

Remarks by the BIMSTEC Secretary General
12th Anniversary of the establishment of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka
14 September 2026

Your Excellency Humaiun Kobir, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Your Excellency Mr. M. Iqbal Hossain, Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief; Excellencies; Distinguished members of diplomatic corps; friends from business, culture, media, academia, civil society and think tanks communities; distinguished guests, Namaskar! Shubh Sandhya and A very Good Evening to you all!

I wish us all Happy 12th Anniversary of the establishment of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka! It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to our celebration of the 12th Anniversary of Establishment of the BIMSTEC Secretariat. I am grateful to you all for your kind presence. I am particularly thankful to His Excellency Humaiun Kobir, Hon'ble State Minister for Foreign Affairs, for his esteemed presence. I take this opportunity to also thank His Excellency Mr. M. Iqbal Hossain, Honorable State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief, for his esteemed presence.

On this auspicious occasion, I extend my warm greetings to the Governments and People of 7 BIMSTEC member States. As you all know Bangladesh is the current Chair of BIMSTEC and I take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the BIMSTEC Secretariat, the Government of Bangladesh for various initiatives being planned and proposed by it to enhance regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. I also thank the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka. I am grateful to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh for its continued support to the Secretariat, since its establishment in September 2014.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

As you all know, the signing of Bangkok Declaration, on 06 June 1997, marked the birth of BIMSTEC. It was a historic initiative by the then Leaders of Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand to create a platform for cooperation between the countries of South Asia and South-East Asia. Initially known as BIST-EC, it was renamed as BIMSTEC, after Myanmar joined 6 months later. When Bhutan and Nepal joined BIMSTEC in 2004, it was, with its 7 members, renamed as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. Two BIMSTEC members, Myanmar and Thailand, are also ASEAN members, which has enabled BIMSTEC to benefit from the experience of ASEAN.

As we are aware, the BIMSTEC member States face similar developmental and security challenges, which they cannot address alone. They recognize the imperative and importance of regional cooperation to deal with common security and developmental challenges in Bay of Bengal region through BIMSTEC. Our member States consider BIMSTEC a vital instrument for realization of their security and sustainable development goals and fully support it. Their geographical contiguity, historical linkages and shared cultural heritage provide a solid foundation for forging regional cooperation under BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC, since its inception, has made significant progress in forging regional cooperation in various sectors, on its comprehensive agenda, pertaining to regional security and sustainable development. BIMSTEC has succeeded in creating the institutional framework that it needs to function as an efficient and effective regional Organization. BIMSTEC has its own Charter and its vision is enshrined in BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030. BIMSTEC has held so far 6 Summits of Heads of Governments and numerous Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings, including Sectoral Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings.

BIMSTEC has a vast and clearly defined Agenda, comprising 18 Sectors, which have been organized into 7 Groups. Each BIMSTEC member State has been designated as the lead State for pursuing cooperation in one of the 7 Groups, which has ensured that each member State considers itself an equal stakeholder in BIMSTEC and contributes equally to its success.

There are numerous sectoral joint working groups, expert groups and their sub-groups to identify the areas of cooperation in various sectors and monitor their implementation. There are agreed Action Plans for cooperation in various Sectors, which are being implemented. BIMSTEC has remained focused on its core mandate of technical and economic cooperation and has avoided placing political issues on its Agenda.

In order to institutionalize cooperation in various sectors, BIMSTEC has also established BIMSTEC Centres, such as BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate, BIMSTEC Energy Centre, both in India, BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory in Bhutan, and BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility in Sri Lanka. There are initiatives to establish 10 more Centres of Excellence in areas, such as Agriculture, Disaster Management, Maritime Transport, Traditional Medicine, Public Health, Public Audit, Culture and Tourism Skill Development, live stock and digital economy.

BIMSTEC has already concluded two Conventions: BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking; and BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters. 3 more Conventions on Extradition; Human Trafficking; and Transfer of Sentenced Persons are being concluded. The BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation, which was signed in April 2025, has entered into force for 4 member States. Besides, a number of MoUs and MoAs have also been signed and are being concluded.

I am happy to inform you that with the entry into force of BIMSTEC Charter, BIMSTEC is a legal entity; and its door is open for admission of Observers and new Members.

BIMSTEC has been seeking developmental partnerships with the non-members as well as the UN, International and Regional Organisations. BIMSTEC has entered into MoUs for forging partnerships with ADB, IFPRI, IORA and UNODC. BIMSTEC has been implementing a project in health sector on pandemic preparedness and response with support from WB and FAO. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Council has approved the BIMSTEC Secretariat as a Member of the Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D). We have been exploring partnerships with ASEAN, CDRI, FAO, ISA, ICIMOD, IUCN, UNDRR, UNEP, UNESCAP, UNOPS, Un Women, WB, WIPO and WHO.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

The ceremonial inauguration of the Secretariat, in Dhaka, in September 2014, was a momentous occasion. The BIMSTEC Secretariat has since emerged as the anchor for implementation of regional cooperation initiatives under BIMSTEC. In view of the expanding regional cooperation within BIMSTEC, the role of the Secretariat since evolved and expanded. The Secretariat has been working closely with the member States towards implementation of the decisions of BIMSTEC Leaders and Ministerial Meetings through facilitating consultation, communication and coordination amongst the member States.

The Secretariat monitors and reports to the member States on the progress in implementation of their decisions. We have created a Project Management Unit in the Secretariat in order to undertake implementation of projects. With a view to enhance visibility of BIMSTEC, the Secretariat has enhanced its outreach to various stakeholders: universities/academic institutions, think tanks, media, business communities etc. The Secretariat also represents BIMSTEC at regional, international and global platforms.

The key challenge faced by BIMSTEC is not the lack of political will or inability to build consensus; it is implementation of the decisions taken by the Summits and Ministerial Meetings. Therefore, based on the Recommendations contained in the Report of Eminent Persons Group, BIMSTEC has been going through reforms and revitalization in order to make it a more capable, effective and efficient organization.

Let me reiterate that the BIMSTEC Secretariat remains committed to support the member States in expanding and deepening cooperation under BIMSTEC. The Secretariat Team is immensely grateful to the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the Secretariat and providing all the necessary support to it. We are also grateful to the Embassies and High Commissions of the BIMSTEC member States in Dhaka for their continued support to the Secretariat.

Before I conclude, I once again express my gratitude to our Chief Guest and all our distinguished guests for their esteemed presence. Thank you all, once again, for being a part of our celebration and for your unwavering support to BIMSTEC. I seek your continued support for BIMSTEC in future. I wish you a joyful evening. Namaskar!
