





13 September 2014

Inauguration of BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka

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PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Message

I am delighted to know that the Secretariat of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is going to be inaugurated in Dhaka on 13 September 2014. I take this opportunity to extend my warm greetings to the government and the friendly people of the member states on this auspicious occasion.

The Government of Bangladesh is very proud to host the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka. Bangladesh is a founding member of BIMSTEC and attaches great importance to the BIMSTEC process. Launching the Secretariat within a very short time following the signing of its 'Memorandum of Association' in March this year is a testimony to the strong commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to BIMSTEC.

BIMSTEC has brought together over one-fifth of the world population under one umbrella. While our shared historical and cultural linkages have brought us closer, we also face many common challenges. BIMSTEC provides us with a formidable platform for developing deeper understanding and cooperation among the member states and working for progress and prosperity of the people of the region. Although BIMSTEC has made considerable progress in a number of areas of cooperation, it still has a long way to go. I believe that the establishment of the BIMSTEC Secretariat is one big step forward towards that end.

I would like to convey my deep appreciation to the government and the people of the member states for selecting Bangladesh as the seat of the Secretariat. I wish the BIMSTEC Secretariat all success in its future endeavours towards building a prosperous region through collective action.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh live forever.

Sheikh Hasina

THIRD BIMSTEC SUMMIT Myanmar, 2014



BIMSTEC Heads of State/Government at the 3rd Summit, 4th March 2014



PRIME MINISTER
REPUBLIC OF INDIA

Message

I am delighted that the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat is being officially inaugurated in Dhaka in September 2014.

BIMSTEC, which was established in 1997, brings together 1.5 billion people comprising 21% of world population and a combined GDP of over US\$ 2 trillion. BIMSTEC is also a priority in our 'Look East Policy'. It provides a substantive orientation to the development of the North Eastern region of India and links South Asia to South East Asia.

The BIMSTEC Secretariat will provide a strong institutional foundation and help impart new momentum and dynamism to cooperative activities aimed at bringing peace, prosperity and progress to the peoples of the BIMSTEC member states.

On this occasion, I wish to convey appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for providing a suitable location for the Secretariat and compliment all other member states for their positive role in taking the BIMSTEC process forward.

India is committed to BIMSTEC and will continue to extend all cooperation to the process and to the Secretariat.

Narendra Modi

BIMSTEC: A Window of Opportunity for Win-Win Cooperation

Prof. Mustafizur Rahman

Introduction: BIMSTEC as an Emerging Opportunity

Bangladesh's offer to host the Permanent Secretariat of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) in Dhaka is indicative of the firm commitment of Bangladesh to advance the cause of deepening economic integration among the countries belonging to this regional grouping of high promise and significant potential. This first ever headquarter of any inter-governmental organization in Bangladesh needs to be seen as an important milestone in Bangladesh's continuing quest to make regionalization and globalization work for the development of our economy and socio-economic upliftment of our people. Establishment of the Permanent Secretariat is also an opportunity to instill fresh momentum to an endeavor that got off the ground a decade and half back in 1997 as BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation), informed by an ambition to forge closer cooperation among the countries of the Bay of Bengal region. As may be recalled, BIST-EC evolved into BIMSTEC or Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation in 2004 with Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan joining the grouping over the subsequent years. With the inclusion of the new members, BIMSTEC is now in a position to service the needs of both a Bay of Bengal centric growth zone and also serve as a gateway with a larger hinterland. This provides the BIMSTEC with an added opportunity to leverage the attendant advantages of deepening cooperation on a more broader scale and with a wider scope and perspective.

BIMSTEC: Key Milestones

6 June 1997: Adoption of Bangkok declaration and formal launching of the BIST-EC

22 December 1997: Inclusion of Myanmar and renaming of the grouping as BIMST-EC

February 2004: Inclusion of Bhutan and Nepal as members at the Sixth Ministerial Meeting

8 February 2004: signing of Framework Agreement on BIMSTEC Free Trade Area (BFTA)

31 July 2004: First BIMSTEC Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand

13 November 2008: Second BIMSTEC Summit held in New Delhi, India

4 March 2014: Third BIMSTEC Summit held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

4 March 2014: Signing of Memorandum of Association (MOA) on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate in India and Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Commission and BIMSTEC Cultural Industries Observatory in Bhutan

13 September 2014: Inauguration of BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat in Dhaka by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

At a time when regional integration is emerging as a key strategy to not only deepen intra-regional cooperation but also as a tool to facilitate strengthened inter-regional and global integration of economies, closer BIMSTEC cooperation could potentially play an important role in realizing the benefits of globalization and greater market access through strengthening of comparative advantages and establishing regional value chains.



Realising the Opportunities

Current State of Trade, Investment and Transport Connectivities

The BIMSTEC region offers a market of 1.6 billion people, about a-fifth of global population. However, BIMSTEC economies together account for only about 4 per cent of global GDP (2012) and 3.8 per cent (equivalent to about 1.8 trillion USD) of global trade. As it is, the seven countries of the BIMSTEC grouping are at different stages of economic development: three are developing economies (India, Sri Lanka, Thailand); four are LDCs (Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan, with the last two being land-locked LDCs). BIMSTEC-wide collaboration and connectivity leave much to desire. For example, share of intra-regional trade in BIMSTEC currently accounts for only about 4.2 per cent of the global trade of the member countries. One of the major reasons for low intra-regional trade flow is the low intra-regional investment flows in BIMSTEC, although investment regimes are quite liberal in the member countries. Weak transport connectivity and lack of multi-modal and seamless transportation of goods, lack of trade facilitation and weak infrastructure discourage cross border movement of investment and capital and adversely affect development of regional value chains. There is a need to also deepen people to people connectivity not only to stimulate tourism but also to encourage and promote the interests of trade, commerce and investment.

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PRIME MINISTER
ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN

Message

On behalf of the people and the Royal Government of Bhutan, I have the pleasure to extend my warmest greetings and felicitations on the auspicious occasion of the inauguration of BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The establishment of the Permanent Secretariat marks an important milestone for BIMSTEC. In the years since it was established, BIMSTEC has seen significant progress especially in terms of the scope and substance of cooperation being pursued.

The need for a Permanent Secretariat has long been felt in order to coordinate and make the cooperation more effective. The BIMSTEC Secretariat will play a critical role in helping BIMSTEC realize its objective of harnessing enormous potential that the sub-region holds for economic development and social progress.



I have no doubt that the Secretariat, under the capable leadership of Secretary General H.E. Sumith Nakandala, will steer cooperation among BIMSTEC Member Countries to greater heights in the years ahead. Bhutan attaches high importance to our membership of BIMSTEC and looks forward to working closely with the BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat.

Tshering Tobgay



THIRD BIMSTEC SUMMIT
Myanmar, 2014
SIGNING CEREMONY
Nay Pyi
4 March, 2014

BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers at the signing ceremony, 4th March 2014, Myanmar



PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

Message

On behalf of the people of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and on my own behalf, it is my pleasure and honour to send a message on the occasion of the formal inauguration of BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my congratulations to all member states on the achievement of establishing of BIMSTEC Secretariat which truly is a remarkable milestone in the history of BIMSTEC. I would also like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all those who have contributed to the realization of BIMSTEC Secretariat during the Third BIMSTEC Summit held in Nay Pyi Taw, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar in March this year. My special tribute also goes to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for hosting the BIMSTEC Secretariat.

I am convinced that this historic achievement together with the installing of first-ever Secretary-General for our organisation would surely intensify our collective efforts in moving towards a more harmonious and prosperous society in BIMSTEC member states. I also believe that the Secretariat will give impetus to better coordination and facilitation in implementing of BIMSTEC activities and projects.

On this auspicious occasion, I would like to convey my best wishes to BIMSTEC Secretary- General and the peoples of BIMSTEC Member States.

U Thein Sein