



Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

Press Release

Regional Maritime Cooperation Gets a Fresh Impetus at 2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave

Visakhapatnam, India | 15 July 2025: Member States of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), in their deliberations at the 2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave, held from 14–15 July 2025, reaffirmed their collective commitment to strengthening maritime connectivity through cooperation amongst their ports.

Hosted by the Visakhapatnam Port Authority, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways of India, the two-day Conclave was themed **“Navigating the Future: Blue Economy, Innovation & Sustainable Partnerships”**. Delegations of the seven BIMSTEC member States, comprising maritime experts, port authorities, private sector leaders, and regional development partners, discussed ways to deepen cooperation among BIMSTEC ports, attract strategic investments in maritime infrastructure and accelerate the transition toward environmentally sustainable and digitally enabled port ecosystems.

While inaugurating the Conclave, **Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal** stated that, ***“India’s Neighbourhood First Policy exemplifies its commitment to leading cooperation in the regional maritime sector.”*** He also highlighted national initiatives, including Harit Sagar and Green Ports, aimed at fostering economic development through water transport.

Speaking at the event, **Minister of State of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Shri Shantanu Thakur**, emphasised the strategic importance of BIMSTEC, stating, ***“BIMSTEC countries are global powerhouses in various sectors, whose strengths create vast opportunities for deeper regional cooperation in a rapidly evolving global landscape.”***

The discussions covered a broad range of issues, with key focus areas including:

1. Accelerating private sector investment and public-private partnerships (PPPs) in BIMSTEC maritime projects
2. Recalibrating global supply chains: strategic opportunities for South and Southeast Asia
3. Catalysing Bay of Bengal port connectivity and regional trade flows
4. Unlocking opportunities with the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation

5. Enhancing intra-regional trade through harmonising customs and logistics for regional port efficiency
6. Promoting cruise tourism in coastal states in the Bay of Bengal
7. Future roadmaps for BIMSTEC port collaboration
8. Upskilling BIMSTEC maritime workforce

The Conclave concluded on a forward-looking note with a strong emphasis on enhancing regional maritime cooperation, sustainability, and trade facilitation. It focused on promoting public-private partnerships, harmonising policies and procedures among member States, standardising port products and services, accelerating digitisation, and upgrading skills across the maritime sector.

There was due focus on implementing the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC), adopted at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit earlier this year. Signing of the AMTC is regarded as a significant milestone in facilitating efficient and harmonised maritime trade and transport across the region. India, the first country to ratify the agreement, has already proposed establishment of a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Maritime Transport (BSMarTC) in India to support implementation and build technical capacity among the member States.

To enhance regional maritime cooperation, the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Maritime Cooperation has identified five strategic priority areas:

- Maritime Domain Awareness
- Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR)
- Oil Pollution Response
- Maritime Security
- Blue Economy Development

The forum also highlighted the need for green shipping corridors and alignment with global benchmarks to foster environmentally sustainable practices in the Bay of Bengal region. Several institutional mechanisms were proposed, including the establishment of a BIMSTEC Network of Maritime Think Tanks, a BIMSTEC Maritime Cooperation Coordination Centre or Ports Association, and a BIMSTEC Maritime Business Forum. The Conclave further advocated for the development of a BIMSTEC Ports Communication System to enhance digital connectivity and coordination among regional ports.

In the area of trade facilitation, the Conclave called for a regional single window clearance mechanism for customs and seaport procedures, as well as the negotiation of a BIMSTEC Trade Facilitation Agreement. Recognising the importance of multimodal connectivity, the Conclave proposed the organisation of a BIMSTEC Land Ports Conclave along similar lines.

The Conclave also proposed the formation of a BIMSTEC Expert Group on Seaports to provide strategic guidance, policy inputs, and technical support to advance port cooperation within the region.

In his remarks, **the Secretary General of BIMSTEC, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey**, said ***“Strengthening maritime cooperation is essential to building a connected, resilient, and prosperous Bay of Bengal region. This Conclave provides an important opportunity for Member States to align strategic priorities, accelerate joint action, and advance BIMSTEC’s vision of regional integration,”***

Participants welcomed India’s announcement to establish a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Sustainable Maritime Transport as a regional hub for research, training, and best practices in green and resilient maritime logistics. The Conclave’s agenda aligned closely with the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity, highlighting the development of deep-sea ports, inland waterways, and coastal routes to better serve landlocked and underserved regions. Emphasising that maritime connectivity is key to trade, security, environmental resilience, and people-to-people ties, participants also shared best practices in public-private partnerships and innovation in green shipping, port automation, and low-carbon logistics—reflecting BIMSTEC’s growing focus on sustainable and diversified regional cooperation.

In closing, the Secretary General called for institutionalising the BIMSTEC Ports Conclave as a regular mechanism to sustain dialogue and deepen cooperation in the maritime domain. He affirmed the BIMSTEC Secretariat’s continued commitment to working closely with Member States to realise the goal of a secure, prosperous, and developed Bay of Bengal region.

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 and Food Security; Connectivity; Environment and Climate Change; People-to-People Contact; Science, Technology and Innovation; Security; and Trade, Investment and Development. The cooperation also covers 8 sub-sectors: Blue Economy, Mountain Economy, Energy, Disaster Management, Fisheries and Livestock, Poverty Alleviation, Health, and Human Resource Development.

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