

# BIMSTEC Newsletter



A Monthly Newsletter from BIMSTEC Centre

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## BIMSTEC Event

### Updates on CTTC Sector

The Third Meeting of BIMSTEC JWG-CTTC (Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime) Sub-group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues was held on 19-20 April 2007 in New Delhi, India. All BIMSTEC Member Countries participated in the Meeting.

Substantial progress was made, and agreement was reached on the text of provision of the draft BIMSTEC Convention of Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Organised Crime and Illicit Drug-Trafficking. It was further decided in the Meeting that the text of the Convention will be submitted to a higher-BIMSTEC bodies for further consideration and subsequent approval and adoption.

## Updates from BIMSTEC Working Group

The BIMSTEC Working Group in Bangkok is one of the mechanisms which drives the working process of BIMSTEC. The BWG Meeting is held monthly at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand. The latest development / progress from the 69th BWG Meeting are as follow;

**ADB Cooperation with BIMSTEC** : The 1st Inception Meeting of BIMSTEC Technical Advisory Committee of the BTILS was held in March 2007 in Bangkok. The ADB team is in the process of drafting the inception report and will present it in the next BWG Meeting in May 2007.

**Website** : Apart from the BIMSTEC official website, a BIMSTEC Energy Centre Website will soon be activated. This will enable sharing experiences and strengthening cooperation amongst member countries in the fields of grid connectivity, gas pipelines, hydro power, renewable sources of energy, energy efficiency, access to energy in all areas and energy sector reforms, restructuring, regulations and best practices. Decision to establish the BIMSTEC Energy Centre by India was welcomed at the 9th Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi in August, 2006. India would act as a focal point for strengthening cooperation in the energy sector through sharing of experience and capacity building.

**Marking the 10th Anniversary of founding of BIMSTEC** : BIMSTEC will commemorate its 10th Anniversary with special events in June, 2007. Activities planned to celebrate this occasion include: *an Exhibition*—to showcase the BIMSTEC Milestones from its inception, *Design Competition*—to encourage participations from high-school students, and a *Reception* for distinguished guests. (More information is available on the Website)

## Celebrating Oriental New Year

Many countries in South and Southeast Asia are having a big New Year celebrations in mid of April. These countries share similar traditional practices. In Asian countries where Buddhism and Hinduism predominate, the April New Year is recognised as the beginning of the Salivahana Saka era. Other oriental countries follow the lunar and solar systems .

The date of the New Year was originally set by astrological calculation, but it is now fixed. But Sri Lanka still uses an astrological calculation to set the dates and times based on the sun's positional change and the festival events commence on those dates and times.

The Thai New Year (Songkran Festival) is celebrated every year on 13 April to 15 April. It is also celebrated in Laos (called Songkan in Lao), Cambodia, Myanmar (where it is called Thingyan), and by ethnic Dai in Yunnan, China. Sri Lanka also celebrates a similar festival called Sinhalese and Tamil New Year on the same dates.

Part of the celebration is Water Festival, which makes it a merry, boisterous and joyful as no other festival can be. The water throwing part originated as a way to pay respect to people, by



Above : Sri Lankan Village Beauties playing 'rabana' (drums) to announce the "Aruvudu Uwada' New Year Festival.



pouring a small amount of lustral water on other people's hands as a sign of respect. In Myanmar, splashing water on one another is to clean past misdeeds, and to wish the person to be as cool as water. Happily the water splashing relieves the heat, since April is the hottest month of the year (temperatures can rise to over 100°F or 40°C on some days).

Not many people realize that their ancestors started this festival to teach their descendants some important things. This festival teaches people to come home to visit their parents, pay respect to them, and usually bring them a small gift. As parents give their children so much love, support and help, and this is the time that children appreciate their parents. People also visit their elder neighbors to reinforce good neighbourly relationships and to pay respect to the elders around the neighborhood. For these reasons, Songkran days are also considered as the family days and the elderly days.

There is a similar Indian Festival called Sankranti or Makar Sankranti[1], celebrated on 14 January every year. Songkran as such has similarity to Indian festival of Holi.

Bangladesh celebrated the 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Independence and National Day on 26 March 2007. On this day, Bangladesh pays deep respect to the valiant freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives in the war of liberation to achieve an independent and sovereign Bangladesh. The people of Bangladesh fought the liberation war to establish the rightful place for Bangladesh in the community of nations and for the cause of peace, progress and harmony; and also to work for global progress.

Bangladesh enjoys excellent bilateral relations with Thailand. Priority is being given to expanding the relations in the areas of trade, investment, energy, infrastructure development, agriculture, tourism and culture. Both countries are active members of the BIMSTEC, ARF, ACD and ADPC etc

## Bangladesh National Day



Above : H.E. Mr. Shahed Akkhtar, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Thailand took a group photo with the distinguished guests.

## BIMSTEC Upcoming Activities

Date	Activity	Venue
19-20 Apr 2007	JWG-CTTC Sub-group on Legal and Law Enforcement Issues	New Delhi
8-10 May 2007	Workshop on Fisheries Cooperation	Phuket
15-16 May 2007	Sub-Group on Combating and Financing Terrorism	Phuket
22-23 May 2007	2 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting for finalizing the Memorandum of Association for the establishment of the BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate	New Delhi
6-19 June 2007	BIMSTEC Exhibition to Commemorate the 10th Anniversary of Founding of BIMSTEC	Bangkok

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