



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



BIMSTEC

A Bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an inter-Governmental Organisation. It was established on 06 June 1997 with signing of Bangkok Declaration. After Myanmar joined on 22 December 1997, the Organisation was named BIMST-EC (Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation). With admission of Bhutan and Nepal as members, in February 2004, the Organisation was renamed as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). BIMSTEC comprises seven member States; Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It acts as a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia.



"We recognize the crucial role played by BIMSTEC in enhancing regional cooperation in agreed priority areas over 27 years of its existence and the need to revitalize BIMSTEC as an effective vehicle to fulfil the developmental aspirations of the peoples in the Bay of Bengal region."

6th BIMSTEC Summit Declaration
April 2025, Bangkok

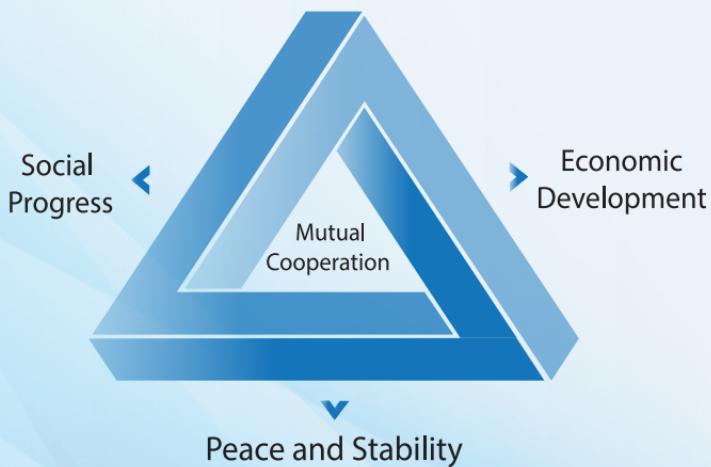
Evolution of BIMSTEC



- **April 2025:** 6th BIMSTEC Summit
- **May 2024:** Entry into force of BIMSTEC Charter
- **March 2022:** Reconstitution of various Sectors of BIMSTEC cooperation into 7 Groups of Sectors
- **September 2014:** Establishment of BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka
- **July 2004:** Renamed as BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) with joining of Nepal and Bhutan
- **December 1997:** Renamed as BIMSTEC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation) with joining of Myanmar
- **June 1997:** Establishment of BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand) Economic Cooperation through Bangkok Declaration

Purposes

- Accelerate economic development and social progress
- Promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in economic, social, technical and scientific fields
- Cooperate in projects that are productive and create synergies on regional basis
- Maintain peace and stability in Bay of Bengal region
- Maintain close and beneficial cooperation with international and regional organisations



Strategic Importance

- Seven member States of BIMSTEC are located in Bay of Bengal at the heart of Indian Ocean Region
- BIMSTEC is the only regional organisation that brings together five countries from South Asia and two countries from Southeast Asia
- BIMSTEC has a vast Agenda for regional cooperation, organised in seven Groups, with each member State taking lead in one or more Sectors
- BIMSTEC enjoys the unwavering political support of its members & focuses solely on technical and economic cooperation

BIMSTEC CHARTER

Articulates the long-term vision and priorities of the member States

Establishes the legal and institutional framework for BIMSTEC

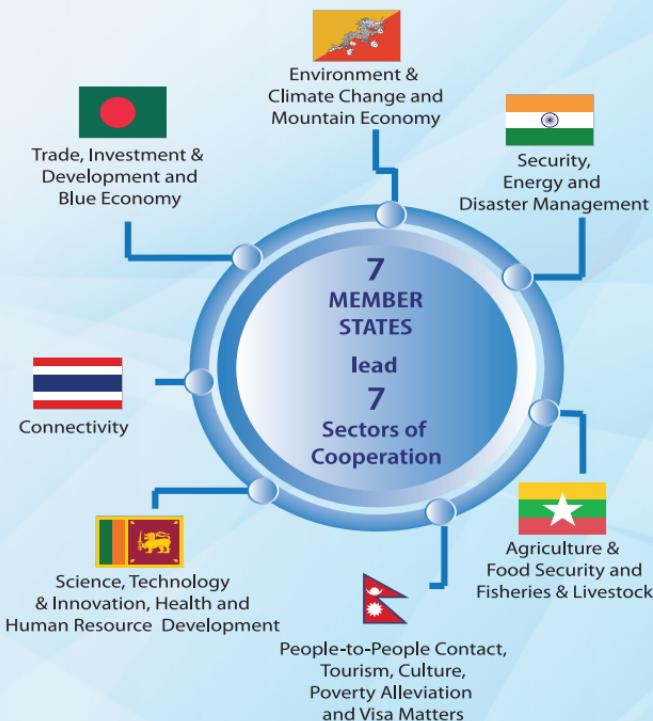
Confers legal personality on the Organisation

Enables admission of new member States and Observers

Empowers conclusion of agreements with countries/organisations

Sectors of Cooperation

The various Sectors of cooperation under BIMSTEC have been organised into seven Groups, with each member State designated as Lead for one or more Sectors.



Progress in Sectoral Cooperation

Agriculture and Food Security

Regional cooperation in Agriculture and Food Security, including fisheries & livestock, has been a high priority under BIMSTEC. The Plans of Action on BIMSTEC Agricultural Cooperation and Fisheries & Livestock Cooperation have been adopted. Proposals for establishment of a BIMSTEC Food Reserve, a Seed Bank and a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Agriculture are under consideration. There is particular focus on promoting climate resilient agriculture. BIMSTEC has signed a MoU with International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) for support in capacity building.

Blue Economy

The 1st Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Expert Group on Blue Economy is being scheduled; it will develop a Plan of Action on regional cooperation in Blue Economy in Bay of Bengal.

Connectivity

BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity, adopted in March 2022, has been under implementation. Development of a Plan of Action for Connectivity is underway. The Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC) was signed at the 6th BIMSTEC Summit, in Bangkok, in April 2025. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for operationalisation of AMTC are being finalised. BIMSTEC is also engaged in negotiation of a BIMSTEC Motor Vehicles Agreement,

which will facilitate land connectivity amongst the member States. There is a proposal to establish BIMSTEC Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre in India. BIMSTEC has been working with ADB for forging regional cooperation in Transport Connectivity.

Culture

Under Paro Initiative, BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission (BCIC) and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory (BCIO) have been set up in Paro, Bhutan. The Expert Group on Cultural Cooperation has finalised a Plan of Action, which includes BIMSTEC Cultural Heritage Inventory; BIMSTEC Buddhist Circuit; BIMSTEC Network of Cultural Experts; Capacity Development of Professionals; and Identification and Documentation of BIMSTEC Heritages. There is a proposal to set up a Centre of Excellence for Culture and Tourism in Nepal.

Disaster Management

The Expert Group on Disaster Management is currently engaged in finalising Plan of Action to improve Preparedness and Coordination for responding to natural disasters in the member States. A BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate (BCWC) has been set up in Noida, India; it makes tailored weather and climate forecasts for the member States. Three rounds of BIMSTEC Disaster Management Exercise have been held. A BIMSTEC Disaster Management Centre is being

set up in India to anchor cooperation among the member States in disaster management.

Environment and Climate Change

Regional cooperation in Environment and Climate Change Sector aims to strengthen resilience of the member States to environmental challenges and adverse impacts of climate change. Significant progress has been made in delineating and implementing Plans of Action for regional cooperation in areas of environment and climate change as well as mountain economy.

Energy

BIMSTEC has adopted a Plan of Action for Energy Cooperation. A MoU for establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection has been concluded and BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection Master Plan is under discussion. BIMSTEC Policy for Transmission of Electricity and BIMSTEC Policy for Trade, Exchange of Electricity and Tariff Mechanism are being finalised. BIMSTEC Energy Centre (BEC) has been established in Bengaluru, India.

Health

BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Public Health (2023-2025) has been under implementation. Cooperation between BIMSTEC and World Bank on Strengthening Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response and Health Systems Resilience is underway. The Inaugural Meeting of BIMSTEC Health Ministers, preceded by a Senior Health Officials' Meeting, has been

planned to be convened soon. A proposal for establishment of BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine and Public Health in Thailand is under consideration.

A BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine has been set up. There is a BIMSTEC Plan of Action for Development of Traditional Medicine. Development of a BIMSTEC Traditional Medicine Portal has been agreed. There is a proposal to set up a BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Traditional Medicine in India.

Human Resource Development

The Expert Group on Human Resource Development has finalised a Plan of Action on Human Resource Development (2024-2029) for empowering a Skilled and Resilient Workforce for the Future, especially focusing on education, skill development and capacity building.

People-People Contact Forums

A Network of Policy Think Tanks of BIMSTEC member States has been set up; it makes policy recommendations for enhancing regional cooperation in various Sectors under BIMSTEC. An Association of BIMSTEC Speakers and Parliamentarians is being set up. Youth Exchanges and Sports events have been held.

Poverty Alleviation

Poverty Alleviation has been a priority goal for regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. A Plan of Action on Poverty Alleviation has been adopted and is under implementation.

Security

Regional cooperation in Security has been a high priority for BIMSTEC, encompassing cooperation in counter-terrorism, transnational crime and drug trafficking etc., under the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organised Crime, and Illicit Drug Trafficking. The BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters has been signed and is being ratified. Text of the BIMSTEC Convention Against Trafficking in Persons has been finalised. A Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in Bay of Bengal Region has also been finalised.

Draft Texts of the BIMSTEC Convention on Transfer of Sentenced Persons and the BIMSTEC Convention on Extradition are under discussion. BIMSTEC Plan of Action on Drug Control; Five Year Action Plan for BIMSTEC Cyber Security Cooperation; and Action Plan to prevent Illicit Flow of Funds (IFF) are also under discussion.

Apart from Meeting of National Security Chiefs, it has been decided to institutionalise Home Ministers Meeting to strengthen and deepen cooperation in Security Sector. BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs have prioritised cooperation in maritime, cyber and space domains. They have also instituted Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue. BIMSTEC Guidelines for the Maritime Component of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) have been finalised. BIMSTEC Guiding Principles for the Conduct by BIMSTEC Maritime Law Enforcement Agencies (MLEAs) during their interaction at sea and BIMSTEC Guidelines for Coordinated Marine Oil Spill Response are being finalised.

Science, Technology & Innovation

The Expert Group on Science, Technology, and Innovation Cooperation (STI) has finalised a Plan of Action (2023-2027). A BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF) is being set up in Colombo. Regional cooperation is also being pursued through BIMSTEC Start-up Conclave, STI Forum and Boot Camps. Cooperation in digital domain has also been prioritised, including building of Digital Public Infrastructures (DPI).

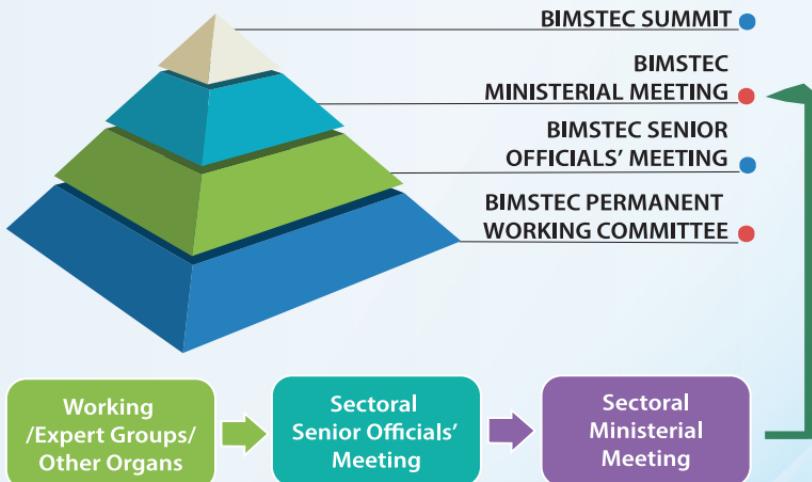
Trade, Investment & Development

Regional cooperation in promoting intra-regional trade and investment remains a high priority under BIMSTEC. The Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area (FTA) has been signed and six specialized Working Groups have been engaged in negotiation of constituent Agreements on Trade in Goods, Trade in Services, Investment, Dispute Settlement, Trade Facilitation and Customs Cooperation. There has also been focus on enhancing Business to Business exchanges through BIMSTEC Business and Business Economic Forums and BIMSTEC Business Summits and Conclaves. There is a Proposal to create a BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce.

Tourism

The Working Group on Tourism adopted, in January 2024, an updated Plan of Action on Tourism, which is under implementation. A BIMSTEC Virtual Tourism Information Centre has been set up in New Delhi. A BIMSTEC Tourism Fund has been created. There is a BIMSTEC Network of Tour Operators for encouraging intra-BIMSTEC tourism. BIMSTEC has been collaborating with ADB in conducting tourism related studies and workshops.

Core & Sectoral Mechanisms



- The institutional mechanisms of BIMSTEC comprise core and sectoral mechanisms
- The Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the BIMSTEC member States is the apex decision-making body and it oversees all other policy making bodies. So far 6 Summits have been held; the 6th Summit was held in Bangkok in April 2025
- The BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting, comprising Foreign Ministers, coordinates and monitors progress in regional cooperation and implementation of the directives and decisions of the Summits
- The Sectoral Ministerial Meetings coordinate implementation of the Action Plans, Centres and other Initiatives within their respective Sectors
- The Senior Officials' Meetings follow-up and coordinate implementation of the directives and decisions of the BIMSTEC Ministerial Meetings
- The BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee deliberates on the administrative and financial matters of the Secretariat and the BIMSTEC Centres/Entities
- The National Focal Points (NFPs), at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the member States, serve as national contact points for all communications, consultations and co-ordination amongst the member States

Key Outcomes of 6th BIMSTEC Summit

- Summit Declaration
- Adoption of BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030
- Signing and Adoption of BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation
- Adoption of the Rules of Procedures of BIMSTEC Mechanisms
- Signing of MoUs with External Partners [Indian Ocean Rim Association and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes]
- Adoption of the Report of BIMSTEC Eminent Persons' Group

Agreements and Conventions

- Bangkok Declaration
- BIMSTEC Charter
- BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking
- BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters
- Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area
- BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation

Memoranda of Association/ Understanding

- Memorandum of Association (MoA) for Establishment of BIMSTEC Energy Centre
- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Establishment of BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory
- MoA on Establishment of BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat
- MoA on Establishment of BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate
- MoU for Establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection
- MoU for Mutual Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies/ Training Institutions of BIMSTEC member States
- MoA on Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility

BIMSTEC Centres/Entities



BIMSTEC Energy Centre
(BEC)
Bengaluru, India



BIMSTEC Centre on
Weather and Climate (BCWC)
Noida, India



BIMSTEC Cultural Industries
Observatory (BCIO)
Thimphu, Bhutan



BIMSTEC Technology Transfer
Facility (BTTF)
Colombo, Sri Lanka

Proposed BIMSTEC Centres

- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence in Agriculture, India
- BIMSTEC Disaster Management Centre, India
- BIMSTEC Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre, India
- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence on Tropical Medicine and Public Health, Thailand
- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence for Public Audit, Thailand
- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence of Culture and Tourism, Nepal
- BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence for Traditional Medicine, India

External Partners





BIMSTEC Secretariat

The BIMSTEC Secretariat was established on 13 September 2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Secretariat is headed by Secretary General. It implements the decisions and directives of the member States and consults, coordinates, monitors and reports on the progress in regional cooperation under BIMSTEC. H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, a distinguished diplomat from India, currently serves as Secretary General.

BIMSTEC Secretariat

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