

# BIMSTEC Newsletter

A Monthly Newsletter from BIMSTEC



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BIMSTEC Special

## BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG) Chair outlines priorities

Myanmar being the current Chair of BIMSTEC, its Mission in Bangkok also chairs the BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG) in Bangkok. **H.E. U Aung Thein**, Ambassador of the Union of Myanmar to the Kingdom of Thailand since February 2008, shared his vision of BIMSTEC with us. In his distinguished career, H.E. U Aung Thein has previously served as Myanmar's Ambassador to Vietnam, in addition to defence service in various capacities up to the rank of Major General. He has been recipient of decorations such as Naing Ngan Taw Sit Hmu Htan Tazeik.



**Q. Myanmar is the current Chair of BIMSTEC, What are its priorities during its tenure as Chair ?**

**Amb:** Myanmar, as the current Chair of BIMSTEC since December 2009, has a number of priorities. The most urgent matter for BIMSTEC is establishment of a Permanent Secretariat, and accordingly we aim to reach the decision on location of the Secretariat at the 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting which will be held in Myanmar during this year.

**Q. You are steering the BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG) that meets regularly in Bangkok. What is your own vision of BIMSTEC?**

**Amb:** In order to promote trade among us, establishment of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is one of the priorities. Actually, all 14 areas of priorities are important for member states and we need to cooperate more for tangible progress.

**Q. What are the important current initiatives of BIMSTEC?**

**Amb:** Some important current initiatives of BIMSTEC are inter alia Free Trade Area, BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) for connectivity, and people to people contact.

**Q. There are many regional organizations in this part of the world. What role you see for BIMSTEC in promoting regional integration?**

**Amb:** BIMSTEC is an unique organization bridging South and South East Asia. It therefore has great potential in promoting regional integration.

*(Source: The Embassy of the Union of Myanmar, Bangkok)*

## BIMSTEC Events:

- BIMSTEC International Training Programme on Ornamental Aquatics Plants Propagation: August 1-28, Bangkok, Thailand
- 2nd BIMSTEC Meeting on Network of National Centers of Coordination in Traditional Medicine: August 30–September 1, 2010, Nonthaburi, Thailand

## International Seminar 'From Land Locked to Land Linked: North East India in BIMSTEC' organized in India

An international seminar '*From Land Locked to Land Linked: North East India in BIMSTEC*', was organized on April 8-10, 2010 in Shillong, Meghalaya, India. The Conference, organized by Jadavpur Association of International Relations (JAIR), with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) of India, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) and Indian Council of Social Science Research - North East Region Council (ICCSR-NERC), was aimed at strengthening co-operation among BIMSTEC member countries in promoting trade, investment and tourism ties with the Northeastern region of India.



The conference was attended by H.E. Mr Shashi Tharoor, India's Minister of State for External Affairs, Governor of Meghalaya state, Ambassadors of Thailand, Myanmar and High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India, besides policy makers, government officials, academicians, civil society, and media.

H.E. Mr Tharoor, while mentioning the high priority Government of India attached to development of Northeastern region of India, emphasized the need for enhancing connectivity within the region. He said if advantage was taken of the experiences of member-countries in a concerted way, it would be possible to have a far-reaching impact on poverty reduction and on overall development of the region. H.E. Mr. Krit Kraichitti, Ambassador of Thailand to India, reiterated the importance of pushing forward various projects under BIMSTEC framework, particularly the trilateral road network, linking Thailand-Myanmar-India.

(Source: JAIR; MEA; Royal Thai Embassy, New Delhi)

## Thailand & Myanmar sign gas supply agreement

H.E. Dr. Wannarat Channukul, Minister of Energy of Thailand, and H.E. U Than Htay, Myanmar Deputy Minister for Energy, presided over a GSA signing ceremony in Nay Pyi Taw on July 30, 2010, for Zawtika Field in M9 block (Gulf of Mottama) of Myanmar. Under the 30-year agreement, PTTEP of Thailand is to put gas on stream in 2013 at a rate of 300 million cubic feet (mcf) a day, with 240 mcf a day going to PTT for power generation in Thailand and 60 mcf a day for domestic consumption in Myanmar. The gas to be taken by PTT will replace 2,400 million liters of fuel oil import a year and save Thailand about 400 billion baht in foreign-currency payments. Gas is Thailand's main power generation fuel. Located in the Gulf of Mottama, some 300 km from Yangon, Zawtika is a prime gas field in the Myanmar M9 and M11 project, operated by PTTEP International Co., Ltd. (PTTEPI), a wholly-owned subsidiary of PTTEP. Its preliminary proved reserves amount to about 1.4 trillion cubic feet. PTTEP will accelerate its development by designing wellhead and central processing platforms and constructing gas pipelines to enable production to begin in 2013.

(Source: PTTEP Thailand)

## Climate Change Resilience Fund created in Bangladesh

*(Bangladesh is the lead country for 'Climate Change', one of the 14 areas of cooperation under BIMSTEC)*

Government of Bangladesh has put in place an innovative mechanism to channel US\$ 110 million or more in grant funds in order to build resilience of Bangladesh citizens to the effects of climate change. The **'Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund'** was established on 31 May 2010 with the signing of an Memorandum of Understanding between Government and five development partners. The Fund will support implementation of Bangladesh's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan for 2009-2018, by supporting vulnerable communities in adapting to greater climate uncertainty and changing agricultural conditions. The Fund is to be managed and implemented by the Government of Bangladesh, with initial contributions from partner countries and technical support from World Bank. Mr Musharraf Bhuiyan, Secretary of the Economic Relations Division, noted *'This sets a good example for development partners to align to the highest priorities of our country and provide additional resources to address climate change as pledged in Copenhagen last year. Given the magnitude of our adaptation and mitigation needs, we hope these initial contributions will encourage support from other partners.'* (Source: World Bank)

## 601st wisdom 'Nenasala' telecentre opens in Sri Lanka

*(Sri Lanka is the lead country for 'Technology' area in BIMSTEC)*

Implemented under the e-Sri Lanka initiative of setting up 1000 'Nenasala' telecentres or 'wisdom outlets' under the programme island-wide, the 601st Nenasala was opened at Badulla recently. According to Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA), Nenasalas provide several ICT facilities including Internet and e-mail facilities, photocopying services, access to agricultural information to the people. The Nenasala project has won award as the best model of people-centred ICT centres in the world. (Source: ICTA of Sri Lanka)



## Promotion of cultural industries in Bhutan

*(Bhutan is the lead country for 'Cultural Cooperation' area in BIMSTEC)*

Cultural industries have a great potential for generating income through utilization of cultural assets. Bhutan's rich cultural resources provide a major opportunity for creation of employment and poverty reduction. Some of the cultural industries are arts and applied arts such as traditional paintings, contemporary visual art, traditional boot-making, sculpturing, performing arts and traditional architecture, cultural and religious services, craft-based manufacturing, and even media and cultural tourism.

The Cultural Industries Sector Development- A Baseline Report 2009, jointly prepared by the National Statistics Bureau and Department of Culture, with support from UN agencies, takes stock of the potential of culture-based activities that contribute to Bhutan's overall development goals. It indicates the scope, opportunities and strategies needed to boost cultural industries and creative enterprises as an effective means of combating poverty and revitalizing communities. This baseline report forms an essential starting point for the implementation of RGoB's long-term vision of stimulating vibrant and competitive cultural industries and establishment of a Cultural Industries Commission and Cultural Industries Observatory - a research center for cultural industries. ( Source: Bhutan Times, UNDP)

## Poverty Alleviation Fund expanding its reach in Nepal

*(Nepal is the lead country for 'Poverty Alleviation' area in BIMSTEC)*

The Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) in Nepal is implementing targeted demand-driven community based programs. It aims to improve access to income-generation and infrastructures for groups that had tended to be excluded for various reasons in communities. PAF has steadily expanded implementation of its programmes to 59 districts. Starting with six districts of Darchula, Mugu, Pyuthan, Kapilbastu, Ramechhap and Siraha, PAF now covers - as PAF regular program districts - all the districts categorized as most deprived districts by CBS/NPC (Central Bureau of Statistics - National Planning Commission) based on 28 poverty related social-economic indicators. Besides these, PAF is also implementing innovative pocket programmes in other 19 districts under a special innovative window programme (Source: PAF Nepal)

## News in photos



Newly built Terminal 3 of New Delhi's IGI airport was inaugurated on July 3, 2010. Built to handle 34 million passengers per year, T3 is expected to boost regional air connectivity by developing as a regional hub.



The 100<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG) meeting was held on May 27, 2010 at the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Bangkok. BWG has played an important role in coordinating and taking forward various initiatives of the Grouping. Seen here are Ambassadors of BIMSTEC Missions in Bangkok, along with DG, Department of International Economic Affairs, MOFA, and other members of delegations on the occasion of this landmark meeting.

## 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](mailto:pol.bangkok@mea.gov.in)