



Message from BIMSTEC Secretary General

Welcome to April Edition of our Monthly BIMSTEC E-Newsletter.

During this month as BIMSTEC hosted several meetings and strengthened its external partnerships, advancing regional cooperation amongst its member States.

The 9th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Group (BPWC), held in Dhaka, on 7-8 April 2026 took significant decisions aimed at strengthening regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. As the current Chair of BIMSTEC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of Bangladesh hosted the two-day Meeting. BPWC serves as a vital institutional mechanism for administrative and financial supervision, ensuring smooth operation of the BIMSTEC Secretariat. It also deals with matters pertaining to BIMSTEC's Agenda for regional cooperation.

In April, Bhutan hosted the 2nd Meeting of the Intergovernmental Expert Group on Mountain Economy, which reviewed progress and set priorities for 2026–2027. In Bangkok, the Knowledge Sharing Workshop on MSME Facilitation, which was hosted by the BIMSTEC Secretariat together with ADB provided a vital platform to exchange experiences and explore regional collaboration opportunities to strengthen MSME development.

Representing BIMSTEC at the 9th Indian Ocean Conference in Mauritius, I highlighted the importance of regional cooperation for maritime governance in Indian Ocean Region and the role being played by BIMSTEC in promoting maritime cooperation in Bay of Bengal region.

During the 82nd Session of UNESCAP, I underlined how BIMSTEC's Mission for regional cooperation aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030, discussed with fellow leaders at a high-level dialogue, our shared vision for a sustainable future for Asia and the Pacific and highlighted the paramount need for consultation, coordination and cooperation amongst various regional and sub-regional organisations in Asia and the Pacific.

On the sidelines of UNESCAP, I met with Executive Secretary of UNESCAP, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Chief of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of UNDRR to strengthen cooperation with them in areas of mutual interest such as digital connectivity, and disaster response and resilience.

This month we are carrying a brief on cooperation in Health Sector under BIMSTEC.

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

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Indra Mani Pandey
BIMSTEC Secretary General

BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC) meets in Dhaka



The 9th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee (BPWC), an important mechanism for forging regional cooperation, met in Dhaka for 2 days; it was chaired by Bangladesh the current Chair of BIMSTEC. It was addressed by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, BIMSTEC Secretary General. BPWC serves as a vital institutional mechanism for administrative and financial supervision, ensuring smooth operation of the Secretariat. The Meeting was attended by National Focal Points and delegates from the 7 BIMSTEC member States: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

BIMSTEC Intergovernmental Expert Group on Mountain Economy Meets in Bhutan



BIMSTEC Intergovernmental Expert Group on Mountain Economy (IEG-ME), which held its 2nd Meeting on 16–17 April 2026 in Thimphu, reviewed progress in implementation of BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Mountain Economy and prioritized activities to be conducted during 2026–2027. The Member States agreed to designate focal points to strengthen coordination and discussed opportunities for collaboration with United Nations, International Organizations and developmental partners to support technical cooperation, capacity development, and resource mobilization.

BIMSTEC and ADB Convene Knowledge Sharing Workshop to Advance MSME Development



The Asian Development Bank, in collaboration with the BIMSTEC Secretariat, organized a Knowledge Sharing Workshop on MSME Facilitation in the BIMSTEC Region on 28–29 April 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand, with participation of 20 Government Officials from BIMSTEC Member States. The Workshop provided a platform to exchange experiences and explore regional collaboration opportunities to strengthen MSME development. It made a set of recommendations for consideration of the Member States.

BIMSTEC Secretary General, addressed the 9th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC)



BIMSTEC Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, addressed Plenary Session 3 of the 9th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC), held in Mauritius from April 10-12, 2026. In the discussion, Secretary General highlighted the importance of regional cooperation and the role being played by BIMSTEC in maritime cooperation in Bay of Bengal region. Organized by the India Foundation, in collaboration with the Governments of Mauritius and India, the Conference brought together Leaders from Indian Ocean Region to deliberate on "Collective Stewardship for Indian Ocean Governance."

BIMSTEC Secretary General, addressed the 82nd Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).



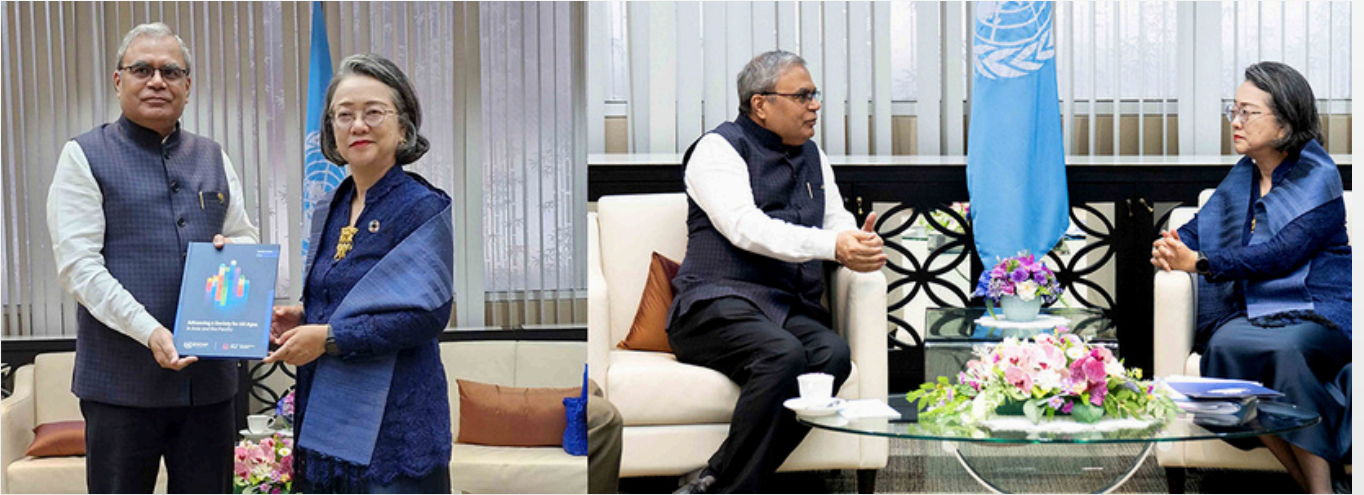
BIMSTEC Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, addressed the 82nd Session of the UNESCAP in Bangkok on 20 April 2026. Speaking during the General Debate on "Opportunities and Solutions for a Sustainable Future," Secretary General highlighted the growing salience of regional organisations, underscored that BIMSTEC's comprehensive agenda is fully aligned with the SDG's Agenda 2030 and highlighted the vision, goals and priorities of BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC Secretary General, participated at High-level Dialogue involving regional and Subregional organisations from Asia and the Pacific.



Continuing his engagement at the 82nd Session of UNESCAP in Bangkok, Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, participated at High-level Dialogue involving regional and subregional organizations from Asia and the Pacific. Sharing BIMSTEC's perspectives on opportunities and solutions for a sustainable future, he underlined BIMSTEC's salience for forging cooperation to secure a sustainable future for Bay of Bengal region. He outlined in brief progress under BIMSTEC in various sectors, including connectivity, energy, food, security, health, environment & climate change and trade and investment.

BIMSTEC Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, meets with H.E. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP



On the sidelines of 82nd Session of UNESCAP, in Bangkok, BIMSTEC Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, meets with H.E. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP and discussed with her strengthening cooperation between BIMSTEC and UNESCAP, aligning with the agenda and priorities of both the Organizations.

BIMSTEC Secretary General, met with H.E. Baron Waqa, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat



On the sidelines of the 82nd Session of UNESCAP, BIMSTEC Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey met with H.E. Baron Waqa, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum. They discussed the shared challenges faced by the member States of the two Organisations in maritime domain and identified opportunities for future collaboration between BIMSTEC and PIF

BIMSTEC Secretary General met with Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).



On the sidelines of the 82nd Session of UNESCAP, BIMSTEC Secretary General met with Ms. Atsuko Okuda, Regional Director of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). During the meeting, they discussed ITU's assistance in promoting cooperation in digital connectivity, including digital public infrastructure

BIMSTEC Secretary General, met with H.E. Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief of Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UNDRR



On the sidelines of the 82nd Annual Session of UNESCAP, Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, met with H.E. Mr. Marco Toscano-Rivalta, Chief of Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, UNDRR. As the Bay of Bengal has been one of the most disaster-prone regions of the world, they discussed cooperation between BIMSTEC and UNDRR as per the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Disaster Management to build a more disaster-resilient Bay of Bengal.

Health Cooperation under BIMSTEC Region

Background :

Health Cooperation under BIMSTEC reflects the region's shared commitment to safeguarding the well-being of its populations through strengthened health systems, and knowledge exchange. Cooperation under Health Sector encompasses public health and traditional medicine, recognizing the complementary role of both traditional and modern healthcare systems.

The First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health, held in Colombo in July 2023, marked a significant milestone in institutionalizing regional health cooperation. The meeting finalized the Terms of Reference of the Expert Group and the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health (2023–2025), establishing a structured framework for collaboration.

The 6th BIMSTEC Summit further endorsed the strengthening of health cooperation, including the establishment of Centres of Excellence and enhanced collaboration in pandemic preparedness and response.

Addressing Emerging Challenges

The BIMSTEC region faces a complex and evolving public health landscape shaped by emerging infectious diseases, climate change, and increasing pressures on healthcare systems. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of regional cooperation in pandemic preparedness, surveillance, and response.

In this context, BIMSTEC is advancing a coordinated approach to strengthening health systems resilience, with a focus on early warning mechanisms, laboratory capacity, and workforce development. The adoption of a One Health approach, integrating human, animal, and environmental health, has also gained prominence in regional discussions.

Another emerging priority is the integration of traditional medicine into national healthcare systems, alongside safeguarding associated knowledge and genetic resources. Strengthening intellectual property frameworks and promoting evidence-based practices remain critical in this regard.

Capacity building, training, and knowledge-sharing continue to be central in addressing disparities in healthcare access and outcomes across Member States.

Key Achievements at a Glance

BIMSTEC has made steady progress in advancing regional health cooperation. Key achievements include:

- Implementation of the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health (2023–2025) activities and finalization of Terms of Reference of the Expert Group on Public Health.
- Convening of the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health in July 2023.
- Development of collaboration frameworks, including a Letter of Agreement signed on 10 April 2026 with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) under the provision of "Strengthening project management and capacity of regional entities for pandemic preparedness, prevention and response in South Asia region", to establish a Project Management Unit (PMU) at the Secretariat.
- Establishment of the BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine, in Thailand.
- Organization of regional training programmes by the BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine, including the International Training Course on Management of Malaria (August 2025) and Training on Laboratory Diagnostic Tools for Malaria Elimination (September 2025).
- Continued progress in traditional medicine cooperation, including the Second Conference on Traditional Medicine Knowledge, Genetic Resources and Intellectual Property Rights (August 2025).
- Convening of the Seventh Meeting of the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine (November 2025).
- Member States have concurred with India's proposal to establish a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Traditional Medicine.



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

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