlochan, Secretary for Youth Affairs and Sports; Mr. Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary for DPIIT; Mr. Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary for Ayush; Mr. Sanjeev Kishore Gautam, Director General of National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) of India, etc. They discussed the role of India in relevant sector in promoting regional cooperation to take the BIMSTEC Agenda forward.

Apart from these meetings, the Secretary General was interviewed by Times Now, the popular English news channel of India.

## Secretary General meets with Director General of Research and Information System



Secretary General met with the Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, as well as members of the Board and research scholars, New Delhi, India on 06 March 2024.

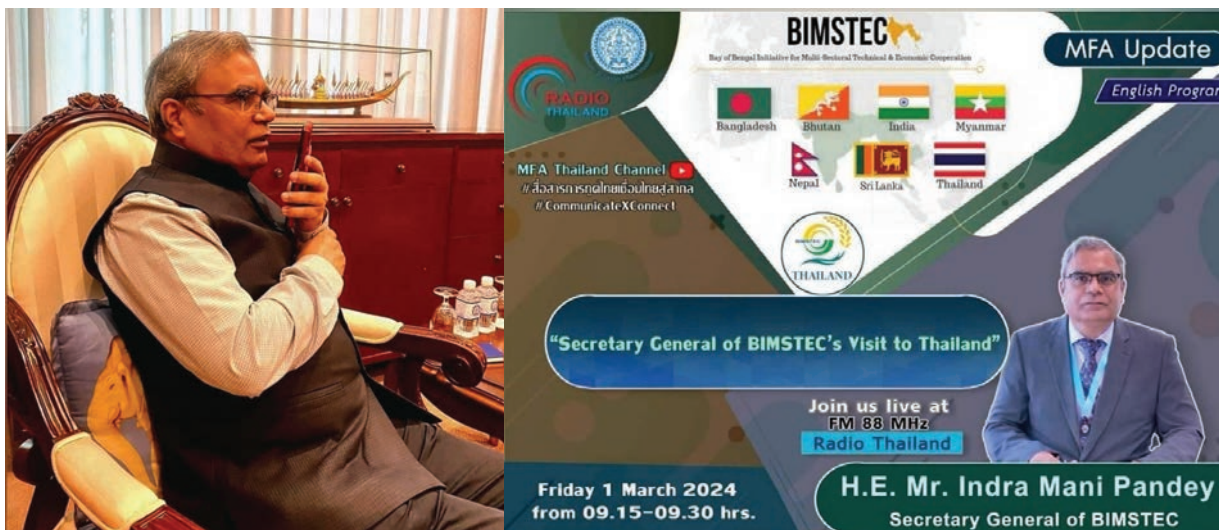
## Secretary General at BIMSTEC Climate and Weather Centre



Secretary General visited the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate at the National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting in NOIDA, India on 08 March 2024 where he engaged in insightful discussions with scientists at the Centre.



### Secretary General on FM 88 Radio Thailand



Secretary General was interviewed by FM 88 Radio Thailand and the transcription of the interview is available at <https://t.ly/a5v1N>

### Secretary General met with Head of South and South-West Asia Office, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



Ms. Mikiko Tanaka, Director/Head of South and South-West Asia Office, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP-SSWA) based in New Delhi, India, met Secretary General at the BIMSTEC Secretariat on March 18, 2024.

They discussed bolstering cooperation between BIMSTEC and ESCAP-SSWA across multiple areas of mutual interest including regional connectivity and digital transformation.

### Representative of UN Women in Bangladesh met with Secretary General



Representative of UN Women in Bangladesh, Ms. Gitanjali Singh, called on the Secretary General on 25 March 2024.

Acknowledging the vital importance of gender in the context of development, they discussed possible opportunities for future cooperation.



## BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting

The BIMSTEC Senior Officials' Meeting(SOM) comprises the Foreign Secretaries/Secretaries/appropriate Senior Officials nominated by the BIMSTEC member States and it meets annually before the Ministerial Meeting with special sessions held when necessary.

The SOM, among others, prepares for the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, coordinates implementation of agreements and decisions of the Ministerial Meeting and oversees the Permanent Working Committee's deliberation.

The SOM reports to the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and has held twenty three meetings to date.



### 20<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC SOM

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 03 March 2020



### 21<sup>st</sup> BIMSTEC SOM

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 02 September 2020



### 22<sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC SOM

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 28 March 2022



### 23<sup>rd</sup> BIMSTEC SOM

Bangkok, Thailand, 08 March 2023

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