



BIMSTEC

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

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Editorial



Welcome to our 5th monthly BIMSTEC e-Newsletter of 2024!

May 2024 was a historic month for BIMSTEC as its Charter entered into force on 20th May, granting the BIMSTEC a legal status. The 3rd Meeting of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) was held during the month and I paid my introductory visit to Nepal.

It was an honour to meet with Hon'ble President, Prime Minister and relevant Ministers, Senior Officials of the Government of Nepal, seeking their guidance for deepening regional cooperation among the BIMSTEC member States and briefing them on the current state of cooperation under the BIMSTEC Framework. The EPG held its third Meeting in Dhaka, marking significant progress in its work.

I also had the opportunity to participate at the 4th Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue and Jakarta Futures Forum: Blue Horizon, Green Growth, where I shared the BIMSTEC's perspectives. Further, there were engagements with various partners both within and outside the region, including a visit to BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru, India. These engagements underscored the tremendous promise that BIMSTEC holds for the region.

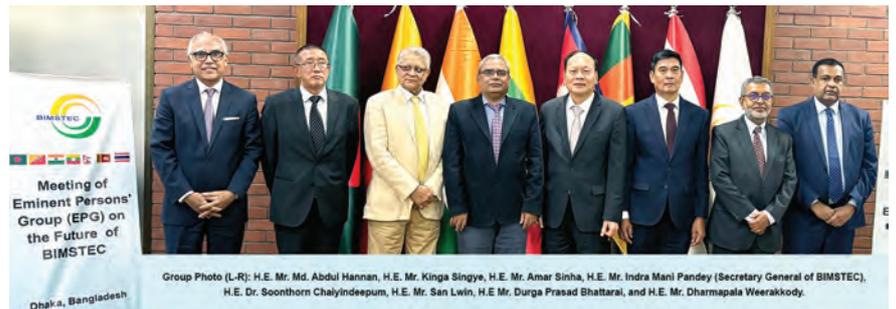
We will celebrate soon the BIMSTEC's Foundation Day. I am also looking forward to my introductory visits to Bhutan and Myanmar.

We value your continued indulgence and look forward to your valuable suggestions.

Happy Reading!

(Indra Mani Pandey)
Secretary General

3rd Meeting of the Eminent Persons' Group on Future Directions of BIMSTEC



The 3rd Meeting of the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) on Future Directions of BIMSTEC was held, on 12-13 May 2024, at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka.

The Meeting was chaired by Dr. Soonthorn Chaiyindeepum, member of EPG from Thailand, which is the current Chair of BIMSTEC. The members of EPG from 6 BIMSTEC member States participated in the Meeting. HE Ambassador Dharmapala Weerakkody also participated in the Meeting, as the officiating member of EPG from Sri Lanka. The BIMSTEC Secretariat, led by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, facilitated the Meeting and participated in its deliberations.

During the two-day long Meeting, the EPG engaged in discussions on Bangkok Vision 2030; alignment of the BIMSTEC's Agenda with the Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development Goals; and the current status of regional cooperation within BIMSTEC.

Furthermore, the EPG held interactions with the Ambassadors and High Commissioners of BIMSTEC member States to Bangladesh as well as the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee.

The EPG has been entrusted with the task of making recommendations to reform, revitalize and repurpose the BIMSTEC in order to foster a prosperous, resilient and developed Bay of Bengal region. The establishment of EPG serves as a testament to the BIMSTEC's commitment to take requisite steps to foster and deepen regional cooperation with a view to promote sustainable development and security of its member States.

The EPG is committed to submit its Report to BIMSTEC Leaders at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit, which is scheduled to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, later this year. The 4th Meeting of the EPG will be held in Dhaka in June 2024.

Secretary General Pays Introductory Visit to Nepal 19-23 May 2024



Secretary General undertook his introductory visit to Nepal from 19-23 May 2024. Nepal, a land of magnificent mountains, lakes and valleys and a multi-religious and multi-cultural nation, is one of the seven member States of BIMSTEC.

During his visit, Secretary General called on Honourable President of Nepal, H.E. Ramchandra Paudel, on 21 May 2024, at the Presidential Palace, and briefed him on the present state of regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal region within the BIMSTEC framework. While highlighting Nepal's significant contributions to BIMSTEC, Honourable President underscored the importance of the BIMSTEC as a Forum that links the mountain ecosystem of Himalayas with the marine ecosystem of Bay of Bengal.

Later, the same day, Secretary General called on Honourable Prime Minister of Nepal, H.E. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachandra,' in Singha Durbar, and solicited Nepal's continued support in strengthening regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal region through BIMSTEC. Secretary General underscored the significance of entry into force of the BIMSTEC Charter on 20 May 2024, hoping that it would usher in a new era of cooperation within BIMSTEC. Prime Minister, recalling his participation in the Retreat of BIMSTEC Leaders, hosted in Goa in 2016 by Prime Minister H.E. Shri Narendra Modi of India, emphasized the important role that BIMSTEC can play in realization of peace, security and prosperity of the member States, and reiterated the commitment of the Government of Nepal to steering BIMSTEC towards new heights. He hoped that the upcoming Summit would add new vigour to regional cooperation within BIMSTEC.

Secretary General also called on Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Narayan Kaji Shrestha, and reviewed with him the present state of regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC, the way forward and the vital role of Nepal in the success of the BIMSTEC. The Minister underlined the need to implement earnestly the decisions taken in the past by BIMSTEC Leaders.

During his call on Honourable Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, H.E. Hit Bahadur Tamang, Secretary General discussed the significance of Nepal's vital role, as the Lead member State, in strengthening regional cooperation in areas of culture, tourism as well as poverty alleviation and people-to-people contact.

On 20 May 2024, Secretary General called on Foreign Secretary, H.E. Sewa Lamsal; Secretary for Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation, H.E. Sushil Chandra Tiwari; and Secretary for Home Affairs, H.E. Eaknarayan Aryal.

Besides the official meetings, Secretary General delivered a keynote address on “**Harnessing Regional Synergies for Development and Prosperity in BIMSTEC Region**” at a Discourse organized by the Centre for Economic Development and Administration, Tribhuvan University, which was attended by eminent persons, diplomats, scholars, researchers, students, and media.

Secretary General attended the 2568th Buddha Jayanti Ceremony organised by the Government of Nepal, at the International Convention Centre in Lumbini, the birth place of Buddha. He highlighted the shared Buddhist culture and heritage of the BIMSTEC member States and prayed for peace and prosperity for all. He also visited various cultural sites in and around the Kathmandu Valley.



Secretary General participates in Jakarta Futures Forum: Blue Horizons, Green Growth



Secretary General participated at "Jakarta Futures Forum: Blue Horizon, Green Growth" organized by Observer Research Foundation and Foreign Policy Community of Indonesia, with the support of Embassy of India, in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 02-03 May 2024.

At the Forum, Secretary General delivered a Keynote Address at Panel Discussion: "International Cooperation for Facilitating a Just and Inclusive Energy Transition". He also delivered a Keynote Address, at the Working Lunch on "ASEAN-BIMSTEC Collaboration and Cross Learnings".

Besides, Secretary General met the following dignitaries from ASEAN and discussed with them the possible future collaboration between the BIMSTEC and ASEAN:

1. H.E. Ekkaphab Phanthavong, Deputy Secretary-General(DSG) for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community;
2. H.E. Satvinder Singh, DSG for ASEAN Economic Community;
3. H.E. Amb. Bovonethat DOUANGCHAK, Permanent Representative of the Lao PDR to ASEAN and the Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN;
4. H.E. Amb. Aung Myo Myint, Permanent Representative of Myanmar to ASEAN; and
5. H.E. Amb. Phantiphalsudha Ekarohit, Permanent Representative of Thailand to ASEAN.

Secretary General Participates at 4th Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue



Secretary General delivered Plenary Address at the 4th Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue in Colombo, Sri Lanka, organized by Pathfinder Foundation and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. He was also a Lead Speaker at the Panel Discussion on "Harmonising Regional Governance and Cooperation".

Secretary General is interviewed by News 1st of Sri Lanka



Secretary General was interviewed by Hashini Pathirana of News 1st of Sri Lanka during the 4th Bay of Bengal Maritime Dialogue, in Colombo, organized by Pathfinder Foundation and Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue. The interview is available at <https://t.ly/SCbpy>.

Secretary General visits BIMSTEC Energy Centre in Bengaluru



Secretary General visited the "BIMSTEC Energy Centre" in Bengaluru, India, on 09-10 May 2024. He was briefed on the role being envisioned for the Centre, including capacity building, research and development, promoting energy efficiency and addition of renewals.

Indian Foundation hosts Secretary General



The India Foundation hosted an interaction Secretary General on May 10, 2024, with focus on the present state of regional cooperation within the BIMSTEC framework and its future direction.

State Minister of Commerce of Bangladesh meets with Secretary General



H.E. Ahasanul Islam Titu, Honorable State Minister of Commerce of Bangladesh met with Secretary General at BIMSTEC Secretariat on 28 May 2024. They discussed the way forward for expanding cooperation in trade and investment sector within the BIMSTEC framework, which Bangladesh Leads.

Country Director of the World Bank for Bangladesh and Bhutan meets Secretary General



The Country Director of the World Bank for Bangladesh and Bhutan, Mr. Abdoulaye Seck, called on Secretary General on 15 May 2024. They discussed the possible opportunities for cooperation between the World Bank and BIMSTEC.

Executive Director of South Asian Network on Economic Modeling meets Secretary General



Professor Dr. Selim Raihan, Executive Director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, Dhaka, met Secretary General at the BIMSTEC Secretariat, on May 15, 2024, and discussed the opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation.

Editor-in-Charge of Daily Observer, meets Secretary General

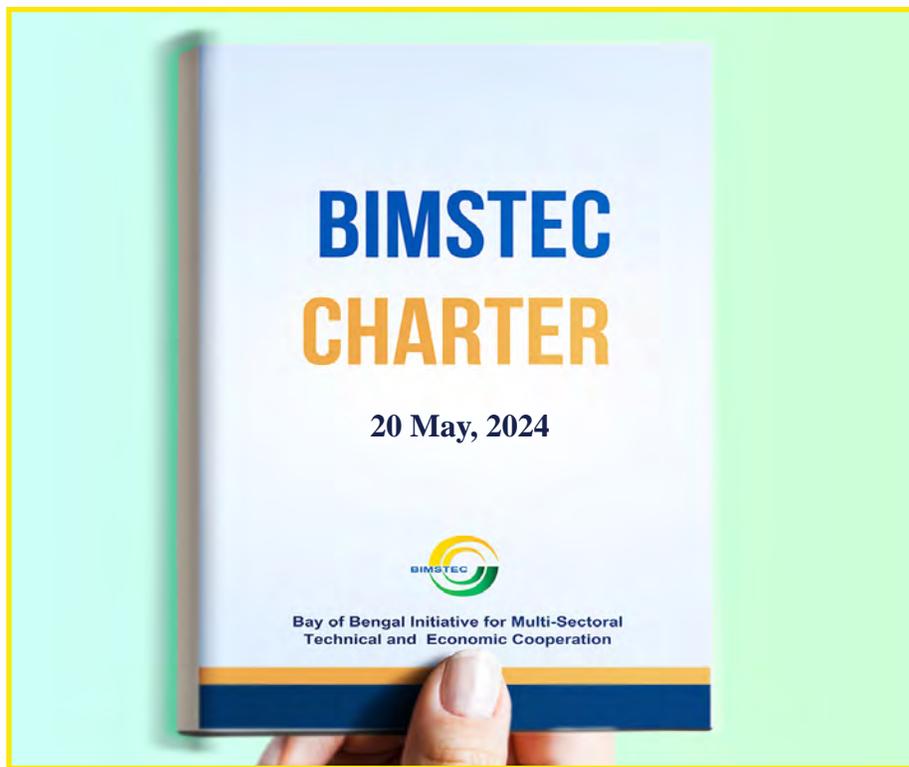


Mr. Shahriar Feroze, Editor-in-Charge of Daily Observer, met Secretary General at the BIMSTEC Secretariat on 28 May 2024. They exchanged views on the current state of regional cooperation under BIMSTEC and its future. Secretary General underscored the critical role of media in informing the people about the goals and successes of BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC Charter Enters into Force

The BIMSTEC Charter entered into force on 20 May 2024, granting the BIMSTEC a legal personality. It is a historic milestone, which will provide impetus to expanding and deepening regional cooperation in Bay of Bengal region.

The Charter was signed by the Heads of State and Government of the BIMSTEC member States during the 5th Summit held virtually, in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 30 March 2022.



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