BIMSTEC Secretariat

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Press Release

IPCS-BIMSTEC-HD Launch Report on Harmonising Humanitarian Assistance (HA) / Disaster Relief (DR) in Bay of Bengal

In a significant step toward regional cooperation in disaster response and climate resilience, BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), in partnership with the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), officially launched a pioneering report titled "Harmonising Humanitarian Assistance(HA)/Disaster Relief(DR) in the Bay of Bengal" at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka on 8 July 2025.

The report builds on insights from the IPCS-BIMSTEC-HD Policy Implementation Workshop held in October 2024 in Bangkok, which convened experts, policymakers, and practitioners from across the region to address growing climate challenges. The report underscores the urgent need to harmonise regional efforts in HA/DR in the face of intensifying natural disasters.

The event was graced by H.E. Mr. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of BIMSTEC and H.E. Mr. Abdul Motaleb Sarker, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

The Secretary General emphasised that "The challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters in the Bay of Bengal region demand a collective response. As BIMSTEC continues to grow in relevance, we must focus on building disaster-resilient infrastructure and strengthening regional preparedness. The report makes a timely and important case for harmonising disaster response efforts—and rightly recognises BIMSTEC as the platform to lead that charge."

The Additional Secretary said that "The report comes at a crucial moment. As climate-induced disasters intensify across the Bay of Bengal, our collective response must be swift, more coordinated, and grounded in shared systems. Harmonisation, as rightly emphasised in the report, is the key to unlocking more effective action. Bangladesh, as the current Chair of BIMSTEC, fully supports the call for greater alignment and stands committed to strengthening regional cooperation in disaster preparedness and response."

The report presents a compelling case for institutional and policy harmonisation in HA/DR and recommends the following areas for action by the BIMSTEC Disaster Management Centre:

- ***Establish a research database through collaboration with specialist/technical orgnisations;***

- ***Establish a unified Regional Climate Disaster Mapping and Response Centre for the Bay of Bengal within the BDMC;***

- ***Enhance Bay of Bengal crisis communications through a platform housed in the BDMC; and***

- ***Institute a cost-sharing and prepositioning programme for HA/DR equipment and supplies coordinated by the BDMC.***

The launch concluded with interactive and insightful discussions among the participants, reinforcing a shared commitment to building a resilient and responsive regional HA/DR ecosystem.

Disaster Management is one of the sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation. The Expert Group on Disaster Management is currently engaged in finalising Plan of Action to improve Preparedness and coordination for responding to natural disaster in the member States. A BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate has been set-up in Noida, India; it makes tailored weather and climate forecasts for the member States. Three rounds of BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise have been held. A BIMSTEC Disaster Management Centre is being proposed in India to anchor cooperation among the member States in disaster management.

BIMSTEC comprises seven countries of the Bay of Bengal region: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It pursues regional cooperation in 7 broad sectors: Agriculture & Food Security; Connectivity; Environment & Climate Change; People-to-People Contact; Science, Technology & Innovation; Security; and Trade, Investment & Development. The cooperation also covers 8 sub-sectors: Blue Economy, Mountain Economy, Energy, Disaster Management, Fisheries & Livestock, Poverty Alleviation, Health, and Human Resource Development.

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