



BIMSTEC

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

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Editorial



Greetings and best wishes for a Happy New Year 2025!

Welcome to our first Monthly BIMSTEC E-Newsletter of 2025!

I am delighted to share that January 2025 witnessed a number of significant developments, reflecting growing engagements among the BIMSTEC member States and with our partners.

The month began with my visit to Nepal, where I had the privilege of meeting with the concerned Ministers and senior officials. We discussed Nepal's vital contribution to the success of BIMSTEC and opportunities to strengthen cooperation in culture, tourism and visa facilitation as well as trade, investment and connectivity. I also engaged with think tanks, such as the Policy Research Institute and Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement, sharing my insights on regional cooperation and BIMSTEC's achievements, goals and challenges.

The month also saw a Special Meeting of BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (S-BPWC), convened to discuss implementation of the Report of the Eminent Persons Group. The 2nd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cyber Security (EG-CSC) finalized the Plan of Action on BIMTEC Cyber Security Cooperation. A capacity building program for cross-border paperless trade and digital trade facilitation was organized in Thailand, in partnership with Asian Development Bank and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

I had the opportunity to call-on the Hon'ble Advisor to Bangladesh's Ministry of Commerce, where we discussed Bangladesh's pivotal role in enhancing regional trade through BIMSTEC. I also had the privilege of addressing a High-Level Panel on the role of regional organisations at the 18th Meeting of the Regional Consultative Committee of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre and Thai Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation. It provided me a valuable platform for engagement with a number of regional and international organisations in order to explore opportunities for collaboration with them such as UNESCAP, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the World Bank etc.

We deeply value your readership and welcome your suggestions both to strengthen regional cooperation and to improve this E-Newsletter.

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- Core and Sectoral Meetings; and
- Capacity Development Programme.

(Indra Mani Pandey)
Secretary General

Secretary General's Engagements

Secretary General Visits to Nepal



Secretary General (SG) visited Nepal from 08-10 January 2025. During his visit, SG called on Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Dr. Arzu Rana Deuba, who reiterated Nepal's firm commitment to BIMSTEC and emphasized the importance of expanding cooperation in areas of high priority to Nepal such as tourism, energy, climate change and connectivity, including air connectivity. SG expressed his appreciation for the role of Nepal in the success of BIMSTEC, including the successful 4th BIMSTEC Summit, held in Kathmandu, in 2018. SG also commended the Government of Nepal for its leadership in fostering regional cooperation in People-to-People Contact Sector through tourism, culture, visa matters as well as the sub-sector of poverty alleviation.

SG also called on Hon'ble Minister for Industry, Commerce, and Supplies H.E. Mr. Damodar Bhandari. They discussed the present state of cooperation in trade, investment and development as well as regional connectivity. In a separate call-on Hon'ble Minister for Culture, Tourism, and Civil Aviation, H.E. Mr. Badri Pandey, the two sides discussed the opportunities for regional cooperation in areas such as tourism and culture and the need for enhancing connectivity to realise these goals within the BIMSTEC framework.

SG also called on Foreign Secretary, H.E. Mr. Amrit Bahadur Rai, and reviewed with him the entire gamut of Nepal's role and future contribution in the success of BIMSTEC. He also called on the Secretary for Culture Tourism and Civil Aviation, H.E. Mr. Ganesh Prasad Pandeya, and discussed Nepal's priorities for and role in expanding cooperation through BIMSTEC in areas of culture, tourism and visa matters as well as connectivity.

During his visit, SG participated in interactive dialogues on BIMSTEC organised by Policy Research Institute (PRI) and Nepal Institute for International Cooperation and Engagement (NIICE), where he shared his insights on regional cooperation and BIMSTEC's achievements, goals and challenges. He was interviewed by 'The Kathmandu Post', with focus on the state of regional cooperation within BIMSTEC and its future.



This was SG's second visit to Nepal; he had paid his introductory visit to Nepal in May 2024, reaffirming the importance of Nepal in deepening and expanding regional cooperation through BIMSTEC. Nepal is the lead member State for People-to-People Contact Sector under BIMSTEC Cooperation.

Secretary General calls on Hon'ble Adviser to Bangladesh's Ministry of Commerce



Secretary General, called on H.E. Sk. Bashir Uddin, Adviser to Bangladesh's Ministry of Commerce. They discussed Bangladesh' contributions to enhancing regional trade through BIMSTEC.

Secretary General met with SAARC Secretary General



Secretary General met with H.E. Golam Sarwar, Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation(SAARC), at the SAARC Secretariat in Kathmandu, Nepal. During their meeting, they exchanged insights on the agenda and priorities of their respective organizations.

Secretary General participates at the 18th Meeting of the Regional Consultative Committee of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center



Secretary General attended the 18th Meeting of the Regional Consultative Committee(RCC-18) of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, held on 23-24 January 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Secretary General addressed at the RCC-18, a High Level Panel, emphasizing the critical role of regional collaboration in building disaster resilience for sustainable development. The Meeting was organized by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre in collaboration with the Department of Disaster Prevention and Management of Thailand.

Secretary General met with Executive Secretary of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)



Secretary General met with H.E. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN Under-Secretary-General, Executive Secretary of United Nations ESCAP and discussed the avenues of collaboration.

Secretary General met with Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN



Secretary General met with H.E. San Lwin, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. They exchanged views on regional cooperation and discussed opportunities for collaboration between ASEAN and BIMSTEC.

Secretary General met with Executive Director of Asian Disaster Preparedness Center(ADPC)



Secretary General met with Mr. Aslam Perwaiz, Executive Director of Asian Disaster Preparedness Center - ADPC and discussed the avenues of cooperation between BIMSTEC and ADPC in the area of disaster management.

Secretary General met with Deputy Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand



Secretary General called on H.E. Paisan Rupanichkij, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand, and discussed with him various matters related to the 6th BIMSTEC Summit to be held in Bangkok.

Secretary General met with Chief of UNDRR Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific



Secretary General met with Mr. Marco Toscano Rivalta, Chief of United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, on 23 January 2025, and discussed the opportunities for future cooperation between the two organization in disaster risk reduction and resilience.

Second Meeting of BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cyber Security Cooperation



The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Cyber Security Cooperation was held in New Delhi on 21 January 2025, hosted by the National Security Council Secretariat of the Government of India. The meeting finalized the Five-Year Action Plan for BIMSTEC Cyber Security Cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework. It also discussed the draft proposal on BIMSTEC CERT-to-CERT (Computer Emergency Response Team) Cooperation Framework and the draft Concept Note on the BIMSTEC Cybercrime Cooperation Framework.

Special Meeting of BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee



A Special Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee(S-BPWC) was held virtually on 28 January 2025 to deliberate on the Report of the Eminent Persons Group on the Future Direction of BIMSTEC.

The meeting discussed in detail implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report. The meeting was hosted by Thailand in its capacity as the current Chair of BIMSTEC, and was attended by delegations from the member States, along with officials from the Secretariat.

BIMSTEC Capacity Building Program on Cross-border Paperless Trade and Digital Trade Facilitation



A three-day capacity building program, focused on "Cross-border Paperless Trade and Digital Trade Facilitation", was held from 21-23 January in Bangkok, Thailand. The program was jointly organized by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the BIMSTEC Secretariat, aimed at enhancing trade facilitation in the region through digital solutions and paperless systems.

The program was focused on promoting paperless cross-border trade and digital solutions, which are essential for improving trade efficiency and reducing administrative burdens. It also brought together experts and stakeholders from BIMSTEC member States to share knowledge and best practices in the implementation of digital trade systems.

First STI Forum and Boot Camp for Enabling STI Interventions



The 1st STI Forum and Boot Camp for BIMSTEC member States was held virtually on 29th January 2025. The inaugural camp organised by Sri Lanka, was aimed at harnessing Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) interventions to address challenges related to Sustainable Development Goals including food security, poverty eradication, climate change, and women empowerment.

The camp provided an overview of the boot camp series' work plan, followed by an interactive session that laid the foundation for future learning and collaboration. It also outlined the structure, goals, and expectations for the upcoming boot camp series.



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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