

# BIMSTEC Newsletter

A Monthly Newsletter from BIMSTEC Centre



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Event

## India-ASEAN Agreement on Trade in Goods signed



August 13, 2009  
Bangkok

India and ASEAN signed the Agreement on Trade in Goods on August 13, 2009 in Bangkok. The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) grouping is currently being chaired by Thailand who hosted the meeting of the Economic Ministers of ASEAN and India, following which the Agreement was signed.

ASEAN is a major trading partner for India and accounts for about 10% of its global trade. In the last financial year, bilateral trade between India and ASEAN was more than US \$ 40 billion. India and ASEAN have set an ambitious target of achieving bilateral trade of US \$ 50 billion by 2010. The current Agreement which comes into force from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 would help achieve this target.

The Trade in Goods agreement focuses on tariff liberalization on mutually agreed tariff lines from both the sides and is targeted to eliminate tariffs on 80% of the tariff lines accounting for 75% of the trade in a gradual manner starting from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2010.

The signing of the India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement will also give a further impetus to the trade and investment linkages between India and ASEAN. India and ASEAN are currently negotiating Agreements on Trade in Services and Investment.

Details of the India-ASEAN Agreement are available at:  
[http://commerce.nic.in/trade/international\\_ta\\_indasean.asp](http://commerce.nic.in/trade/international_ta_indasean.asp)

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## Birthday of Her Majesty the Queen, Thailand



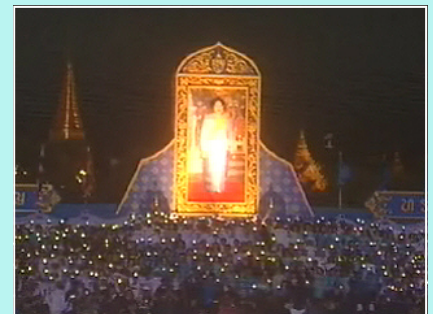
Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's birthday on August 12 is a public holiday celebrated nationwide as **Mother's Day**. Thailand celebrates the Queen's birthday with many activities to pay tribute to the "**Mother of the Land**" who has always been a loving and devoted mother.

Her Majesty the Queen devoted her time and energy to the caring for the four royal children during their younger days. With all her official functions and duties, she still arranged her schedule to spend as much time as possible with her children.

When the royal children approached adulthood, Her Majesty found more time to involve herself in many areas of public life, especially concerning public welfare and the plight of the poor and the underprivileged. For almost 60 years, the Queen has worked side by side with His Majesty the King to eliminate difficulties within the kingdom.

### Celebrations

Donning blue, the color of Friday, the day of the week of the Queen's birth, people and organizations raise flags and portraits of Her Majesty in Bangkok and all over the kingdom. They also offer food to Buddhist monks in the morning to mark her birthday. In the evening, a sea of candlelight and fireworks light the sky over Bangkok's Sanam Luang to celebrate the Queen's birthday and to express their loyalty. Apart from the mass candle-lighting ceremony, there are cultural shows and art performances countrywide as well as the beautiful night along Ratchadamnern road, which has been decorated with thousands of lights.



Although Thai people take the opportunity to pay respects to Her Majesty the Queen on this day, there is also plenty of attention paid to their mothers. In Thai society, a mother is accorded the highest significance as the giver of life and the person who nurtures and brings up family members. She is also someone who works for a living to help sustain the household and who teaches knowledge and skills until the children become self-supporting, all this without demanding anything in return.

On Mother's Day, people buy flowers (especially jasmines), send cards and take their mothers out to lunch or dinner. One of the activities recently launched jointly by several organizations to mark Mother's Day is to take mothers to travel for pleasure. The activity provides an opportunity for family members to spend time together, thus promoting the bonds of love and care for mothers.

## Independence Day of India

The Independence Day of India is celebrated annually on the 15th of August. The date commemorates the day when India achieved freedom from the British rule in the year 1947. In history this date has a special significance as it gave birth to a new nation and a new era. The Independence Day was also the end of nearly a century of struggle for freedom, battles, betrayals and sacrifices. It is an occasion to rejoice in the freedom and to honor those who sacrificed their lives to the cause.



Schools and people hoist the national flag throughout the country and put them up on the rooftops and the buildings. All the government offices are closed on this day but they are lit up with tricolor lights and flag hoisting ceremonies are performed in almost all schools and colleges to mark the occasion. Roads are decorated with tricolor flags and lights to give a patriotic feel.

One day before the Independence day, the President of India delivers the address to the Nation. On India's Independence Day, a national holiday, is celebrated all across the nation with great enthusiasm. The day is marked with flag hosting and cultural programs in the state capital, and the Prime Minister's speech at the Red Fort in Delhi is the major attraction of the day's celebration. A colorful pageant showcasing India's cultural diversity, symbolic depictions of the country's advances in science and technology, and a joint display of India's military capabilities by the armed forces are an essential part of the Independence Day celebrations.

Source: The National portal of India <<http://india.gov.in>>

### BIMSTEC Upcoming Activities

Date	Activity	Venue
8 September 2009	92 <sup>nd</sup> BWG Meeting	Bangkok
2 - 3 November 2009	2 <sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation	Nepal
25 - 27 November 2009	12 <sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and 14 <sup>th</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting	Myanmar
<b>Dates to be Identified</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks		India
19 <sup>th</sup> Trade Negotiation Committee Meeting		India
2 <sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Conference		Thailand
5 <sup>th</sup> JWG on Counter-Terrorism and Transactional Crimes		Nepal
1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting of Tourism Working Group		India
3 <sup>rd</sup> Expert Group Meeting on Agricultural Cooperation		-

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