

BIMSTEC Secretary General visits Sri Lanka

BIMSTEC Secretary General, H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, undertook an official visit to Sri Lanka, a founding member of BIMSTEC, during 6 to 7 February 2025. During the visit, he called on H.E. Dr. Harini Amarasuriya, Honourable Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, who reaffirmed Sri Lanka's steadfast commitment to BIMSTEC and emphasized the critical role of strengthening collaboration in Science, Technology and Innovation as well as Health and Human Resource Development; Sri Lanka Leads regional cooperation in these Sectors under the BIMSTEC framework. Secretary General commended the Government of Sri Lanka for its leadership in advancing regional cooperation not only in sectors which it Leads but also in other sectors.

SG also met with H.E. Vijitha Herath, Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment & Tourism and discussed with him Sri Lanka's priorities and its pivotal role in driving regional cooperation through BIMSTEC. Besides, SG called on H.E. Nalinda Jayatissa, Honourable Minister of Health & Mass Media, to explore avenues for expanding collaboration in Health sector, including future initiatives to strengthen cooperation in this sector. SG also met with H.E. Chrishantha Abey, Honourable Minister of Science & Technology to discuss opportunities for deepening BIMSTEC cooperation in the STI, including early progress in operationalization of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility (TTF). He also met with Acting Foreign Secretary, H. E. Ms. Yasoja Gunasekera and reviewed with her various facets of Sri Lanka's role and contribution in BIMSTEC.

The highlight of the visit was Secretary General's keynote address at the BIMSTEC Digital Conclave, organized by the Asia Group with support of the Secretariat and the Government of Sri Lanka. In his remarks, SG underscored the significance of

the Conclave in advancing regional digital transformation and highlighted BIMSTEC's achievements, goals, and challenges in fostering regional cooperation in digital domain. The Conclave was addressed by Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister for Digital Economy, H.E. Mr. Eranga Weeraratne, and Deputy Minister for Industry and Entrepreneurship Development; H.E. Mr. Chathuranga Abeysinghe. They highlighted the recent initiatives of the Government of Sri Lanka towards enhancing digital governance, e-commerce and digital economy and reaffirmed Sri Lanka's commitment to forge regional cooperation in digital domain.

SG's visit to Sri Lanka underscored the BIMSTEC's commitment to strengthening regional cooperation in order to address the shared developmental and security challenges. Secretary General expressed his gratitude to the Government of Sri Lanka for its warm hospitality and reiterated BIMSTEC's dedication to achieving inclusive and sustainable development across the Bay of Bengal region.

BIMSTEC comprises seven countries of the Bay of Bengal region: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. It pursues regional cooperation in seven broad sectors: Agriculture and Food Security; Connectivity; Environment and Climate Change; People to People Contact; Science, Technology and Innovation; Security; and Trade, Investment and Development. The cooperation also covers 8 sub-sectors: Blue Economy, Mountain Economy, Energy, Disaster Management, Fisheries and Livestock, Poverty Alleviation, Health and Human Resource Development.