BIMSTEC as a regional bloc can be an effective tool in addressing poverty and energy shortage...and that peace and stability are promoted.

BIMSTEC Cooperation Report 2008

The Centre for Studies in International Relations and Development (CSIRD) and the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) in Kolkata had jointly published the Report which extensively reviewed economic and trade performances of BIMSTEC and the prospects of cooperation among member countries in various sectors, including transportation, energy, tourism and fisheries.

The BIMSTEC Cooperation Report 2008 pointed out that at the macroeconomic level BIMSTEC has grown faster than the world average in output in recent years. The region’s share in world output in PPP term has increased from 4.78 percent in 1996 to 5.86 percent in 2006.

It was an outstanding achievement considering the fact that the region accounted for nearly one-fifth of world population. But the Report cautioned that the ongoing global financial crisis could slowdown its growth prospects unless a comprehensive international response would be in place to address the problem in financial markets and to restore market confidence.

The Report emphasized that high growth rate was due in large part to acceleration of international trade in goods and services of the group, particularly India and Thailand. BIMSTEC’s share in global trade in goods has increased from 3 percent annually in 1990s to about 5 percent in the first half of the current decade. Intra-BIMSTEC trade has increased from 2.81 percent in 1997 to 5.46 percent in 2007. The volume of intra-regional trade in BIMSTEC was about US$ 18.14 billion in 2007.

Deeper economic integration in BIMSTEC is viewed as beneficial to all member countries. The Report suggested that at the current stage, member countries should exploit its full potential of regional economic integration by expediting the FTA implementation schedule and expanding its scope by improving connectivity and addressing non-tariff measures. Moving towards a customs union was also envisaged by the Report as the next step for BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC Centre, a not-for-profit organization, wishes to thank CSIRD and ICC for the permission to quote and report this useful 2008 Report to the public.

Sources: BIMSTEC Cooperation Report 2008 and CSIRD website, http://www.csird.org.in
Honorary Consul of Thailand to Bhutan, co-hosted a reception on the auspicious occasions of the 81st Birthday Anniversary of HM King of Thailand.

Mr. Chalermpol Thanchitt, Ambassador of Thailand to Bhutan, and Dasho Ugen Tsechup Dorji, Honorary Consul of Thailand to Bhutan, co-hosted a reception on 21 November 2008 on the auspicious occasions of the 81st Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, the 53rd Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, and the Coronation of His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo.

Members of the Bhutanese Royal Family, Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers, high ranking officials, and many others, attended the function. In this occasion, Dr. Chitriya Pinthong, Director-General of Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA), Mr. Pisanu Chanvitan, Director-General of South Asia, Middle East and African Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as officials from TAT and the Thai private sector also participated in the activities, which included discussions with various Bhutanese counterparts on bilateral cooperation and other issues.

Sources: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, www.mfa.go.th
Bhutan Celebrated the National Day on 17 December 2008

Bhutan celebrated the National Day on 17 December 2008. National day is celebrated on 17th of December in commemoration of the accession of Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuk, the first king of Bhutan to the throne, at Punakha Dzong.

His Majesty the King and the statue of Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck were escorted to the celebration ground in an elaborate chipdrel procession. His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Their Majesties the Queen Mothers and the members of the royal family, cabinet ministers, representatives of the clergy, the armed forces, parliamentarians, students and the international community joined the celebrations. After His Majesty’s arrival at the celebrations ground, the national flag was hoisted and a guard of honour was presented. His Majesty the King addressed to the nation, followed by the Jibi Pao and a Marchhang Ceremony. At the Changlimithang ground, where Bhutanese came to celebrate the historic Centenary National Day, many were blessed by the privilege of an audience with His Majesty the King.

Bhutan National Emblem: The national emblem, contained in a circle, is composed of a double diamond thunderbolt placed above a lotus, surmounted by a jewel and framed by two dragons. The double diamond thunderbolt represents the harmony between secular and religious power; which results from the Buddhist religion on its Vajrayana form. The lotus symbolizes purity; the jewel sovereign power; and the two dragons, male and female, stand for the name of the country-the thunder.

The National Flag of Bhutan: The flag is divided diagonally into equal yellow and orange halves. The division starts from the lower corner of the flag where it is hoisted and runs along the diagonally opposite corner. The yellow portion lies on the upper part of the diagonal division and it represents the yellow scarf worn by His Majesty, which in turn represents the being of His Majesty, the King. The orange portion lies on the lower part of the flag and it represents the orange scarf worn by the Je Khenpo, the religious head of the country. The National Flag has a white dragon which spreads equally along the diagonal division towards the upper end.


BIMSTEC Upcoming Activities

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>21 January 2009</td>
<td>87th BWG Meeting</td>
<td>Bangkok</td>
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Dates to be Identified

- 18th TNC Meeting
- 5th STEOM/7th TEMM
- 2nd BIMSTEC Energy Ministers’ Conference
- 2nd Ministerial Meeting on Culture
- 2nd BIMSTEC Ministerial Conference on Poverty Alleviation
- Expert Group Meeting on the establishment of a BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Exchange Facility

For further information on activities and programs of BIMSTEC, please contact:

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