

# BIMSTEC Newsletter

A Monthly Newsletter from BIMSTEC Centre



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## BIMSTEC Event

### **BIMSTEC Business Visa Scheme**



The 3<sup>rd</sup> Expert Group Meeting on BIMSTEC Business Visa Scheme was held on 27 November 2007 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Md. Abdul Karim, Joint Secretary (Political), Ministry of Home Affairs, the Government of Bangladesh, and attended by representatives from all BIMSTEC member countries.

The Meeting was held to make modalities of issuing the easy visas for the qualified businesspeople of member-countries, under a move towards boosting economic cooperation in the sub-regional bloc.

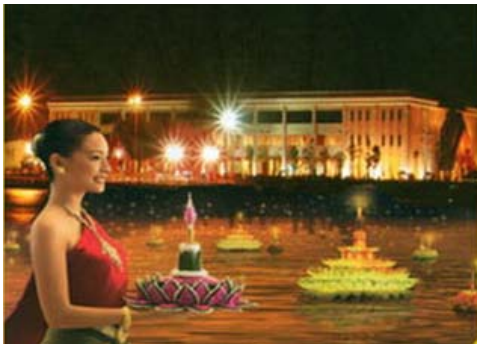
The BIMSTEC Business Visa Scheme was initiated and endorsed by the 9<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting in August 2006. It was agreed that BIMSTEC should foster people-to-people contact with a view to establishing a greater sense of community among the nations and Interactions among the people at various levels would also give strength to BIMSTEC formal process of cooperation.

### **ADB Regional Technical Workshop**

The 2nd Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting on BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS) was held on 29-30 November 2007 at the Plaza Athene Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

The secretaries and senior officials from the respective Transport/Foreign Affairs Ministries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand; the Chairperson and representatives of the BIMSTEC Working Group (BWG); members of the Technical Assistance (TA) Team from the Asian Development Bank (ADB); BTILS Consultant Team Leader; and representatives from the BIMSTEC Center attended the meeting.

The Meeting was held to discuss the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the BTILS draft Final Report; to deliberate on the policy framework and strategies to address the issues and constraints identified in the Study and to consolidate views on priorities for BIMSTEC transport connectivity; and to discuss the proposed implementation mechanism/organisation and schedule. If necessary, TAC members agreed to convene the 3<sup>rd</sup> TAC Meeting in early 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand.



## Loy Krathong Festival



Loy Krathong (or Loi Krathong) is a festival celebrated annually throughout Thailand. It is held on the full moon of the 12<sup>th</sup> month in the traditional Thai lunar calendar, in the western calendar this usually falls into November.

“Loi” means “to float”. “Krathong” is a raft about a handspan in diameter traditionally made from a section of banana tree trunk, decorated with elaborately-folded banana leaves, flowers, candles, incense sticks etc. In modern-days, bread flowers and Styrofoam were widely used but lately reversed back to the traditional rafts as they are more environmental friendly. During the night of the full moon, people will release a small raft on a river. In addition, fireworks and beauty contests take place during the festival.

The festival probably originated in India as a Hindu festival similar to Diwali as thanksgiving to the deity of the Ganges with floating lanterns for giving life throughout the year. The Thai tradition of Loy Krathong started off in Sukhothai, but is now celebrated throughout Thailand, with the festivities in Chiang Mai and Ayutthaya being particularly well known.

The beauty contests that accompany the festival are known as "Noppamas Queen Contests". According to legend, Noppamas was a consort of the Sukothai king Loethai (14<sup>th</sup> century) and she was the first to float decorated krathongs.

## BIMSTEC upcoming Activities

Date	Activity	Venue
12-16 November 2007	Workshop on Geoinformatics Applications in Disaster Management for BIMSTEC countries	Dehradun
27 November 2007	3 <sup>rd</sup> Expert Group Meeting BIMSTEC Business Visa Scheme	Dhaka
29-30 November 2007	2 <sup>nd</sup> TAC Meeting on BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistics Study (BTILS)	Bangkok
3-4 December 2007	4 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of Chief Executives of Railways	Bangkok
9-10 January 2008	Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation	Dhaka

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