

Message from BIMSTEC Secretary General

Welcome to the May Edition of our Monthly BIMSTEC E-Newsletter.

This month, BIMSTEC advanced regional cooperation through connectivity, capacity building and knowledge sharing, which reflects our commitment to building a more resilient and prosperous Bay of Bengal region.

The BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC) entered into force this month, marking a key milestone. AMTC provides institutional framework for strengthening maritime transport cooperation and enhancing regional maritime connectivity.

Regional cooperation in public health remains a priority for BIMSTEC. During its second Meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health reviewed implementation of its Plan of Action and mapped out priorities for future collaboration.

Cooperation in energy and digital transformation was advanced with the BIMSTEC Energy Centre hosting "Best Practices in Planning of New Power Transmission Systems Workshop".

The virtual training programme on "Designing Interoperable Digital Government Services in South Asia" organised by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in partnership with BIMSTEC Secretariat and the Open Group, provided a valuable platform for advancing regional knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.

At the Track 1.5 Regional Workshop on Climate Change and Geopolitics in South Asia, organised by IPCS, I highlighted climate change as a transnational security threat that requires urgent regional cooperation and an enhanced role for regional organisations.

BIMSTEC continued to enhance its visibility and cultural ties through media engagements, such as my participation in the Asia Media Summit hosted in the Maldives and an interview with Deshkal News.

This month we are carrying a brief on cooperation in the HRD Sector under BIMSTEC.

We deeply value your readership and welcome your suggestions both to strengthen regional cooperation under BIMSTEC and improve this E-Newsletter.

Indra Mani Pandey
BIMSTEC Secretary General

Inside this Newsletter:

In Focus: BIMSTEC Sectoral Meetings

In Focus: BIMSTEC SG's Engagements

BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation Enters into Force

Regional Capacity-building Initiatives and Workshops

Sectoral Snapshot: Advancing Human Resource Development in the BIMSTEC member States

2nd Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health



The Second Meeting of the BIMSTEC Expert Group on Public Health was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 12–13 May 2026. It was chaired by Dr. Asela Gunawardena, Director General of Health Services of Sri Lanka. It reviewed the progress in implementation of the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health (2023–2025) and discussed the revised BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health for the next phase of cooperation. The Group deliberated on a wide range of issues relating to regional public health cooperation, including strengthening disease surveillance, pandemic preparedness and response, One Health approaches, antimicrobial resistance, digital health systems, climate-related health risks and regional coordination mechanisms.

The Group also discussed establishment of BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Public Health, proposed by Sri Lanka, BIMSTEC Regional Early Warning Observatory, proposed by Bangladesh, and operationalization of the Project Management Unit (PMU) at the BIMSTEC Secretariat with support from the World Bank. The Expert Group emphasized the importance of practical, implementation-oriented cooperation and agreed to further strengthen regional collaboration in health sector through coordinated activities, capacity-building initiatives and enhanced engagement with development partners.

Knowledge Sharing Workshop on Best Practices in Planning of New Power Transmission Systems



The BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC), Bengaluru, organized a **Webinar on Best Practices in Planning of New Power Transmission Systems** on 13 May 2026. It highlighted the importance of strengthening regional cooperation and fostering a collaborative approach towards development of resilient, efficient and sustainable power transmission systems across the region.

BIMSTEC Secretary General, participates at Track 1.5 Regional Workshop on Climate Change and Geopolitics in South Asia organised by IPCS



In his inaugural remarks, Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey, SG BIMSTEC, spoke about the multidimensional nature of security, including non-traditional aspects of security such as energy, food, health, climate, water and human security. He highlighted that challenges to security posed by climate change are transnational in nature and underlined the need for regional cooperation to address them. He emphasized the salience of regional organizations in the current geopolitical climate and outlined the role being played by BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC Secretary General, participates at 21st Asia Media Summit held in Male, Maldives, during 11–14 May 2026



BIMSTEC Secretary General, Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey, participated in the High-Level Ministerial Session on **"Enabling Public Media: Policy Perspective"** and highlighted the role of public media in strengthening regional cooperation and people-to-people relations across the BIMSTEC region. He sought assistance of the media in creating awareness about BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC Secretary General Speaks to Deshkal News



In an interview with **Deshkal News**, H.E. Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General of BIMSTEC, shared his perspectives on BIMSTEC's role in advancing regional cooperation, promoting connectivity and fostering shared prosperity among its Member States.

The full interview can be accessed through the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5e3Ktb6FsM>

The BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC) enters into force

The BIMSTEC Secretariat is pleased to announce entry into force of the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC), marking a significant milestone in advancing regional maritime connectivity and maritime cooperation among the BIMSTEC Member States.

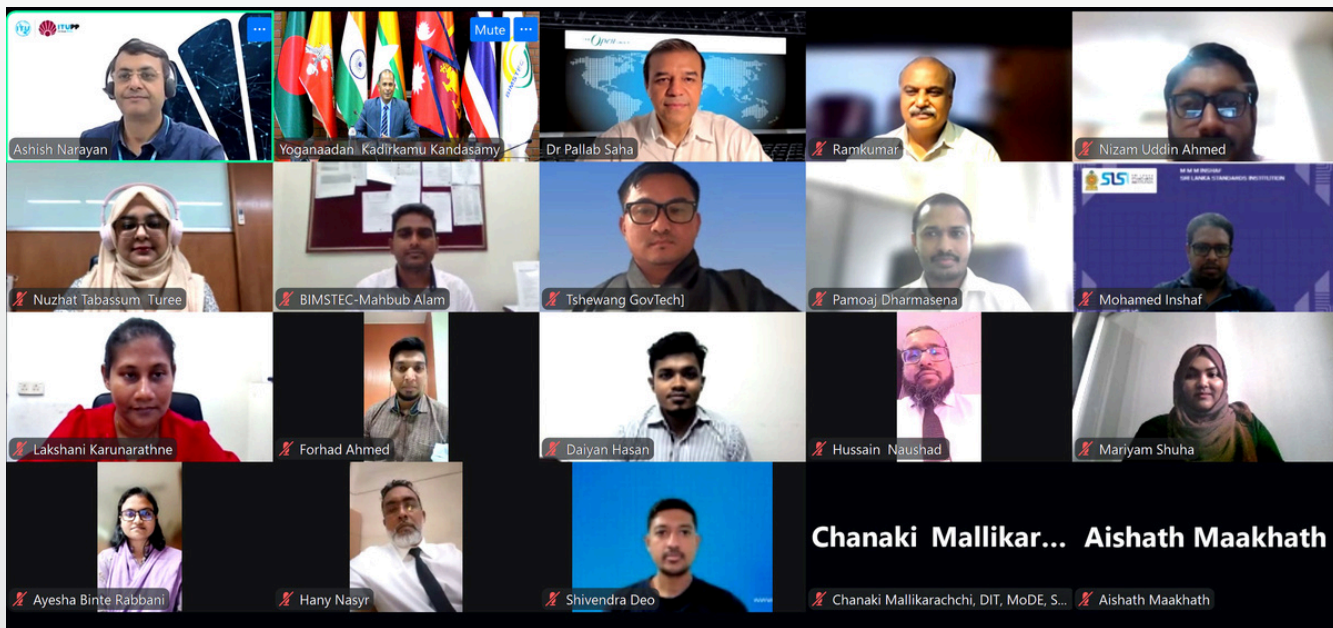
It may be recalled that the BIMSTEC Member States had signed the AMTC on 03 April 2025 during the 6th BIMSTEC Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand. The Agreement stipulates that it would enter into force following the deposit of the Instrument of Ratification, Approval, or Acceptance by at least 4 BIMSTEC member States.

With the deposition of the Instrument of Ratification by Myanmar on 13 May 2026, the 4th BIMSTEC member State to do so, the condition for entry into force has been met; it may be noted that Bhutan, India and Thailand had earlier deposited their instruments of ratification. In accordance with the provisions of the Agreement, the AMTC is now effective among the above 4 member states that have ratified it.

The entry into force of the AMTC marks an important development in enhancing maritime connectivity in the Bay of Bengal. The Agreement provides a vital framework for strengthening maritime transport cooperation, facilitating smoother movement of goods and services and harmonizing legal and operational procedures among the Member States. It is expected to contribute significantly to enhancing regional maritime connectivity, enabling an increase in intra-BIMSTEC trade, travel and tourism.

BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity, adopted in March 2022, has been under implementation and is being updated. Development of a Plan of Action for Connectivity is underway. BIMSTEC is also engaged in negotiation of a BIMSTEC Motor Vehicles Agreement. A Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Maritime Transport is being set up in India.

Regional Capacity Building on Digital Governance and GovStack



The virtual **Training Program on “Designing Interoperable Digital Government Services in South Asia”** (1–18 May 2026), organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in partnership with BIMSTEC Secretariat and the Open Group, successfully concluded on 18 May 2026.

The Program brought together participants from five BIMSTEC Member States in South Asia and provided a valuable platform for advancing regional knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in areas of digital transformation, interoperability, enterprise architecture, and citizen-centric digital public service delivery through GovStack and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

The BIMSTEC Secretariat conveys its sincere appreciation to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Open Group, distinguished speakers, facilitators, and all participants for their valuable contributions and active engagement throughout the Program.

BIMSTEC and Gelephu Mindfulness City Discuss Collaboration to Promote Regional Investments



His Excellency Ambassador Jonathan Tow, Special Envoy of His Majesty The King of Bhutan to India for the Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC), visited the BIMSTEC Secretariat on 04 May 2026. The discussion focused on exploring opportunities for collaboration between GMC and BIMSTEC in promoting intra-BIMSTEC investments.

Advancing Human Resource Development in the BIMSTEC member States

Human Resource Development (HRD) remains a cornerstone of BIMSTEC's cooperation agenda, reflecting the pivotal role of human capital in fostering sustainable development, economic resilience, innovation, and regional integration. HRD is led by Sri Lanka and focuses on strengthening skills development, education, capacity building, and workforce readiness across the BIMSTEC Member States.

Cooperation in HRD has gained significant momentum with the adoption of the BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Human Resource Development (2024–2029) and its corresponding Plan of Implementation (2025–2029). These strategic frameworks provide a comprehensive roadmap for regional collaboration in areas such as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), higher education, professional development, knowledge sharing, and institutional capacity building.

The BIMSTEC Expert Group on Human Resource Development (EGHRD) serves as the principal mechanism for advancing cooperation in this sector, facilitating policy dialogue, exchange of best practices, and implementation of agreed activities among Member States. As a key upcoming milestone, the Third Meeting of the BIMSTEC EGHRD is scheduled to be held on 18–19 August 2026 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Addressing Emerging Challenges

The BIMSTEC region is undergoing rapid socio-economic transformation driven by technological advancement, demographic changes, urbanization, and evolving labour market demands. These developments present both opportunities and challenges for human resource development.

Member States continue to face the need to address skills mismatches, enhance the quality and relevance of education and training systems, and improve employability outcomes. At the same time, ensuring equitable access to education, skills development, and lifelong learning opportunities remain essential for promoting inclusive growth and reducing socio-economic disparities.

The growing importance of digital transformation, artificial intelligence, innovation ecosystems, and entrepreneurship further highlights the need for forward-looking HRD strategies. Enhanced regional cooperation can support knowledge exchange, mutual learning, and the development of a future-ready workforce capable of contributing to sustainable economic growth and regional competitiveness.

Key Achievements at a Glance

BIMSTEC has made notable progress in strengthening regional cooperation on Human Resource Development. Key achievements include:

- Finalization and adoption of the **BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Human Resource Development (2024–2029)** and the **Plan of Implementation (2025–2029)**, providing a strategic framework for regional cooperation.
- Successful convening of the **First BIMSTEC Expert Group on Human Resource Development (EGHRD)** in August 2024, which reviewed national priorities and finalized the draft HRD frameworks.
- Convening of the **Second EGHRD Meeting** in Colombo in July 2025, which advanced implementation modalities and identified priority areas for future cooperation.
- Identification of priority areas across skills development, education, training, capacity building, and workforce enhancement.
- Strengthened regional dialogue and collaboration on human capital development in support of the objectives of the BIMSTEC Charter, the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit, and the Bangkok Vision 2030.

Through sustained cooperation and knowledge sharing, BIMSTEC continues to advance a people-centric development agenda that seeks to empower individuals, enhance employability, and build a skilled and resilient workforce for the future.



**BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL
TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

BIMSTEC SECRETARIAT

📍 HOUSE: N.W.(I)-06, ROAD: 53,
GULSHAN 2, DHAKA-1212, BANGLADESH

✉ COMMUNICATIONS@BIMSTEC.ORG

☎ +880-2222290096-98, FAX: +880-2222287565

🌐 WWW.BIMSTEC.ORG

FOLLOW US ON

