

**STATEMENT BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY LYONPO JIGMI Y. THINLEY,  
PRIME MINISTER OF THE KINGDOM OF BHUTAN,  
AT THE FIRST BIMST-EC SUMMIT,**

BANGKOK, FRIDAY 31 JULY 2004

Hon'ble Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, Prime Minister of Thailand,  
Hon'ble President(s),  
Hon'ble Prime Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is indeed a matter of great honour and pleasure for my delegation to be in this beautiful city of Bangkok to participate in the First BIMST-EC Summit. We deeply appreciate the warm reception and generous hospitality extended to us by the Government of Thailand.

2. Allow me to express our sincere gratitude to all member countries of BIMST-EC for their unanimous support in facilitating our country's membership to this most important body.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. It is fitting that the First BIMST-EC Summit should be held in Bangkok, its birthplace. Bhutan greatly appreciates and welcomes the kind offer of the Government of Thailand to host this historic meeting. We in Bhutan have the highest regard for the great Thai nation and its people, sharing as we do a similar culture based on Buddhist values and the institution of Monarchy. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand is highly respected in my country for His Majesty's wisdom and leadership in guiding the destiny of the Thai people.

4. I would like to say that we had been observing with much admiration the resilience of the Thai economy in recovering from its economic crisis. However, it is Thailand's bold and courageous manner with which it has dealt with the HIV/AIDS epidemic that my country would particularly like to pay tribute to. This exemplary leadership in battling the scourge against humanity is most inspiring for all countries, in particular for us in South Asia. We applaud Thailand's role and political commitment in bringing the battle against this devastating disease to the forefront of world attention.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. We believe that in this rapidly globalizing world, our future is closely linked to developments in our region and the world at large. Our membership of the BIMST-EC is therefore, an extension of our policy of seeking closer economic cooperation, not only with our South Asian neighbours but also with countries of South East Asia. BIMST-EC is a bridge between the two sub-regional groups and my region in particular, stands to benefit from the very successful cooperative culture that South East Asia has been able to evolve.

6. Bhutan fully subscribes to the objectives of BIMST-EC, which among others, is to create an enabling environment for rapid economic growth of our sub-region. We also believe in the efforts to accelerate social progress and engage in active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interests that would reflect the potential of the new economic imperatives of liberalization.

7. BIMST-EC has moved forward in the agreed priority areas in trade and investment, tourism, technology, transport and communication, energy, and fisheries. It is as inevitable as it is timely for our countries to work collectively towards attaining the goal of cooperative frameworks aimed at encouraging these priority areas of cooperation. I do favor the view that there exist new opportunities to be seized, opportunities that are in favor of the approach to increase multi-tiered dialogues and networks of cooperation.

8. As a kingdom with goodwill towards all nations, Bhutan has always been supportive of regional cooperation efforts. We look forward to our new partnership in regional cooperation in BIMST-EC with confidence and optimism. BIMST-EC is an on-going and forward-looking process and given the strong political will and commitment of member countries, its prospects are bright, as BIMST-EC countries represent a rich spectrum of developmental and globalization experiences.

9. We are keen to work with all members and to learn from their experiences in promoting trade, investment and services for our mutual gain and benefit. We must deploy our best and brightest to identify common challenges and seek solutions. We must work towards broadening the base of sub-regional cooperation by encouraging people-to-people contact and gradually expanding our interactions with civil societies. We must learn to look to each other as partners with shared goals, mutual interests and common challenges.

10. Let me assure you that Bhutan will Endeavour to fulfill the objectives of BIMST-EC and work resolutely with the rest of the members to improve the well being and quality of life of the peoples in our regions.

Thank you and Tashi Delek!