



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

Press Release

First BIMSTEC Traditional Music Festival Showcases Cultural Traditions of Its Seven Member States

New Delhi, India | 6 August 2025: BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) reached a significant cultural milestone with inauguration of its First Traditional Music Festival, titled 'Sapt-Sur' – referring to the seven musical notes as well as the seven member States – in New Delhi, India on August 4, 2025. Hosted by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the Festival brought together artists and audiences from 7 South and Southeast Asian member States of BIMSTEC in a vibrant celebration of their shared cultural heritage and unity.

The Festival was inaugurated by India's External Affairs Minister, H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, who described it as a "living bridge" that reflects the cultural harmony among the BIMSTEC member States. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, Dr. Jaishankar underscored the power of cultural diplomacy in strengthening regional bonds. He stated, "Music transcends borders. It is not only an expression of creativity and emotion but also a powerful medium to preserve heritage and foster mutual respect among nations." As the world faces rising geopolitical uncertainty, the Minister noted that cultural traditions, including music, play a critical role in asserting identity and dignity on the global stage.

The performances at the Festival featured a unique blend of folk, classical and indigenous music, resonating with themes of unity, diversity and regional solidarity. It offered an exceptional platform for audiences to experience cultural richness of the BIMSTEC community.

BIMSTEC plans to host more such Fests in future to celebrate the rich cultural heritage of its member States and strengthen people-to-people ties.

Under the Paro Initiative, BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) have been set up in Paro, Bhutan, serving as institutional pillars for advancing cultural cooperation in the region. The Expert Group on Cultural Cooperation has finalized a comprehensive Plan of Action, outlining key initiatives such as the BIMSTEC Cultural Heritage Inventory, BIMSTEC Buddhist Circuit, BIMSTEC Network of Cultural Experts, and capacity building for cultural professionals. Efforts are also underway for the systematic

identification and documentation of BIMSTEC's rich cultural heritage. Additionally, a proposal is under consideration to establish a Centre of Excellence for Culture and Tourism in Nepal, further reinforcing BIMSTEC's commitment to fostering cultural integration and people-to-people connectivity across the 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 & 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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