

BIMSTEC Newsletter

A Monthly Newsletter from BIMSTEC



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BIMSTEC Special

'BIMSTEC: Confluence of South and South-East Asia'

We have the pleasure of **H.E. Mr. Tshering Dorji**, Ambassador of Bhutan to Thailand, speak to us for this issue of Newsletter. In a long and distinguished career as a civil servant, Mr. Dorji has served in Bhutan's Ministry of Trade and Industry, as Governor of two districts, and headed several public sector companies, before joining the Ministry of External Affairs as Chief of Protocol. He was appointed Bhutan's ambassador to Bangladesh with concurrent accreditation to Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives and RoK, prior to taking up his current assignment.



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

A.: BIMSTEC has provided an excellent platform for the members to share and benefit from the wisdom and experiences of two adjacent sub-regions of South Asia and South-East Asia, which in itself is the first and foremost success. It affords us an opportunity to harness the tremendous potential of our sub-regions by engaging in meaningful cooperation in a number of areas. As one of the primary objectives of BIMSTEC is to accelerate economic growth and cooperation, it seems right to applaud the signing of the Framework Agreement on the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area in 2004. The recent endorsement of the BIMTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) is yet another achievement that would enhance intra-regional trade, benefiting our peoples substantially. We should continue to strengthen cooperation on areas already identified and agreed upon, and expedite the signing of the pending agreements and MOUs. The early establishment of the Permanent Secretariat would certainly ease the work towards strengthening cooperation.

Q.: Bhutan is the lead country for 'Cultural Cooperation' in BIMSTEC. What cooperation activities you envisage in these areas?

A.: It is a great honour for Bhutan to be the lead country for "Cultural Cooperation", as promotion and preservation of culture is at the core of Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness that stipulates the significance of culture to economic growth, environment conservation and good governance.

The Paro Initiative adopted at the First BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting on Culture held in May 2006 recognized the new opportunities of culture in development through cultural industries that create a relationship between traditional culture and modern innovative technology. It was acknowledged that cultural industries have a significant impact on twin areas of community vitalization and poverty reduction. Therefore, future cooperation entails creating an enabling environment to promote and sustain such cultural industries through regulatory and legislative support, access to financing, providing physical infrastructure needs, affordable access to ICT and relevant technology, and relevant trainings and certification. However, institutional arrangements and modalities have to be set up first for furthering cooperation in culture. This brings in the importance of signing the MOU on the establishment of BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and the BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory, which we hope to achieve in

