



BIMSTEC E-Newsletter

July 2025



Editorial from the Secretary General

BIMSTEC IN JULY: ADVANCING INCLUSIVE REGIONAL COOPERATION

Welcome to the 7th Edition (July 2025) of our Monthly BIMSTEC E-Newsletter!

July witnessed a series of impactful engagements reaffirming BIMSTEC's commitment to deeper regional cooperation and integration in Bay of Bengal. As the region faces complex developmental, security and climate change induced challenges, BIMSTEC continues to serve as a vital platform for collective regional dialogue and action.

A key highlight was finalization of BIMSTEC Human Resource Development Implementation Plan by 2nd Meeting of the Expert Group, advancing efforts to promote the region's human capital. Other notable events included an information session on Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge, a Dialogue on Sustainable Plastic Management, which fostered cross-sectoral collaboration for a cleaner, more sustainable Bay of Bengal, and a virtual workshop on legume seed production, promoting agricultural innovation and community-based seed networks.

BIMSTEC's focus on disaster resilience was strengthened with the launch of the Report on "Harmonizing Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief in the Bay of Bengal," alongside the 4th BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise. The 2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave in Visakhapatnam highlighted the salience of maritime cooperation, including cooperation amongst the ports of the member States for enhancing intra-BIMSTEC trade and travel.

Climate action also featured prominently, with a workshop in Kathmandu emphasizing the need for inclusive, GESI-responsive climate strategies. The workshop on cross-border digital payments held in cooperation with Asian Development Bank (ADB) underscored the need to establish a seamless cross-border digital payment system in enhancing trade, tourism and ease of doing business.

BIMSTEC's public outreach was further boosted through an interactive dialogue with the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB), helping build public awareness of BIMSTEC's growing relevance in a rapidly evolving global landscape. My engagements with international and regional organizations were aimed at fostering partnerships and collaboration with them in order to realize the goals of BIMSTEC.

Collectively, the meetings and events during the month reflected BIMSTEC's concerted efforts towards building not only institutional capability, but also a stronger foundation for a prosperous and resilient Bay of Bengal region.

We highly value your readership and welcome your suggestions to strengthen regional cooperation under BIMSTEC and to improve our E-Newsletter.

(Indra Mani Pandey)

In this newsletter
you can expect:

**In Focus: Launch of
Report on
Harmonizing
Humanitarian
Assistance /Disaster
Relief in Bay of
Bengal**

**In Focus: 2nd
BIMSTEC Ports
Conclave**

**Sectoral Meeting
and Exercise**

**Capacity Building
and Knowledge
Sharing Workshops**

**Consultation,
Collaboration and
Outreach Meetings**

**Sectoral Snapshot:
Progress in Trade,
Investment and
Development
Sector**



IPCS-BIMSTEC-HD Launch Report on Harmonizing Humanitarian Assistance (HA) / Disaster Relief (DR) in Bay of Bengal

In a significant step toward regional cooperation in disaster response and climate resilience, BIMSTEC, in partnership with the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), launched a pioneering report titled “Harmonizing Humanitarian Assistance(HA)/Disaster Relief(DR) in the Bay of Bengal” on 8 July 2025. The Report underscores the urgent need to harmonize regional efforts in HA/DR in the face of intensifying natural disasters.

The event was graced by H.E. Abdul Motaleb Sarker, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

Secretary General in his address emphasized that *“The challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters in Bay of Bengal region demand a collective response. As BIMSTEC continues to grow in relevance, we must focus on building disaster-resilient infrastructure and strengthening regional preparedness. The Report makes a timely and convincing case for harmonizing disaster response efforts—and rightly recognizes BIMSTEC as the platform to lead that initiative.”*

The Report presents a compelling case for institutional and policy harmonization in HA/DR and recommends the following areas for action by the planned BIMSTEC Disaster Management Centre:

- Establish a research database through collaboration with specialist/technical organizations;
- Establish a unified Regional Climate Disaster Mapping and Response Centre for the Bay of Bengal within the BDMC;
- Enhance Bay of Bengal crisis communications through a platform housed in the BDMC; and

- Institute a cost-sharing and prepositioning program for HA/DR equipment and supplies coordinated by the BDMC.

The launch concluded with interactive and insightful discussions among the participants, reinforcing a shared commitment to building a resilient and responsive regional HA/DR ecosystem.

Disaster Management is one of the sectors of regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. The Expert Group on Disaster Management is currently engaged in finalizing a Plan of Action to improve preparedness and coordination for responding to natural disasters in the member States. A BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate has been set-up in Noida, India; it makes tailored weather and climate forecasts for the member States. Four rounds of BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise have been held. A BIMSTEC Disaster Management Centre is being set up in India to anchor cooperation among the member States in disaster management.

Read more:

bimstec.org/images/content_page_pdf/1751975369_Pr ess%20Release_IPCS-BIMSTEC-HD%20Report_.pdf

Read the full report:

[bimstec.org/images/publication_pdf_file/1754199421_S R\(222\)_IPCS-BIMSTEC-HD_Harmonising%20HADR%20in%20the%20Bay%20o f%20Bengal.pdf](https://bimstec.org/images/publication_pdf_file/1754199421_S R(222)_IPCS-BIMSTEC-HD_Harmonising%20HADR%20in%20the%20Bay%20o f%20Bengal.pdf)



Regional Maritime Cooperation Gets a Fresh Impetus at 2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave

Member States of BIMSTEC, in their deliberations at the 2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave, held from 14–15 July 2025, reaffirmed their collective commitment to strengthening maritime connectivity through cooperation amongst their ports.

Hosted by the Visakhapatnam Port Authority, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways of India, the two-day Conclave was themed “Navigating the Future: Blue Economy, Innovation and Sustainable Partnerships”. Delegations of seven BIMSTEC member States, comprising maritime experts, port authorities, private sector leaders, and regional development partners, discussed ways to deepen cooperation among BIMSTEC ports, attract strategic investments in maritime infrastructure and accelerate transition toward environmentally sustainable and digitally enabled port ecosystems.

While inaugurating the Conclave, India’s Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal stated, “*India’s Neighborhood First Policy exemplifies its commitment to leading cooperation in the regional maritime sector.*” He also highlighted national initiatives, including *Harit Sagar* and *Green Ports*, aimed at fostering economic development through water transport.

In his remarks, Secretary General, BIMSTEC, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey said “*Strengthening maritime cooperation is essential to building a connected, resilient and prosperous Bay of Bengal region. This Conclave provides an important opportunity for Member States to align strategic priorities, accelerate joint action, and advance BIMSTEC’s vision of regional integration,*”

The discussions covered a broad range of issues, with key focus areas including:

- Accelerating private sector investment and public-private partnerships (PPPs) in BIMSTEC maritime projects;
- Recalibrating global supply chains: strategic opportunities for South and Southeast Asia;

- Catalyzing Bay of Bengal port connectivity and regional trade flows;
- Unlocking opportunities with the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation;
- Enhancing intra-regional trade through harmonizing customs and logistics for regional port efficiency;
- Promoting cruise tourism in coastal states in the Bay of Bengal;
- Future roadmaps for BIMSTEC port collaboration;
- Upskilling BIMSTEC maritime workforce.

There was due focus on implementing the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC), adopted at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit earlier this year. Signing of the AMTC is regarded as a significant milestone in facilitating efficient and harmonized maritime trade and transport across the region. India, the first country to ratify the agreement, has already proposed establishment of a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Maritime Transport (BSMarTC) to support implementation and build technical capacity among the member States.

To enhance regional maritime cooperation, the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Maritime Cooperation has identified five strategic priority areas: • Maritime Domain Awareness • Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) • Oil Pollution Response • Maritime Security • Blue Economy Development

The Conclave concluded on a forward-looking note with a strong emphasis on enhancing regional maritime cooperation, sustainability, and trade facilitation. It focused on promoting public-private partnerships, harmonizing policies and procedures among member States, standardizing port products and services, accelerating digitization, and upgrading skills across the maritime sector.

Read more:

[bimstec.org/images/content_page_pdf/1752591150_Press%20Release_BIMSTEC%20Ports%20Conclave_V5_ZF_TD_SG_PC%20\(1\).pdf](https://bimstec.org/images/content_page_pdf/1752591150_Press%20Release_BIMSTEC%20Ports%20Conclave_V5_ZF_TD_SG_PC%20(1).pdf)



2nd Meeting of the Expert Group on Human Resource Development

The 2nd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Human Resource Development was held on 16 July 2025 in Colombo. It finalized the BIMSTEC Plan of Implementation of the Plan of Action for Human Resource Development (2025–2029) and deliberated on the way forward to strengthen regional cooperation in Human Resource Development (HRD). Sri Lanka is the lead member State for forging cooperation in HRD sector.



4th BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise

The 4th BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise (DMEx) was held virtually on 14–15 July 2025, hosted by India's National Disaster Management Authority. Organized as a Tabletop Exercise (TTE), it brought together disaster management professionals from the BIMSTEC member States to assess and enhance regional preparedness for cyclones and floods.

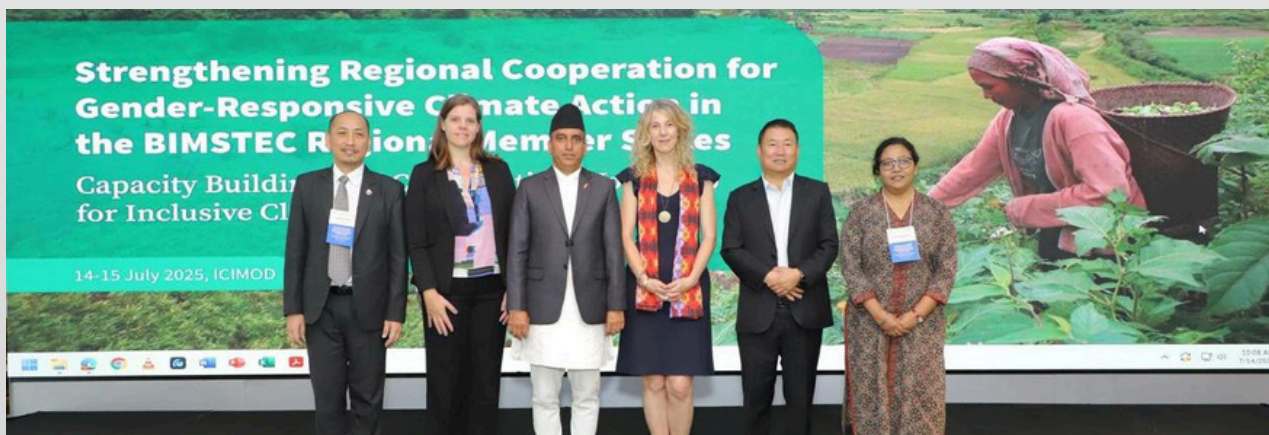
Participants engaged in simulated scenarios, evaluated response frameworks and shared best practices to strengthen coordination for disaster response across the region.



BIMSTEC Co-Hosts High-Level Dialogue on Sustainable Plastic Management

BIMSTEC, in collaboration with the Department of Environment, Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations Office for Project Services, convened a high-level Roundtable on “Accelerating Solutions for Plastic Pollution in Bangladesh and Beyond” in Dhaka on 10 July 2025.

H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General, BIMSTEC, addressed the Opening Session, underscoring the importance of regional cooperation in tackling shared challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, including plastic pollution. The Roundtable brought together policymakers, private sector and youth with focus on accelerating solutions for sustainable plastic management, promoting circular economy approaches, and strengthening regional collaboration.



Capacity Building and Consultation Workshop for Inclusive Climate Policy and Planning

The BIMSTEC Secretariat, in collaboration with UN Women, UN Environment Programme and International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), successfully held a two-day Regional Capacity Building and Consultation Workshop for Inclusive Climate Policy and Planning in Kathmandu on 14-15 July 2025.

The Workshop brought together officials from the BIMSTEC member States and technical experts to strengthen institutional and technical capacities for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in regional climate policies and actions. Participants also explored critical linkages between climate change and gender, engaged in hands-on exercises, and developed forward-looking recommendations to guide regional collaboration.



BIMSTEC at Meghna Knowledge Forum II

BIMSTEC Secretary General virtually addressed the 2nd Meghna Knowledge Forum held on 23–25 July 2025 at AIT, Bangkok, organized by IUCN together with AIT and South Asian University. He highlighted the Meghna River Basin's ecological and socio-economic importance, emphasizing regional cooperation for climate resilience and sustainable management. The Forum gathered experts to discuss climate risks, nature-based solutions, and inclusive basin governance.



Session on Intellectual Property, Traditional Knowledge & Cultural Expressions

The BIMSTEC Secretariat, in collaboration with World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), organized a virtual session on “Intellectual Property, Traditional Knowledge, and Cultural Expressions” on 30 June – 1 July 2025. Over 30 participants from the member States discussed ways to protect traditional knowledge and shared cultural heritage through effective IP frameworks.



Workshop on Legume Seed Production and Farmer Seed Networks

BIMSTEC member States joined a virtual Workshop on “Enhancement of Legume Crop Seeds Production and Sustainable Farmer Seed Networks” on 8–9 July 2025, hosted by Thailand's Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. The Workshop facilitated sharing of best practices in legume seed technology and modern farming innovations to promote sustainable agriculture and regional cooperation.



BIMSTEC Underlines Regional Partnership at Launch of Compendium on Indo-Pacific

BIMSTEC Secretary General delivered the keynote at the virtual launch of the compendium entitled “Innovative Route to Development: The Indo-Pacific Perspective” on 17 July 2025, emphasizing BIMSTEC's role in regional cooperation. The compendium, published by CUTS International, offers key policy insights for Indo-Pacific collaboration.



Workshop to Establish Cross-Border Digital Payments amongst BIMSTEC Member States

BIMSTEC Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, reaffirmed BIMSTEC's commitment to enhancing regional digital financial integration while addressing the opening session of the Consultation Workshop to Establish Cross-Border Digital Payments, organized by Asian Development Bank (ADB) in collaboration with the Government of Nepal, held on 30-31 July 2025 in Kathmandu.

In his video message, Secretary General stressed that developing a seamless cross-border digital payment system is essential for boosting trade, tourism, remittances, and financial inclusion across the member States. He called for stronger collaboration to address key challenges like regulatory harmonization, cybersecurity, data standardization, and ensuring infrastructural and technological compatibility. He urged member States to work together in developing a practical roadmap for establishing a cross-border digital payment network aligned with global standards, while also addressing the region's unique needs.





BIMSTEC to Cooperate with UNODC for Advancing Regional Cooperation against Human Trafficking

BIMSTEC Secretary General met with Mr. Martin Reeve, Global Coordinator of THB-SOM initiative at United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Headquarters in Vienna at the BIMSTEC Secretariat on 16 July 2025. The discussion centered on strengthening regional collaboration to combat human trafficking and address other security challenges including drug trafficking and organized transnational crime.



BIMSTEC–ADB Consultation for Strengthening Cooperation between the Two Organizations

BIMSTEC engaged with Asian Development Bank (ADB) on the proposed Regional Cooperation and Integration (RCI) Operational Approach 2025–2030. An ADB stakeholder consultation mission met with BIMSTEC Secretary General H.E. Indra Mani Pandey on 29 July 2025 to discuss strategic priorities for cooperation with BIMSTEC in areas such as connectivity, trade, investment, regional public goods, environment and climate etc.

Secretary General commended the growing cooperation between ADB and BIMSTEC and sought enhanced engagement of ADB with BIMSTEC. ADB team reiterated ADB's commitment to support BIMSTEC in areas of mutual priority.



Interactive Session with Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh

BIMSTEC Secretary General hosted an interactive briefing session with members of the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka on 22 July 2025, with a view to highlight BIMSTEC's vital role in fostering regional cooperation and integration across the Bay of Bengal.

The BIMSTEC Secretariat has been enhancing its public outreach and awareness about BIMSTEC's vision, goals and agenda for regional cooperation. It has focused on building close link with media as a vital tool for public diplomacy, besides its reach out to think tanks and academia.



BIMSTEC Secretary General Meets with President of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh

BIMSTEC Secretary General met with Mr. Md. Rafeuzzaman, President of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh, at the BIMSTEC Secretariat on 09 July 2025. They discussed opportunities for regional collaboration to enhance intra-BIMSTEC tourism.



Advancing Regional Prosperity: BIMSTEC's Progress in Trade, Investment, and Development Sector

Since its inception, BIMSTEC has been committed to fostering economic development and integration, while building a more connected and prosperous Bay of Bengal region. Over the years, it has been steering efforts to enhance intra-regional trade and create a conducive environment for attracting investments across the member States.

Framework for Stronger Economic Cooperation

A major milestone in regional cooperation in Trade and Investment was achieved with the signing of the framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area (FTA) in 2004. The landmark Agreement provides a blueprint for liberalizing trade in goods and services, facilitating investment flows, and deepening economic cooperation.

To implement this vision, BIMSTEC has established a robust institutional mechanism comprising the Trade/Economic Ministerial Meeting (TEMM), Senior Trade/Economic Officials' Meeting (STEOM), and the Trade Negotiating Committee (TNC), supported by area-specific Working Groups. These platforms, particularly the TNC, have been instrumental in advancing negotiations on six constituent agreements in areas of goods, services, investment, dispute settlement, custom matters and trade facilitation under the FTA.

Recent Progress Towards Fostering Deeper Economic Ties

BIMSTEC has gained momentum with a series of significant developments in the recent months:

- In March 2025, the Working Group on Rules of Origin met virtually to advance negotiations on draft rules for goods origin, product-specific rules, and certification procedures, essential for finalizing the Trade in Goods Agreement.

- Negotiations on the Trade Facilitation Agreement also continued, alongside capacity-building workshops on Cross-Border Paperless Trade, Digital Trade Facilitation, and Digital Payment Systems, held in July 2025.
- In April 2025, member States approved the Concept Note for the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fiscal and Monetary Policy, mandating it to develop a Plan of Action for regional cooperation, including local currency trade settlement and cross-border digital payments.
- In May 2025, a proposal was tabled for establishing a BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce and Industry to enhance business collaboration. Member States are currently reviewing the concept note prepared by Bangladesh.

Unlocking a New Frontier in Blue Economy

As the lead country for the Blue Economy, Bangladesh has planned to host the first Expert Group Meeting on Blue Economy to formulate a comprehensive Action Plan, in line with the 6th BIMSTEC Summit declaration.



**BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL
TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

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