



**Bay of Bengal Initiative
for Multi-Sectoral Technical
and Economic Cooperation
(BIMSTEC)**



BIMSTEC

A Bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an inter-Governmental Organisation. It was established on 06 June 1997 with signing of Bangkok Declaration. After Myanmar joined on 22 December 1997, the Organisation was named BIMST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation). With admission of Bhutan and Nepal as members, in February 2004, the Organisation was renamed as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). BIMSTEC comprises seven member States; Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It acts as a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia.



"We recognize the crucial role played by BIMSTEC in enhancing regional cooperation in agreed priority areas over 27 years of its existence and the need to revitalize BIMSTEC as an effective vehicle to fulfil the developmental aspirations of the peoples in the Bay of Bengal region."

**6th BIMSTEC Summit Declaration
April 2025, Bangkok**

Evolution of BIMSTEC



Purposes

- Accelerate economic development and social progress.
- Promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in economic, social, technical and scientific fields.
- Cooperate in projects that are productive and create synergies on regional basis.
- Maintain peace and stability in Bay of Bengal region.
- Maintain close and beneficial cooperation with international and regional organisations.

Strategic Importance of BIMSTEC

- Seven member States of BIMSTEC are located adjacent to Bay of Bengal, which is at the heart of Indian Ocean Region.
- BIMSTEC is the only regional organisation that brings together 5 countries from South Asia and 2 countries from Southeast Asia.
- BIMSTEC has a vast Agenda for regional cooperation, organised in seven Groups, with each member State taking lead in one or more Sectors.
- BIMSTEC enjoys the unwavering political support of its members and focuses on technical and economic cooperation.
- BIMSTEC is undergoing reforms and revitalisation to make it an efficient, effective and dynamic regional organisation.
- 7 BIMSTEC member States are home to 1.8 billion people (2024), their combined GDP amounted to over \$5.0 trillion (2024) and their external trade stood at around \$2.0 trillion (2023).
- Various UN, International and Regional Organisations have shown willingness to partner with BIMSTEC in its pursuit of developmental and security cooperation.

BIMSTEC Charter

Articulates the long-term vision and priorities of the member States

Establishes the legal and institutional framework for BIMSTEC

Confers legal personality on BIMSTEC

Enables admission of new member States and Observers

Empowers conclusion of agreements and MoUs with countries/organisations

BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030



The BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, which was adopted at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit, envisages a prosperous, resilient and open BIMSTEC region and provides a roadmap for forging regional cooperation upto 2030.

Sectors of Cooperation

The various Sectors for regional cooperation under BIMSTEC have been organised into 7 Groups, with each member State designated as the Lead for one or more Sectors.



Progress in Sectoral Cooperation

Agriculture and Food Security

Regional cooperation in Agriculture and Food Security, including fisheries & livestock, has been accorded a high priority under BIMSTEC. The Plans of Action for cooperation in Agriculture and Fisheries & Livestock have been adopted. A BIMSTEC Network of Agricultural Research and Development Institutions has been formed. Proposals for establishment of a BIMSTEC Food Reserve, a BIMSTEC Seed Bank, BIMSTEC Centers of Excellence in Agriculture and Livestock respectively and a Network of Fisheries and Livestock Research and Development Institutions are under consideration. There is particular focus on promoting climate resilient agriculture.

Blue Economy

Bangladesh, the lead member State, has prepared a Concept Note and a draft Action Plan on Blue Economy (2025-2029). The 1st Meeting of the Expert Group on Blue Economy, to be convened soon, will finalise the Action Plan and delineate steps to implement.

Connectivity

BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity, adopted in March 2022, has been under implementation. It is also being updated. Development of a Plan of Action for Connectivity is underway. The Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC) was signed at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for operationalisation of AMTC are being finalised. A Joint Shipping Committee is being constituted. BIMSTEC is also engaged in negotiation of a BIMSTEC Motor Vehicles Agreement. Two Editions of BIMSTEC Ports Conclave have been held. A Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Maritime Transport is being set up in India.

Culture

Under Paro Initiative, BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) have been set up in Bhutan. The Expert Group on Cultural Cooperation has finalised a Plan of Action, which includes cooperation on BIMSTEC Cultural Heritage Inventory; BIMSTEC Buddhist Circuit; BIMSTEC Network of Cultural Experts; Capacity Development of Professionals; and Identification and Documentation of BIMSTEC Heritages. There is a proposal to set up a Centre of Excellence for Culture and Tourism in Nepal.

Disaster Management

The Expert Group on Disaster Management has finalised 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 (BCWC) has been set up in Noida, India; it makes tailored weather and climate forecasts for the member States. 4 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. BIMSTEC Guidelines for maritime component of HADR have been finalised. Further, BIMSTEC Guidelines for Coordinated Maritime Oil Spill Response are being finalised.

Environment and Climate Change

Regional cooperation in Environment and Climate Change Sector aims to strengthen resilience of the member States to environmental challenges and adverse impacts of climate change. Significant progress has been made in delineating and implementing Plan of Action for regional cooperation in environment and climate change Sector.

Progress in Sectoral Cooperation

Energy

BIMSTEC has adopted a Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation. A MoU for establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection has been concluded and BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection. Master Plan is under discussion. BIMSTEC Policy for Transmission of Electricity and BIMSTEC Policy for Trade, Exchange of Electricity and Tariff Mechanism are being finalised. BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) has been established in Bengaluru, India, to anchor cooperation in energy sector.

Health

The BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health is under implementation and it is being updated. A project between 5 BIMSTEC member States from South Asia and the World Bank on strengthening Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response (PPR) and Health Systems Resilience is being implemented. The Inaugural Meeting of BIMSTEC Health Ministers has been planned to be convened in Colombo. A BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine has been set up in Thailand. A BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine has been established. The BIMSTEC Plan of Action for the Development of Traditional Medicine is under implementation. Development of a BIMSTEC Traditional Medicine Portal has been agreed. A proposal to establish a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Traditional Medicine in India is under implementation by the member States.

Human Resource Development

The Expert Group on Human Resource Development has finalised a Plan of Action on Human Resource Development (2024–2029), aimed at empowering a skilled and resilient workforce for the future, with particular focus on education, skill development and capacity building, which is under implementation. A

proposal to establish a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence for Skill Development in Bangladesh is under consideration.

Mountain Economy

The Inter-Governmental Expert Group on Mountain Economy (IEG-ME) has developed a Plan of Action, which provides a structured framework for strengthening regional cooperation; promoting sustainable mountain livelihoods; enhancing climate resilience; and supporting integrated mountain ecosystem management across the BIMSTEC region, which is under implementation.

People-People Contact Forums

A Network of Policy Think Tanks of the BIMSTEC member States has been set up; it makes policy recommendations for enhancing regional cooperation in various Sectors on BIMSTEC's Agenda. An Association of BIMSTEC Speakers and Parliamentarians is being set up. A number of Youth Exchanges and Sports events have been held.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty Alleviation has been a priority goal for regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. A Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation has been adopted and is under implementation. It focuses on sharing best practices and capacity building.

Security

Regional cooperation in Security has been a high priority for BIMSTEC. Under the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking, the member States have engaged in cooperation in counter-terrorism, transnational crime and drug trafficking etc. The BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters has been

Progress in Sectoral Cooperation

signed and is being ratified. Draft Texts of the BIMSTEC Convention on Transfer of Sentenced Persons and the BIMSTEC Convention on Extradition are under discussion. The text of the BIMSTEC Convention Against Trafficking in Persons has been finalised. A Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Bay of Bengal Region has also been finalised. BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Drug Control; Five Year Action Plan for BIMSTEC Cyber Security Cooperation; and Action Plan to prevent Illicit Flow of Funds (IFF) have also been finalised.

Apart from Meeting of National Security Chiefs, it has been decided to institutionalise Home Ministers Meeting to strengthen and deepen cooperation in Security Sector. BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs have prioritised cooperation in maritime security, cyber security and space domains. They have instituted Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue. BIMSTEC Guiding Principles for the Conduct by BIMSTEC Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies (MLEAs) during their interaction at sea are being finalised. A proposal to conduct an exercise of BIMSTEC maritime security agencies is under implementation.

Science, Technology & Innovation

The Expert Group on Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation has finalised a Plan of Action (2023–2027). A BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) is being set up in Colombo. Regional cooperation in this Sector is also being pursued through BIMSTEC Start-up Conclaves, STI Forums and Boot Camps. Cooperation in digital domain has also been prioritised, including building of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Regional Cooperation in Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also being explored.

Trade & Investment

Regional cooperation in promoting intra-regional trade and investment remains a high priority under BIMSTEC. The Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area (FTA) has been signed and 6 Working Groups have been engaged in negotiation of 6 constituent Agreements on Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Investment, Dispute Settlement, Trade Facilitation and Customs Cooperation. A proposal to set up a BIMSTEC Forum of Investment Promotion Authorities, to facilitate intra-BIMSTEC investments as well as attracting investments into the member States from around the world, is under consideration. A BIMSTEC Expert Group on Fiscal and Monetary Policy has been created to promote consultation and cooperation in fiscal and monetary policies, cross-border digital trade and settlement of trade in local currencies. Also, the process for establishment of a BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BIMSTEC CCI) is under way.

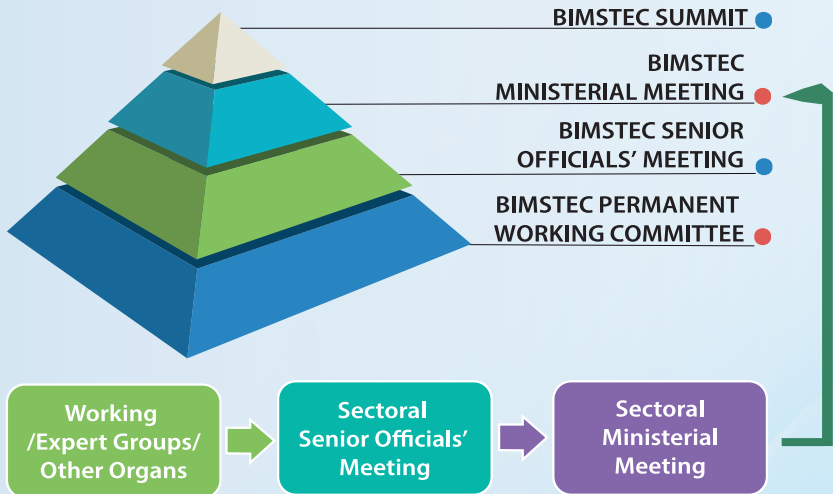
Tourism

The Working Group on Tourism has adopted an updated Plan of Action on Tourism, which is under implementation. A BIMSTEC Virtual Tourism Information Centre has been set up in New Delhi. A BIMSTEC Tourism Fund has been created. There is a BIMSTEC Network of Tour Operators for encouraging intra-BIMSTEC tourism. The Expert Group on Visa Matters has finalised a BIMSTEC Visa Facilitation Scheme to enhance regional mobility and visa facilitation amongst the BIMSTEC member States.

Women Development

A proposal to create an Expert Group on Women Development, in order to mainstream perspectives pertaining to women development and women-led development, is under consideration of the member States.

Core & Sectoral Mechanisms



- The institutional mechanisms of BIMSTEC comprise core and sectoral mechanisms.
- The Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the BIMSTEC member States is the apex decision-making body and it oversees all other policy making bodies. So far 6 Summits have been held; the 6th Summit was held in Bangkok in April 2025.
- The BIMSTEC Ministerial Meetings, comprising Foreign Ministers, coordinate and monitor progress in regional cooperation and implementation of the directives and decisions of the Summits.
- The Sectoral Ministerial Meetings coordinate and monitor progress in implementation of Action Plans, activities of the Centres of Excellence and other Initiatives under their respective Sectors.
- The Senior Officials' Meetings follow-up and monitor implementation of the directives and decisions of the concerned BIMSTEC Ministerial Meetings.
- The BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee deals with administrative and financial matters of the Secretariat and the BIMSTEC Centres/Entities and matters pertaining to regional cooperation in various Sectors.
- The National Focal Points (NFPs), at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the member States, serve as national contact points for all communications, consultations and coordination amongst the member States.

Key Outcomes of 6th BIMSTEC Summit

- Summit Declaration
- Adoption of BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030
- Signing and Adoption of Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation
- Adoption of the Rules of Procedures of BIMSTEC Mechanisms
- Signing of MoUs with External Partners [Indian Ocean Rim Association and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes]
- Adoption of the Report of BIMSTEC Eminent Persons' Group

Agreements and Conventions

- Bangkok Declaration
- BIMSTEC Charter
- BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking
- BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters
- Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area
- BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation

Memoranda of Association/ Understanding

- Memorandum of Association (MoA) for Establishment of BIMSTEC Energy Centre
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Establishment of BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory
- MoA on Establishment of BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat
- MoA on Establishment of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate
- MoU for Establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection
- MoU for Mutual Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies/ Training Institutions of BIMSTEC member States
- MoA on Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility

BIMSTEC Centres/Entities



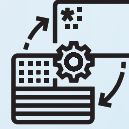
BIMSTEC Energy Centre
(BEC)
Bengaluru, India



BIMSTEC Centre for
Weather and Climate (BCWC)
Noida, India



BIMSTEC Cultural Industries
Observatory (BCIO)
Thimphu, Bhutan



BIMSTEC Technology Transfer
Facility (BTTF)
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Proposed BIMSTEC Centres

- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Agriculture, India
- BIMSTEC Disaster Management Centre, India
- BIMSTEC Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre, India
- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine, Thailand
- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence for Public Audit, Thailand
- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence for Traditional Medicine, India

External Partners

MoU Partners : ADB, IFPRI, UNODC, IORA

**Non MoU Partners : ASEAN, CDRI, ISA, ITU, ICIMOD,
IUCN, UNDRR, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNOPS, UN WOMEN,
WB, WHO, WIPO**



BIMSTEC Secretariat

The BIMSTEC Secretariat was inaugurated on 13 September 2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Secretariat is headed by Secretary General. It implements the decisions and directives of the member States. It facilitates communication, consultation and coordination among the member States and monitors and reports on the progress in regional cooperation to them. H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, a distinguished diplomat from India, currently serves as Secretary General.

BIMSTEC Secretariat

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