Tourism

The Second BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting held in Dhaka on 18-19 December 1998 identified tourism as one of the first six areas of cooperation in BIMSTEC. The First BIMSTEC Summit emphasized the need for joint marketing of tourism packages, exchange of visits, and sharing of information as well as tourism promotion in the BIMSTEC region. The leaders in the Second BIMSTEC Summit agreed to harness the region’s natural, cultural and historical endowments in order to enhance intra-BIMSTEC tourism as well as tourism from other countries. The Third BIMSTEC Summit encouraged the Member States to realize the enormous tourism potential of the region by enhancing cooperation in this field, particularly through facilitating engagements among the private sector in the Member States. The leaders at the Goa Retreat recognized the rich potential for the development of tourism and reiterated their keen interest in taking concrete steps to promote intra-BIMSTEC tourism including specialized tourist circuits and eco-tourism. In particular, the leaders encouraged the development of the Buddhist Tourist Circuit and Temple Tourist Circuit within the region.

The leaders in the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit agreed to take concrete steps to promote intra-BIMSTEC tourism; task the relevant authorities to devise strategies considering the emerging opportunities and building on the past initiatives including the “Plan of Action for Tourism Development and Promotion for the BIMSTEC Region”. They further agreed to take concrete measures to facilitate tourism by ensuring the safety and security of tourists, and smooth transport connectivity. They reaffirmed their commitment to developing and promoting Buddhist Tourist Circuit, Temple Tourist Circuit, ancient cities trail, eco-tourism, and medical tourism; and welcome the offer of Nepal to host a BIMSTEC tourism conclave in Nepal in 2020, coinciding with the Visit Nepal Year 2020. However,
this conclave could not be happened due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The First Roundtable and Workshop of Tourism Ministers held in Kolkata, India on 23 February 2005 prepared the Plan of Action for Tourism Development and Promotion, and the Second BIMSTEC Tourism Ministers’ Roundtable and Workshop held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 29 August 2006 adopted it. Similarly, the First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Tourism held in New Delhi on 23 September 2013 decided to set up the Tourism Fund with a one-time contribution by each Member State which will be supporting the activities approved by the Tourism Working Group. The BIMSTEC Tourism Fund is being administrated by India. In addition, the First Meeting of Network of Tour Operators held in New Delhi on 07 July 2017 and the Second Meeting of Network of Tour Operators held virtually in Colombo on 08-09 December 2020 made recommendations including common marketing strategy such as the creation of a BIMSTEC brand for tourism, a common website for promotion, annual BIMSTEC Travel Mart/Conclave, a common safety protocols for adventure tourism, Public-Private Partnership for promotion of Tourism, BIMSTEC Annual Convention on Tourism, etc.

During the Seventeenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, the Ministers reiterated that the tourism and hospitality industry in the BIMSTEC region has been severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ministers called upon the Member States to implement the Plan of Action for Tourism Development and Promotion for the BIMSTEC Region to facilitate intra-regional tourism. They also encouraged the holding of the Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Working Group on Tourism, the Third BIMSTEC Tourism Ministers’ Roundtable. They further encouraged the tourism entrepreneurs including tour and trekking operators to hold interactions and meetings with a view to enhancing cooperation and coordination among themselves. As the Asian Development Bank has been drafting the final report on “Leveraging Thematic Circuits for a BIMSTEC Tourism
Strategy” (link to the final report when finalized and uploaded in webpage), the Ministers instructed the Secretariat to coordinate with the Member States and the ADB for its early completion.