



BIMSTEC

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

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Editorial



Welcome to our 7th monthly BIMSTEC e-Newsletter of 2024!

We are pleased to share with you highlights of key developments in July 2024, bolstering regional cooperation under the BIMSTEC.

A new milestone was realized with convening of the 2nd BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat, held in New Delhi which reviewed regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework and discussed outcomes of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit. I paid my first visit as Secretary General to Myanmar during which I had the honour of calling on Honourable Prime Minister and Chairman of the State Administration Council, other Ministers, Deputy Ministers and Senior Officials of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and to discuss with them the current state of regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework and Myanmar's role in deepening it.

The BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs held their 4th Meeting in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, deliberating on both traditional and non-traditional security concerns. The Eminent Persons Group held its 5th Meeting, focusing on finalizing its report. Further, the 6th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Thinkers proposed specific recommendations pertaining to regional cooperation in agriculture, climate change and food security in the region. The BIMSTEC Expert Group on Science, Technology and Innovation updated its Plan of Action in its 2nd Meeting.

I was privileged to deliver a Lecture on "Promoting Regional Cooperation in Bay of Bengal Region Through BIMSTEC" at National Defence College of Bangladesh, Dhaka. The Third Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue, titled "The New World Order and BIMSTEC: Curtain Raiser to the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit" was held in Bangkok.

We appreciate your continued readership and welcome your valuable suggestions!

(Indra Mani Pandey)
Secretary General

2nd BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat



The 2nd Retreat of the Foreign Ministers of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was held in New Delhi, on July 11-12, 2024. The Retreat was hosted by External Affairs Minister of India, H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, with participation of Foreign Ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and Thailand as well as State Minister of Sri Lanka and Foreign Secretary of Nepal.

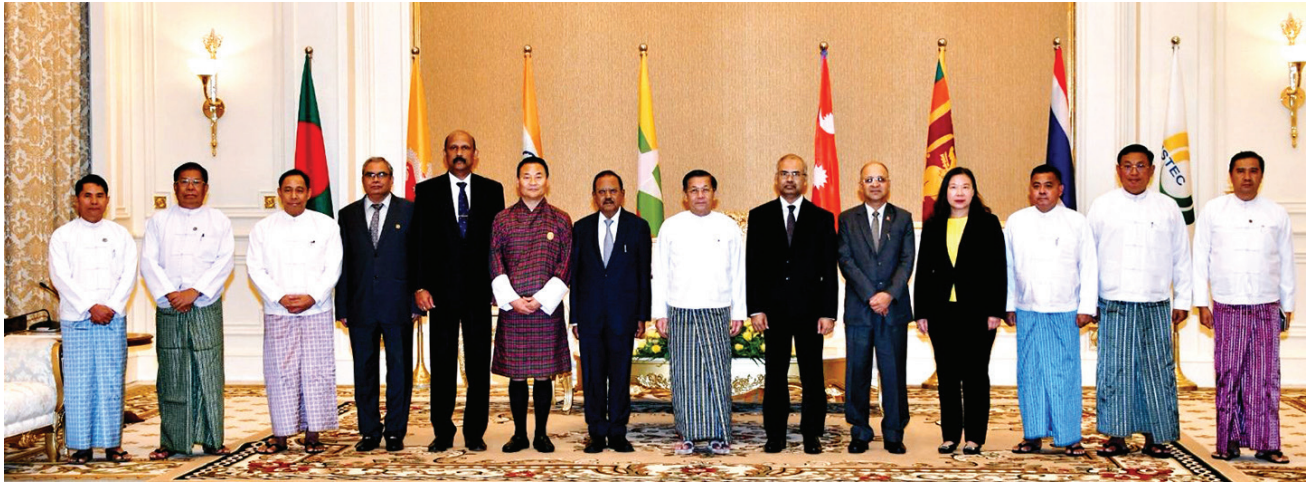
The Retreat was organized in two segments. During the 1st segment, the Retreat reviewed the regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework which was based on a presentation by India on implementation of the key outcomes of the 1st Retreat, highlighting specific proposals of India in this regard. During the discussion, a number of ideas and initiatives were shared by the member States. The second segment focused on possible outcomes of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit, which is scheduled to be held in September, 2024.

After their Retreat, Foreign Ministers made a joint call on the Prime Minister of India, H.E. Narendra Modi. They discussed the ways and means for further strengthening regional cooperation in diverse areas. Prime Minister Modi underscored the role of BIMSTEC as an engine for economic and social growth in the region and stressed the critical importance of connectivity in regional integration. He reaffirmed India's commitment to a peaceful, prosperous, resilient and secure BIMSTEC region.

The mechanism of the BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat, comprising Foreign Ministers from BIMSTEC member States, serves as a platform for exchanging ideas and fostering deeper cooperation and collaboration under the BIMSTEC framework. Thailand hosted the 1st BIMSTEC Retreat in Bangkok on 17 July, 2023.



Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs



The Fourth Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs was held in Myanmar on 26 July 2024, focusing on enhancing regional cooperation in dealing with regional security challenges, including terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking, maritime security and cyber security. The Meeting discussed strategies to strengthen collective security and agreed on several collaborative initiatives.



Secretary General Pays Introductory Visit to Myanmar (22-27 July 2024)



Secretary General (SG) of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, paid his first visit to Myanmar during 22-27 July 2024. SG also participated in the 4th Meeting of the BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs and called on the Heads of Delegation of the BIMSTEC member States participating in the Meeting.

Secretary General Introductory Visit to Myanmar

SG joined the Heads of Delegation of the member States participating at the 4th BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs in the Courtesy Call on H.E. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Hon'ble Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister of Myanmar.

During his visit, SG called on H.E. Admiral Moe Aung, Hon'ble National Security Adviser and Union Minister for Ministry (1) at office of Chairman of the State Administration Council of Myanmar, and discussed with him regional security cooperation under the BIMSTEC; he also hosted a dinner for SG and his wife.

Further, SG called on H.E. Min Naung, Hon'ble Union Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, and discussed with him regional cooperation under the BIMSTEC, especially in Agriculture and Food Security Sector, which is led by Myanmar.

During the visit, SG called on H.E. Lwin Oo, Hon'ble Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, and reviewed with him the matters related to BIMSTEC cooperation mechanisms, the work of BIMSTEC Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) on the future directions of BIMSTEC and the need for holding of the core and sectoral BIMSTEC meetings regularly. Hon'ble Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs reiterated Myanmar's commitment and reassured SG of Myanmar's full support to BIMSTEC. He also hosted a dinner for SG and his wife.

Furthermore, SG met with H.E. Aung Kyaw Tun, Hon'ble Deputy Minister for Transport and Communications, and discussed regional cooperation under BIMSTEC, especially in enhancing regional connectivity including digital and people-to-people connectivity.

Myanmar is one of the seven member States of the BIMSTEC and leads regional cooperation in Agriculture and Food Security Sector and Fisheries and Livestock Sub-sector. Myanmar joined as a member of the BIMSTEC in December 1997.



Secretary General Speaks at National Defence College of Bangladesh



Secretary General delivered a Lecture on "Promoting Regional Cooperation in Bay of Bengal Region Through BIMSTEC" at the National Defence College of Bangladesh, Dhaka, on 15 July 2024.

Eminent Persons' Group Continues its Deliberations on Future Directions of BIMSTEC



The Fifth Meeting of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) on Future Directions of the BIMSTEC was held from 16-19 July 2024 at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The Meeting was chaired by Dr. Soonthorn Chaiyindeepum, member of the EPG from Thailand. The members of EPG from all BIMSTEC member States participated in the Meeting. The BIMSTEC Secretariat, led by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General, assisted the EPG in its deliberations.

During the Meeting, the EPG engaged in discussions on the implementation of Bangkok Vision 2030 and the finalization of its report. The EPG plans to submit its report to the BIMSTEC Leaders at the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit, scheduled for September, 2024.

The Sixth and the final Meeting of the EPG on Future Directions of BIMSTEC will be held in August 2024. The EPG has been entrusted with the task of guiding the member State in reforming, revitalizing and repurposing BIMSTEC.

6th Meeting of BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks

The 6th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) was held virtually in Yangon on 09-10 July 2024, with participation of all BNPTT members. The Meeting, which focused on 'Agriculture and Food Security', was organized by the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies with support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar.

The Meeting made significant recommendations on 'policies, strategies and future directions for agriculture development and in the areas of climate change and food security, for consideration of the BIMSTEC member States.

BNPTT was established in 2008 as a Track-II initiative to promote people-to-people contacts and foster regional cooperation and integration among the member States. The 7th BNPTT Meeting is proposed to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal in 2025.



2nd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation



The 2nd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Cooperation was held on 25-26 July 2024 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

It updated the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on STI, including addition of the new goal of promoting public-private partnership in the STI sector. It also discussed the modalities and timeframe for hosting the 1st BIMSTEC Startup Conclave and finalized the Concept Note on organizing STI Forum and Boot Camps for Enabling STI Interventions, among others. An industrial tour was organized for the participants.

STI is one of the seven sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation with Sri Lanka as the lead country.

3rd Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue



The Third Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue, titled “The New World Order and BIMSTEC: Curtain Raiser to the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit” was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from July 11-12, 2024. The dialogue was organized by the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, in collaboration with the ASEAN Studies Center at Chulalongkorn University and The Asia Foundation. The two-day Dialogue featured numerous panel discussions on contemporary issues such as the new world order & global challenges; trade, investment & connectivity; governance; people to people relations; and trade & gender. A special session on breaking barriers and the way forward was also held.

The Dialogue concluded with a set of concrete recommendations, including early conclusion of BIMSTEC FTA negotiations, creation of database on non-tariff barriers, strengthening the technical capacity of the Secretariat, focusing on gender issues, enhancing BIMSTEC’ annual budget, and implementing pilot projects in the region.

The Dialogue was aimed at enhancing networking and sharing of ideas among regional experts to foster a deeper understanding of global challenges and to provide sustainable solutions. Over 100 experts, scholars, diplomats, entrepreneurs and practitioners attended the Dialogue both in-person and in virtual mode.



BIMSTEC CENTRES

BIMSTEC Centres play a crucial role in fostering cooperation between the member States in key areas. Given its importance, **Article 15** of the **BIMSTEC Charter** on **Other Subsidiary Bodies** states that subsidiary bodies including BIMSTEC Centres/Entities, may be established through the signing of the specific Memoranda of Associations among the member States and Headquarters Agreements with the Host Countries.

Currently, there are two BIMSTEC Centres: the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate in Noida, India focussed on enhancing scientific capacity in weather & climate research, and the BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru, India which coordinates, facilitates, and strengthens cooperation in the energy sector among the member States.



BIMSTEC Centre for Energy
Bengaluru, India



**BIMSTEC Centre for
Weather and Climate**
Noida, India

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