

BIMSTEC Newsletter

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BIMSTEC Special

‘BIMSTEC a core element in Thai Foreign Policy’

Mrs. Krisana Chandrababha is in charge of BIMSTEC matters in Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs in her capacity as Director General (DG) for International Economic Affairs. A distinguished career diplomat since 1978, she has rich experience of multilateral work in tenures at Headquarters and at Manila, New York, Ankara and Geneva. We spoke to her about Thailand’s views on BIMSTEC:



Q.: Thailand is one of the founder members of BIMSTEC, which was established in 1997 as BIST-EC. What is Thailand’s vision of BIMSTEC, and what are its expectations from it?

DG: BIMSTEC remains a core element in Thai foreign policy since its establishment 13 years ago. As the only forum linking South Asia and Southeast Asia, BIMSTEC offers a wide range of opportunities for Member Countries to strengthen our cooperation for mutual benefits. Thailand considers BIMSTEC as a forum through which Thailand and other BIMSTEC Member Countries can build long-lasting partnerships, support sustainable and inclusive economic growth, as well as enhance physical, institutional and people-to-people connectivity.

Q: What, according to you, have been achievements of BIMSTEC so far, and what should be the priorities for its future work?

DG: There have been a number of achievements in the 14 sectors of cooperation of BIMSTEC, with some areas having more concrete progress than others. Examples of recent achievements include endorsement of the BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS), signing of the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking, as well as the 2nd BIMSTEC Ministers on Energy’s Meeting held in Thailand, during which the Ministers agreed to expedite the Establishment of the BIMSTEC Energy Center. While the initiatives undertaken in all these sectors are important, I believe the top priorities for BIMSTEC include the expedition of the establishment of the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat, the conclusion of the BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the development of physical and institutional connectivity within BIMSTEC through the implementation of the BTILS. These priorities will take our cooperation to greater heights, promote peace and economic prosperity among BIMSTEC Member Countries, as well as foster greater understanding among our peoples.

Q: Thailand is the lead country for ‘Fisheries’, ‘Public Health’ and ‘People-to-People Contact’ in BIMSTEC. What are the initiatives being pursued in these sectors?

DG: Thailand recognizes that BIMSTEC is a region richly endowed with marine resources and local wisdom and knowledge pertaining to various herbal plants and traditional medicine. Moreover, for centuries peoples of the BIMSTEC Member Countries have long had close contacts and ties through trade and travel. Thus, Thailand attaches great importance to Fisheries, Public Health and People-to-People Contact sectors in BIMSTEC...

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Visit of H. E. Senior General Than Shwe to India

At the invitation of the President of India Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar, paid a State Visit to India from 25 to 29 July 2010. The visit was part of series of high-level contacts that India and Myanmar have had over the past few years.

During the visit, the Head of State of Myanmar and the Prime Minister of India expressed their commitment to further strengthen and broaden the multi-dimensional relationship which now encompasses a range of areas of cooperation in security, economic, social and development matters.

India is currently assisting with development of infrastructure such as railways, road and waterway development and power, as well as projects such as industrial training centres and tele-communications in Myanmar. During the visit, the two countries agreed to promote cooperation in trade, connectivity, agriculture, power, energy, information and communication technology, tourism, culture and education sectors. A number of agreements on cooperation in diverse sectors were signed during the visit. The Indian side agreed to consider Myanmar's request for assistance in three areas namely IT development, Industrial development and Infrastructure development in Myanmar.

The two leaders also emphasized the importance of India and Myanmar to work together in the cause of international and regional cooperation. Myanmar reiterated its support for India's bid for membership of the UNSC. India offered its good wishes to Myanmar for a successful term as BIMSTEC Chair that it assumed in 2009. The two sides also agreed to further promote tourist contacts under the frameworks of ASEAN + India and BIMSTEC. With Myanmar being a natural bridge between India and ASEAN, both sides reiterates their commitment to undertake trilateral connectivity from Moreh in India and Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar. The Indian side agreed to take up the preparation of DPRs for roads and causeways in Myanmar to realize this project.

(Source: Embassy of Myanmar, Bangkok; Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi)



President and Prime Minister of India welcome visiting Chairman, State Peace and Development Council of Myanmar, and Daw Kyaing Kyaing in New Delhi on July 27, 2010

ADB to finance Bangladesh-India Electrical Grid Interconnection

ADB has approved a loan of USD 100 million on August 31, 2010 for Bangladesh-India Electrical Grid Interconnection Project, which envisages building a 40-kilometer 400-kilovolt transmission line, along with a high voltage direct current substation and connecting loop, linking the western electrical grid of Bangladesh with India's eastern grid. Around 500 MW power is expected to flow into Bangladesh by 2012 as a result of the project, with the possibility of more in the future. The project will signal a new era in energy cooperation in South Asia and is likely to herald further power trading agreements, resulting in the more effective use of existing energy resources in the region. *(Source: ADB)*

Nepal launches Nepal Tourism Year 2011

Government of Nepal has launched Nepal Tourism Year 2011 (NTY2011) campaign, aiming to achieve the target of one million tourist arrivals per year. NTY 2011 also aims to establish Nepal as a prime holiday destination. With the slogan "*Together for Tourism*", the campaign will open new products and activities, offers new tourism packages and will make every possible effort to make the stay of the visitors memorable. To make NTY2011 campaign successful, Government of Nepal has decided to appoint Everest Summiters as NTY 2011 Honorary Goodwill Ambassadors. Letters of Appointment were handed over to some of the summiters present to celebrate the 3rd International Everest Day in Kathmandu on May 29, 2010. Government would also provide a free visa to Mt. Everest and Mt. Dhaulagiri Summiters from May 2010 to December 2011. (*Source: Embassy of Nepal, Bangkok*)



View of the majestic Annapurna mountain range from Pokhara, Nepal

‘BIMSTEC a core element.. (Contd. from page 1)

...In particular, Thailand emphasizes sharing the best practices in fisheries, promoting information sharing and research in the field of traditional medicine, and encouraging the cooperation among policy think tanks within BIMSTEC. In this regard, Thailand hosted the BIMSTEC International Training Program on Ornamental Aquatic Plants Propagation in August 2010, as well as the 2nd BIMSTEC Meeting on the Network of National Centers of Coordination in Traditional Medicines during 30 August – 1 September 2010. Through such initiatives, BIMSTEC Member Countries can utilize our rich marine resources, take full advantage of our local wisdom in traditional medicine, and reinforce our peoples’ long-existing bonds in order to advance our region’s economic prosperity and the well-being of our peoples.

Q: *Thailand is a member of several regional organizations. What place it sees for BIMSTEC in the matrix of regional cooperation?*

DG: BIMSTEC is among the most important regional cooperation frameworks of which Thailand is a member, in addition to ASEAN, GMS, ACMECS, IMT-GT and Mekong-Japan Cooperation. All of these forums share a vision of creating a stable, prosperous and highly competitive region with equitable and sustainable economic development. Since all these forum including BIMSTEC are considered crucial, Thailand has established a special supervisory committee chaired by the Prime Minister in order to give guidelines and direction for all these sub-regional frameworks. As such, while there may be some overlapping of issues, I believe the initiatives carried out under BIMSTEC and other regional forums are complementary to one another. For example, BIMSTEC work on enhancing connectivity complements ASEAN and GMS efforts to improve connectivity, enabling greater and smoother flows of goods and people between South Asian and Southeast Asian countries.

Celebrations

Birthday celebrations of Her Majesty the Queen of Thailand

The 78th Birthday of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit was celebrated with joy by people in Thailand and Thais around the world on August 12, 2010, Her Majesty's dedicated work in a wide range of activities, including the conservation of the environment, promotion of Thai arts and handicrafts and important roles in foreign affairs, is deeply honoured by the people.

India celebrates its 64th Independence Day

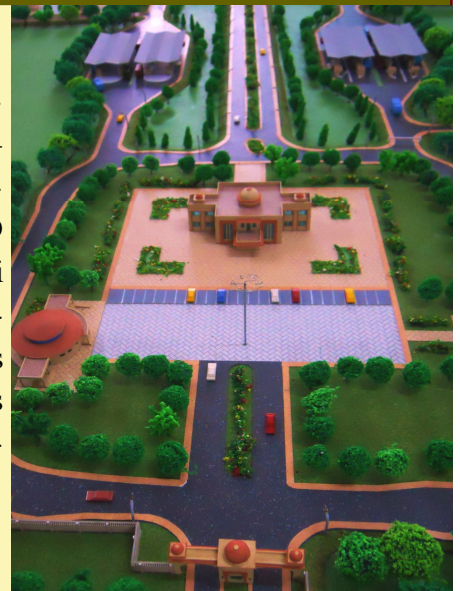
The 64th Independence Day of India was celebrated with joy and fervour on August 15, 2010. Speaking on this occasion from Red Fort, Delhi, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh conveyed India's wishes for peace, prosperity and harmony in all neighbouring countries.

News in photos

Construction of Integrated Check Posts on Nepal-India border

Four Integrated Check Posts (ICPS) are being developed along India-Nepal Border at Raxaul (India) – Birgunj (Nepal), Sunauli (India) – Bhairahawa (Nepal), Jaynagar (India) - Biratnagar (Nepal) and Nepalgunj Road (India) - Nepalgunj (Nepal) at an initial cost of approx. USD 70 million. Construction work has already started in Raxaul and Jogbani and is expected to commence soon in Birgunj and Biratnagar. Construction of these ICPs with modern facilities would streamline all procedures for customs clearance, immigration, security etc at the border, thus greatly facilitating movement of goods and persons and enhancing connectivity, a key BIMSTEC objective.

(Source: Embassy of India, Kathmandu)



Top: Scale model of the administrative building at Jogbani ICP under construction



Left: Scale model of the processor building being built at Raxaul ICP

Contact us

The BIMSTEC Newsletter has been compiled on behalf of BIMSTEC Working Group by Embassy of India, Bangkok. For further information, feedback, or events to be covered in the newsletter, please contact us at: pol.bangkok@mea.gov.in