

BIMSTEC Newsletter

A Monthly Newsletter from BIMSTEC



Volume 45
December 2010

BIMSTEC Special

'Nepal for hydropower development as major source of renewable energy'

For this edition of Newsletter, we bring you an exclusive interview with **H.E. Mr. Naveen Prakash Jung Shah**, Ambassador of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal to Thailand. In a long and distinguished career, he has served as Vice-Chancellor of Tribhuvan University, Senator of several universities and held many important positions in universities and other institutions in Nepal in the fields of education and health.



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

BIMSTEC has been able to achieve various levels of success in different areas of cooperation. Fourteen areas of cooperation under BIMSTEC have been identified and these areas have received considerable attention from member countries. Several meetings have been held ideas and experiences have been shared in these areas of cooperation. BIMSTEC has also served as an extensive forum to expand people to people contact. Endorsement of BTILS is another significant achievement of BIMSTEC to expand and enhance connectivity in the region. Important meetings and discussions are going on in all areas of cooperation. Progress made thus far gives us a sense of satisfaction that our efforts are gaining momentum to achieve the set goals. However, considering the enormous potential that the region opens to us, achievements made so far have not been adequate to be content with. We should redouble our efforts to achieve concrete results in the agreed areas of cooperation. I think our future priorities should be in the establishment of Permanent Secretariat, renewable energy, free trade area, roads and transport connectivity and infrastructures targeting the grass root level.

Q.: Nepal is the lead country for 'Poverty Alleviation' in BIMSTEC. What cooperation activities you envisage in these areas?

We are happy to be the lead country for Poverty Alleviation under BIMSTEC. The first BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh on July 8-9, 2008 and the 2nd Ministerial Meeting will be held in Nepal. The Dhaka Ministerial Meeting decided to forge a deeper understanding of the poverty process and its determinants as well as policy options to combat poverty jointly. This meeting also directed to formulate Poverty Plan of Action (PPA). Nepal was entrusted to prepare the draft PPA and circulate to member countries for comments and suggestions for final PPA. The draft was prepared and circulated to member countries. The National Planning Commission of Nepal is compiling comments and suggestions received from member countries. This PPA emphasizes joint action from member countries to tackle poverty through a multidimensional approach. I believe that the 2nd Ministerial Meeting to be held in Nepal would be crucial to generate an environment to implement the PPA.

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Q. Nepal would be hosting the next BIMSTEC Energy Minister's Meeting. How do you see cooperation in the energy sector evolving? What are the other areas of cooperation that you consider of key importance to Nepal?

We are honoured to have opportunity to host the 3rd BIMSTEC Energy Minister's Meeting in 2012. We will do our best to make this Ministerial Meeting a success. As the pace of economic development in BIMSTEC member countries is growing rapidly, and as energy is the most prevalent requirement for development, BIMSTEC member countries need to have undertaken policies and measures towards achieving energy security. Member countries have been discussing the importance of energy and the use of renewable energy like hydropower, solar, wind and biomass. I believe the Energy Centre to be established in India will be instrumental in exploring all avenues of energy cooperation in the region. Nepal, having abundant water resources for hydropower development, always emphasizes cooperation in the field of hydropower development as this is a major source of renewable energy. In addition to cooperation in energy sector, cooperation in poverty alleviation, physical and infrastructure development and rural tourism development are the key areas we consider important.

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

Nepal became member of BIMSTEC in 2004. Recognizing the interest Nepal has shown to BIMSTEC, we were granted observer status before becoming full member of this economic forum. Regional organizations have been very important to Nepal to strengthen strong bonds of friendship among the member countries and to promote economic interests. BIMSTEC has occupied a significant place in our Foreign policy posture. BIMSTEC as a regional organization has provided an important platform to share experience, expertise and knowledge in the field of economic development and cooperation for the benefit of the people of our region. As an active member of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Nepal sees BIMSTEC as one of the most important regional organization for the socio-economic progress and prosperity of the region through agreed areas of cooperation. BIMSTEC also means to us as a strong bridge to connect us to other nations of South East Asia.

New road link between Bangladesh and Tripura in India

Government of Bangladesh and ONGC Tripura Power Company OTPC, a new subsidiary of The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) of India, have signed an MoU to open up a transport corridor by constructing a 50 km road from Ashuganj river port in Bangladesh to Agartala in Tripura state of India, and developing the Ashuganj port and construction of a major jetty.

"The 50 km road is the new Silk Route for connecting Bangladesh with India's North-East which would boost trade and commerce between the country and the Indian region," according to ONGC Chairman and Managing Director R S Sharma.

The corridor would also be used to carry heavy equipment for company's 726 MW power plant to be installed at Palatana in South Tripura. The new transit route through Bangladesh will cut down commissioning time of the power plant by around eight months

Six contractors from Bangladesh have been engaged to construct the road and develop a jetty in the river port. The Roads and Highways Department of Bangladesh is to supervise the project. The works, estimated at a cost of USD 5.5 million, are expected to be completed by February 2011.

(Source: The Economic Times)

Construction on Kaladan project begins in Myanmar

Construction work for the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Facility has started in December 2010, following a foundation stone laying ceremony of the works that was held at Sittwe, Myanmar on December 19, 2010. Among the dignitaries present for the ceremony were Hon'ble Minister for Transport, Government of Myanmar and the Regional Commander for Rakhine province.

Kaladan project envisages connectivity between ports on India's Eastern seaboard and Sittwe Port in Myanmar and then through riverine transport and road to Mizoram. It includes construction of a port / Inland Water Transport (IWT) terminal and related facilities at Sittwe, Myanmar, for transshipment from ships to inland vessels and vice-versa; development of Kaladan waterway from Sittwe to Setpyitpyin (Kaletwa), about 225 km, by undertaking river engineering works such as dredging, removal of rock outcrops/rapids and installation of navigation aids; construction of an IWT/ highway transshipment terminal and related facilities at Setpyitpyin; and construction of a highway from Setpyitpyin to India-Myanmar border.



The Framework Agreement and Protocols for the projects were signed in April 2008. The Project envisages a timeline of five years from the date of the signing of the agreement. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is the lead consultant for the project whereas M/s Essar Projects is the main contractor. **(Source: IWAI)**



Sri Lanka at the forefront in healthcare delivery

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has acknowledged Sri Lanka's lead in important healthcare indicators such as child mortality rate, prevention of communicable diseases, maternal mortality rate, life expectancy and emphasis on primary healthcare in 'The State of World Population 2010' Report released on December 14, 2010. According to the report, Sri Lanka is at the forefront in providing quality health services in South Asian region, achieving the best rates in all major healthcare indicators.

UNFPA country director Sri Lanka Mrs. Lene K. Christiansen, addressing the gathering at the launch of Report, said the Report made the case for replacing the vicious cycle of crisis and underdevelopment with virtuous cycle of peace and stability. "It is time to tear down the false barriers between crisis, recovery and development. Investing in development softens the impact of crisis and natural disaster and whatever is invested during humanitarian response can become a solid foundation for development and rebuilding a society", she said. **(Source: UNDP/Daily Mirror)**

Celebrations



Fireworks illuminate the sky over Bangkok to mark the 83rd birth anniversary of His Majesty the King of Thailand, which was celebrated with joy and fervour on December 5, 2010.

(Photo: News Today)



His Majesty the King of Bhutan offers prayers at National Day celebrations in Thimphu on December 17, 2010. National day is celebrated in Bhutan on December 17 to mark coronation of the first King of Bhutan on this day in 1907.

(Photo: Kuensel)

News in Photo



A solar powered boat brings education and sustainable energy to remote areas in Bangladesh

On the boats, run by Shidhulai Swanirvar Sangstha, electricity is generated by solar Photo Voltaic (PV) panels. The on-board classrooms receive enthusiastic students. Solar light batteries for home study are re-charged by electricity from boat's panels. The Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development Project (REREDP) is bringing dependable solar energy to far-flung rural households.
(Source: Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy)

Contact us

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