



BIMSTEC

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

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Editorial



Welcome to our 11th Monthly BIMSTEC e-Newsletter of 2024!

The month of November marked a milestone in regional energy cooperation with signing of the Host Country Agreement for establishing the BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru. This Centre will serve as a hub for advancing energy security, promoting renewable energy, and fostering sustainable development in BIMSTEC member States.

BIMSTEC sectoral meetings held during the month made notable progress towards strengthening regional collaboration. The 4th Meeting of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Visa Matters decided to pursue BIMSTEC Visa Facilitation Scheme, the 3rd Meeting of BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change finalized the Action Matrix on BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Environment and Climate Change, and the 6th Meeting of BIMSTEC Taskforce on Traditional Medicine reviewed the implementation of activities under the Plan of Action for Development of Traditional Medicine. The 4th Meeting of the Governing Board of the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate reviewed progress since the 3rd Governing Board Meeting.

BIMSTEC co-hosted a training programme on "Public-Private Partnerships for Transport Infrastructure" in partnership with the Asia Development Bank, and a side event on "Integrating Gender and Poverty in Climate Finance" in partnership with the UN Women and other agencies during the Ministerial Conference on Beijing+30 Review.

I had the privilege of participating at the 2nd Edition of Raisina Down Under 2024, and engaging with the Nepal Institute for International Cooperation & Engagement; Asian Confluence; and Food and Agricultural Organization to explore future collaborations.

The BIMSTEC Secretariat remains dedicated to advancing multi-faceted regional cooperation in the Bay of Bengal. We deeply value your readership and welcome your suggestions to strengthen regional cooperation and improve this newsletter.

(Indra Mani Pandey)
Secretary General

The Host Country Agreement for Establishment of BIMSTEC Energy Centre is Signed



The Host Country Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the BIMSTEC Secretariat for establishing the BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) in Bengaluru was signed on 08 November 2024 in New Delhi. It was signed, on behalf of the Secretariat, by BIMSTEC Secretary General, His Excellency Indra Mani Pandey, while His Excellency Jaideep Mazumder, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, signed it on behalf of the Government of India.

The establishment of BEC is a step towards promoting regional cooperation in energy sector within the BIMSTEC framework, which is led by India. India also leads the Security and Disaster Management Sectors. The BEC will manage regional energy database, conduct feasibility studies for intra-BIMSTEC projects and enhance cooperation by preparing a framework for networking among national agencies of BIMSTEC member States. It will promote energy security through grid interconnections, renewable energy development and realization of energy efficiency. Moreover, the Centre will foster capacity building, cross-border investments and infrastructure development for training in Energy Sector.

A Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation was adopted by the BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Conference in 2005 and the Memorandum of Understanding for establishing the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection has been in force since April 2019. The BIMSTEC policies for Transmission of Electricity and for Trade, Exchange of Electricity and Tariff Mechanism are being finalized and a BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Master Plan is also under discussion.

BIMSTEC Energy Cooperation is focused on promoting renewable energy, improving energy efficiency, developing cross-border energy trade and undertaking grid interconnections, which aim to ensure energy security, transition to green energy and sustainable development of the BIMSTEC member States.

Fourth Meeting of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Visa Matters



The 4th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Visa Matters was held on 20–21 November 2024 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Meeting underscored the importance of cooperation amongst the BIMSTEC member States on visa matters and decided to pursue BIMSTEC Visa Facilitation Scheme to promote intra-BIMSTEC travels, people-to-people exchanges, trade and tourism.

Further, the Meeting agreed to facilitate issuance of visas and other related matters for the participants at the BIMSTEC Meetings/Events/Activities and encouraged the member States, inter alia, to conclude visa exemption agreements through bilateral mechanisms and ease visa procedures etc. It also emphasized that capacity development and knowledge-sharing activities should be organised on a regular basis. The next Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Visa Matters will be hosted by Sri Lanka.

Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change



The 3rd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Joint Working Group on Environment and Climate Change (JWG-ECC) was held on 28-29 November 2024 in Thimphu, Bhutan. The Meeting finalized the Action Matrix for implementing the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Environment and Climate Change, and considered the Report of the 1st Meeting of the Inter-governmental Expert Group on Mountain Economy.

Environment and Climate Change is one of the seven sectors of BIMSTEC Cooperation, which is led by Bhutan.

Fourth Meeting of Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate



The 4th Meeting of the Governing Board of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC) was held on 18 November 2024 at the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting in Noida, India.

The Meeting reviewed progress since the 3rd Governing Board Meeting and discussed funding mechanisms and plans to advance meteorological observation across member States. The Meeting reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening regional cooperation on weather and climate initiatives in the Bay of Bengal region.

Sixth Meeting of BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine



The 6th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine held virtually on 28 November 2024, reviewed the implementation of activities under the Plan of Action for Development of Traditional Medicine finalized in 2020. The Meeting agreed that India will develop a BIMSTEC Traditional Medicine (TM) Portal through which traditional medicine knowledge and information will be shared among member States.

Further, Sri Lanka proposed to host the 2nd Conference on Traditional Medicine Knowledge (TMK), Genetic Resources (GR) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in 2025, where member States will discuss their respective Concept Papers focusing on formulating regional strategy for the protection of GR, TMK and IPR.

Training Programme on Public Private Partnerships for Transport Infrastructure Projects for BIMSTEC



A 3-day Training Programme on Public Private Partnerships (PPP) for Transport Infrastructure Projects for BIMSTEC was held on 12-14 November 2024 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Training was attended by over 25 officials from the BIMSTEC member States and the Secretariat.

The Training was aimed at exploring case studies, sharing best practices of PPP approaches as well as strengthening strategies for enhanced connectivity across the Bay of Bengal region. It was hosted by the BIMSTEC Secretariat in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank.

India hosts BIMSTEC Countries at National Cancer Grid Meeting



India, a BIMSTEC member State, hosted senior cancer physicians and policy makers from BIMSTEC member States at the annual meeting of the National Cancer Grid (NCG) from 06-08 November 2024 at Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai. The initiative was a step towards strengthening regional cooperation in the field of health among the BIMSTEC member States through widening the reach of cancer control activities in the region.

Side Event on Integrating Gender and Poverty in Climate Finance



BIMSTEC organized a Side Event on *"Integrating Gender and Poverty in Climate Finance"* in partnership with the UN Women Regional Office, United National Development Programme, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Government of Bangladesh and other partners during the Ministerial Conference on Beijing+30 Review held from 19-21 November, 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The side event was aimed at enhancing understanding the landscape of gender-responsive climate finance; providing actionable insights on integrating gender and social inclusion considerations in climate finance; and fostering collaborative exchange of resources, knowledge and information on gender-responsive climate finance.

The event highlighted the importance of regional cooperation for climate action, bringing together over 70 participants from government, civil society organizations, youth groups, academia and the private sector.

Secretary General at Raisina Down Under 2024



Secretary General participated at the *"Second Edition of Raisina Down Under 2024"*, on 05-06 November, 2024 in Canberra, Australia. The conference was organized by Observer Research Foundation and Australian Strategic Policy Institute, with the support of Ministry of External Affairs of India and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia.

Secretary General highlighted the importance of BIMSTEC for sustainable and inclusive development in the Indo-Pacific at the panel discussion on *"The Blue Opportunity: Indo-Pacific Partnerships for Infrastructure, Growth, and Development."* He proposed creation of a platform for dialogue among the regional organisations in the Indo-Pacific such as Indian Ocean Rim Association, Association for Southeast Asian Nations and BIMSTEC for sharing of experiences and expertise and avoiding duplication.

The Raisina Dialogue is an annual conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics, which aims at addressing the contemporary challenging issues faced by the world.

Research Director of Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement meets Secretary General



Secretary General received Dr. Pramod Jaiswal, Research Director, Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement (NIICE), in his office on 18 November 2024 and discussed the opportunities for future cooperation within BIMSTEC.

Executive Director of Asian Confluence meets Secretary General



Secretary General received Mr. Sabyasachi Dutta, Executive Director of Asian Confluence in his office on 18 November 2024 and discussed cooperation within the framework of BIMSTEC.

Country Representative of Food and Agriculture Organization of UN calls on Secretary General



Secretary General received Mr. Jiaoqun Shi, Country Representative of Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in his office on 27 November 2024 and discussed opportunities for future cooperation.



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