



BIMSTEC Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security Conference Proceedings

13-14 November 2018



Vivekananda
International Foundation

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**Vivekananda
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Secretary General

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

MESSAGE

Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) is one of the most vibrant sectors of cooperation of BIMSTEC. It has been recognized by BIMSTEC Leaders that combating terrorism and transnational organized crime is an important prerequisite for establishing a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal region. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held on 30-31 August 2018 at Kathmandu, Nepal stressed that combating terrorism and transnational organized crimes require sustained efforts and cooperation and comprehensive approach involving active participation and collaboration of the Member States.

Since its incorporation in 2005, the CTTC Sector has evolved to bring under its purview a wide ranging subjects pertaining to BIMSTEC security cooperation, both traditional and non-traditional ones. The Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking signed in 2009 has been ratified by the great majority of Member States. The Working group on CTTC and its sub-groups are holding regular meetings to develop agreements on various aspects of counter-terrorism cooperation. The Annual Meetings of the National Security Chiefs since 2017 have not only elevated the forum of discussion of CTTC matters but also have given a more holistic dimension to the BIMSTEC security cooperation.

Success in the CTTC Sector needs active cooperation of the Government machineries and the peoples of the region as a whole. Think Tanks have important role to play in CTTC cooperation as they work as interface between common people and the Governments. Dialogue of BIMSTEC Think Tanks on Regional Security being organized by the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), Government of India is the first such initiative under BIMSTEC security cooperation. Participation of all the Member States in this Dialogue shows that Member States recognize the importance of the Dialogue in furthering cooperation in the CTTC Sector. The BIMSTEC Secretariat appreciates the contribution of India, the Lead country of CTTC Sector, in fostering cooperation under the CTTC Sector and also for organizing this Dialogue.

I wish the Dialogue will bring out actionable recommendations in the domain of BIMSTEC Security cooperation under the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Sector. I wish the Dialogue a success.


(M Shahidul Islam)

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प्रधान मंत्री कार्यालय
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NEW DELHI - 110 011

MESSAGE

Regional cooperation under the BIMSTEC Framework has made significant progress in accordance with the directions given by the Leaders at the Leaders' Retreat in Goa in October 2016 in diverse areas of security, connectivity, trade facilitation, people-to-people contact and disaster management.

It is imperative to build an atmosphere of peace and security for the success of our shared efforts for regional integration, and economic development and prosperity. None of the countries in the region are immune to the dangers of terrorism and transnational crimes linked to terror networks and drug trafficking. The region's strategic location in terms of trade routes and maritime security also poses a number of common security challenges, both traditional and non-traditional.

The two meetings of the National Security Chiefs of BIMSTEC member states in New Delhi (March 2017) and Dhaka (March 2018) reflected on the complex nature of the region's security. To enhance regional cooperation in the field of security, we need to use platforms that bring together a broad spectrum of stakeholders to foster communication, better understanding and a common purpose within BIMSTEC.

I am confident that the Dialogue of BIMSTEC Think Tanks on Regional Security being held on 13-14 November 2018 at the Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi, will promote effective interaction between our think-tanks, civil society, opinion makers and experts, so as to build greater awareness about regional security issues. I believe that these interactions would also provide valuable inputs to policy makers.


(Ajit Doval)

New Delhi.

November 03, 2018



Dr Arvind Gupta, IFS (Retd)
Director

Former Dy NSA & Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat
Former Director General, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

Message from Director, VIF

The BIMSTEC is one of the most understated sub regional groupings in Asia. With a population of 1.5 billion people and a combined gross domestic product of \$3.5 trillion, it provides a vital link between South Asia and the emerging economic architecture of the wider Indo- Pacific region. Its unique geographical contiguity, rich natural resources and access to the sea provide the opportunity for the establishment of an integrated economic space buttressed with the development of the *blue economy*. However, its potential to become an economic powerhouse is impeded by persistent security challenges and threats. Terrorism, radicalization, arms smuggling, drugs and human trafficking along with a wide spectrum of maritime and cyber threats in the region transcend beyond national borders. This necessitates a cohesive cooperation among the plethora of security structures in the region to diminish the various destabilizing forces that hinder the peace essential to pursue faster development.

As decided by the leadership of the seven member countries and following the two meeting of BIMSTEC National Security, think tanks, academia, civil societies, media should develop a security dialogue to throw up ideas about how BIMSTEC countries can meet the security challenges to the region. With this agenda, the VIF, in collaboration with the BIMSTEC Secretariat, is organizing a two day BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security. We hope that the dialogue will provide a platform to the delegates to have a fruitful exchange of views. I hope the delegates representing the entirety of BIMSTEC can build long lasting friendships and carry back positive memories of interaction.


(Dr Arvind Gupta)



Concept Note

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organisation comprising seven littorals of the Bay of Bengal (BoB). The BoB not only connects these nations but binds them together by common culture and interests. The region is also a bridge between South and South East Asia. BIMSTEC is home to around 22% of the global population, a GDP of \$ 2.7 trillion and an enviable growth rate of approximately 6.5%. Unlike many regional groupings, BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organisation with 14 sectors – trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism, fisheries, agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people-to-people contact, and climate change.

Despite the *mélange* of existing cooperative arrangements, BIMSTEC has witnessed some serious challenges in the recent past that need transnational coordination. The specter of terrorism, human and drug trafficking, cyber, maritime security, radicalisation, and urban extremism have not only been inhibiting economic prosperity, but also unsettling peace in the region. The region is also prone to a multitude of natural disasters due to geological debilities, global warming, environmental depredations and vagaries of weather. Thus, the region needs an architecture that can congeal an effective security apparatus for stemming these emergent challenges. Frameworks will also have to be established based on shared experiences and coalesced resources, so as to meet the unexpected surge of contingencies and calamities such as the tsunami of 2004.

The meetings of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs in March 2017 (New Delhi) and March 2018 (Dhaka) reflect the mounting concerns of the governments on the complex nature of the region's security. While the two meetings have outlined the locus of this novel initiative, there is a need to unravel the intrinsic and intertwined rudiments. The causal relationships between the causes and effects of each of the spawning security concerns will have to be identified to substantial detail based on the atypical nature of the region. Consequently, it is proposed to conduct a dialogue at New Delhi amongst selected think tanks from the nations comprising BIMSTEC. The aim is to assist the governments to comprehend the magnitude of these complexities and provide policy options to bridge the chasm in the existing security structure. Accordingly, the think tanks are requested to present suitable papers on the following facets of security:

- (a) Threat of terrorism, radicalisation and response by BIMSTEC countries.
- (b) Maritime security (maritime order, capacity building, HADR, maritime connectivity, piracy, etc).
- (c) Transnational crime (arms smuggling, narcotics, human trafficking, etc).
- (d) Disaster management.

The dialogue will be conducted at Vivekananda International Foundation in the format of Round Table Discussions (RTDs). Each think tank would make a presentation of 10 minutes, which would be followed by discussions. The schedule of the dialogue is placed at enclosure. The discussants are requested to forward their papers prior to the conference for the reference of other participants.

Conference Agenda

Day 1 – November 13, Tuesday

0900 – 1000 hours Registration

1000 – 1100 hours **Inaugural Session**

Welcome Address: Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF

Keynote Address: Amb. Kanwal Sibal, Former Foreign Secretary, Government of India

Inaugural Address: Amb. Pankaj Saran, Deputy National Security Advisor, Government of India

1100 – 1130 hours Tea/Coffee Break

1130 – 1300 hours **Session 1: THREAT OF TERRORISM, RADICALISATION AND RESPONSE BY BIMSTEC COUNTRIES**

Kautilya in his master treatise 'Arthashastra' on state craft and national security, has classified the threats to a nation under four categories. The most serious of the four emanates from the internal originators and internal abettors. The internal threat is most relevant in the present context. Today, terrorism has become a global normal, wherein most of the countries in the region have either suffered in the past or are suffering from it now. The existing socio-economic conditions in the region make it more susceptible to radical fundamentalism. The inhospitable terrain, porous borders, vulnerable population, unemployed youth, poor economic conditions and existing network of the terrorist organisations aid and facilitate the spread of radical fundamentalism and terrorism. Most of the BIMSTEC member countries have been victims of radical terrorism. There is a need to have a coordinated response to this most threatening challenge of the region. So what can BIMSTEC countries do collectively to meet the challenge?

Chair: Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Rameshwar Roy

Panelists:

- Amb. (Dr.) Shambhu Ram Simkhada, Former Ambassador, Nepal
- Major General (Retd.) Md. Abdur Rashid, Executive Director, Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies, Bangladesh

- Mr. Sumith Nakandala, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka
- Mr. S.M. Sahai, Additional Secretary, NSCS, India

1300 – 1400 hours Lunch

1400 – 1530 hours **Session 2: MARITIME SECURITY (MARITIME ORDER, CAPACITY BUILDING, MARITIME CONNECTIVITY, AND PIRACY)**

Oceans and seas have emerged as critical arenas for security, trade, environmental and maritime geopolitics and have been transformed into major crossroads for international relations. Overlapping and intersecting interests undergird the complex strategic environment that is characterised by growth, interdependence, vulnerability and competition. These have been supplemented by layers of Non-traditional Security (NTS) threats such as piracy and terrorism, as also concerns relating to safety at sea and sustainable development of the blue economy.

In a world of inter-dependence the political centre of gravity has shifted from land to the oceans. Thus, a significant number of states and international actors have placed maritime security high on their agenda. Security at sea relies on various international governing activities and is a subject of collective public order and legal regulations. New challenges of human and economic security at sea have added another dimension to the theory and practice of maritime security and would also have to be factored in for evolving a constitutive regional security structure. To navigate through this complicated maritime realm, the states in the region will have to adopt collaborative strategies on security, environment, trade, transport, resources, safety and climate change.

All the BIMSTEC countries are either coastal countries or depend upon the oceans for trade. What can the BIMSTEC countries do to cooperate on maritime security issues?

Chair: Vice Admiral (Retd.) Shekhar Sinha

Panelists:

- Admiral (Retd.) Jayanath Siri Kumara Colombage, Sri Lanka
- Police Colonel Preeda Sataworn, Thailand
- Barrister Shah Ali Farhad, Bangladesh
- Amb. Yogendra Kumar, India
- Capt. Gurpreet Khurana, Executive Director, National Maritime Foundation, India

1530 – 1600 hours Tea/Coffee Break

1600 – 1730 hours

Session 3: TRANSNATIONAL CRIME (ARMS SMUGGLING, NARCOTICS, HUMAN TRAFFICKING)

The developments in communication and network technology have not only reduced the distance between nations but have also blurred borders. This has given a new dimension to transnational crimes like arms smuggling, narcotics, human trafficking, cybercrimes and maritime piracy. The complexities of varying laws pose challenges in development of an effective regional response. It is encouraging that BIMSTEC has made considerable progress to deal with this challenge. However, it further needs to work on a comprehensive approach to effectively tackle the issue of transnational crimes. This session will explore how BIMSTEC countries can cooperate with each other to mitigate and deal with the threat.

Chair: Mr. K.C. Verma, IPS (Retd.)

Panelists:

- Police Captain Pakorn Thongjeen, Thailand
- Mr. Bhaskar Koirala, Director, Nepal Institute of Strategic Studies
- Mr. Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Director Royal Institute for Governance & Strategic studies, RIGSS, Bhutan
- Dr. Kin Zaw Win, Director, Tampadipa Institute, Myanmar
- Mr. P.C. Haldar, Policy Perspectives Foundation, India

1900 - 2030 Dinner Hosted by Director, VIF at Hotel Le Meridien, New Delhi

Day 2 – November 14, Wednesday

0900 – 0930 hours Tea/Coffee

0930 – 1100 hours **Session 4: DISASTER MANAGEMENT or HADR**

No other region in the world is more vulnerable to climate change than BIMSTEC, which is visible in recent rise in various natural disasters in the region. The region lies in a high risk zone of potentially high seismic and hydro-meteorological hazards. Most of the governments in the region have given priority to relief and response operations rather than disaster risk reduction. There is a need for strong coordination among the disaster risk management actors in the countries, while enhancing capacity building of Disaster Management (DM) teams. The first BIMSTEC DM Ex-17 at New Delhi was a step in that direction. In this session, delegates will deliberate on the region's preparedness and resilience towards effective activation of inter-governmental mechanisms to deploy regional resources, synergising efforts to institutionalise regional cooperation amongst BIMSTEC member countries.

Chair: Mr. K.M. Singh, IPS (Retd.)

Panelists:

- Mr Ashique Rahman (Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies)
- Mr Bhaskar Koirala (Director, Nepal Institute of Strategic Studies)
- Ms Kanchana Wikramasinghe (Institute of Policy Studies), Sri Lanka
- Dr Naing Awe Oo (Executive Director, Thayninga Institute of Strategic Studies), Myanmar

1100 – 1115 hours Tea/Coffee Break

1115 – 1300 hours **Session 5: BIMSTEC SECURITY DIALOGUE – WAY FORWARD**

The significant commonalities of shared history, culture, language and lifestyle makes BIMSTEC, a common space for peace and development. The rising constants of geography, maritime contiguity and climate offer immense potential for security cooperation. The economic and resource potential makes BIMSTEC strategically vital for rise of Asia's various sub-regions. However, there are security challenges that threaten the stability and growth of the region.

National Security Advisors (NSAs) of BIMSTEC met for the first time at New Delhi on 21 March 2017, and agreed to formulate a common security regime for the BoB. The second meeting of NSAs was held in Dhaka on 21 March 2018. Therefore, there is a large consensus on building structures on maritime security for BoB. However, the question is, what should be the terms of reference for such a security framework?

In this backdrop, delegates may like to explore ways and means to strengthen regional cooperation for greater security and stability in the BIMSTEC region.

Chair: Dr. Arvind Gupta

Panelists:

- Major General (Retd.) Md. Abdur Rashid, Bangladesh
- Mr. Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Director, RIGSS, Bhutan
- Mr. Hemant H, Kotalwar, JS NSCS, India
- Ms. Daw Aye Aye Mu, Myanmar
- Amb. (Dr.) Shambhu Ram Simkhada, Nepal
- Admiral (Retd.) Jayanath Siri Kumara Colombage, Sri Lanka
- Address of Associate Professor Surat Horachaikul, Director, Indian Studies Center (ISC) of Chulalongkorn University (read in absentia) by Mr. Apirat Sugondhabhirom

Media Interaction

Concluding Remarks: Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF

1300 – 1400 hours

Lunch

1830 – 2030 hours

Interaction with CII Officials followed by Dinner

Executive Summary

The first BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security was held at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) on 13-14 November 2018. Delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and the BIMSTEC Secretariat participated in the meeting. The meeting was held in pursuance of the decision taken in the first and second meetings of the National Security Advisers of BIMSTEC member states held on 21 March 2017 at New Delhi and 28 March 2018 at Dhaka respectively wherein dialogue of think tanks and strategic communities towards formalising security cooperation in the BIMSTEC region was emphasised.

Ambassador Kanwal Sibal, Former Foreign Secretary, in his keynote address noted that from India's perspective, there are no territorial or maritime disputes with other members of BIMSTEC. It has persistently sought to give a higher profile to BIMSTEC on the international platform. He also mooted the proposal to hold a BIMSTEC military exercise. Ambassador Pankaj Saran, Deputy National Security Adviser, Government of India, in his inaugural address underlined the need for cooperation amongst the security institutions of BIMSTEC Member States to deal with the common challenges of terrorism, radicalisation, transnational crimes, cyber security, climate change, and maritime security. He also emphasised that besides physical connectivity, there should also be connectivity between people, organisations and security agencies.

The first session dealt with the threat of terrorism and radicalisation, and response by BIMSTEC Countries. It was chaired by Lt. Gen. Rameshwar Roy (Retd.). The panelists were Ambassador Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada, Nepal; Major General Md. Abdur Rashid (Retd.), Executive Director, Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies, Bangladesh; Ambassador Sumith Nakandala, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka; and Mr. S.M. Sahai, Additional Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat, NSCS. Some of the salient points raised during the session were: BIMSTEC Member States must express necessary political will and determination, and pool their resources to meet these challenges. Also pending BIMSTEC Conventions should be finalised and ratified at the earliest to provide the legal framework for cooperation amongst BIMSTEC Member States.

The second session dealt with maritime security. It was chaired by Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha (Retd.). The panelists were Admiral Jayanath Siri Kumara Colombage (Retd.), Sri Lanka, Colonel Preeda Sataworn, Thailand, Barrister Shah Ali Farhad, Bangladesh, Ambassador Yogendra Kumar, India, and Captain Gurpreet Khurana, Executive Director, National Maritime Foundation, India. Some of the salient points raised during the session were: Maritime security is critical for promoting overall security in the Bay of Bengal region. Along with a rules-based maritime

order, the role of the Blue Economy in the Bay of Bengal was also emphasised. Panelists also highlighted the need for a common maritime strategy.

The third session dealt with the issue of transnational crimes (involving arms smuggling, narcotics, and human trafficking). It was chaired by Mr. K.C. Verma, IPS (Retd.); the panelists were Captain Pakorn Thongjeen, Thailand; Mr. Bhaskar Koirala, Director, Nepal Institute of Strategic Studies; Mr. Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Director, Royal Institute for Governance & Strategic Studies, RIGSS, Bhutan; Dr. Kin Zaw Win, Director, Tampadipa Institute, Myanmar; and Mr. P.C. Haldar, Policy Perspectives Foundation, India. Strong concerns were expressed on the proliferation transnational crimes such as human trafficking, drugs abuse, cyber threats, climate change, arms smuggling, terror financing and money laundering in the Bay of Bengal region. The panelists also took note that developments in communication and information technology, especially social media has given a new dimension to transnational crimes.

The fourth session dealt with the challenges associated with Disaster Management. It was chaired by Mr. K.M. Singh IPS (Retd.). The panelists were Mr. Ashique Rahman, Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies; Mr. Bhaskar Koirala, Director, Nepal Institute of Strategic Studies; Ms. Kanchana Wikramasinghe, Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka; and Dr. Naing Awe Oo, Executive Director, Thayninga Institute of Strategic Studies, Myanmar. Some of the salient points raised were of BIMSTEC Member States being most vulnerable to climate change than any other region in the world. The panelists deliberated on BIMSTEC's preparedness and resilience towards disaster management and also emphasised the importance of disaster risk reduction. A major recommendation made was on renaming and converting the BIMSTEC Weather and Climate Centre (BCWC) at Noida, India into an R&D centre named BIMSTEC Disaster Management & Climate Change Centre.

The fifth and final session focused on deliberating the way forward in the BIMSTEC security discourse. It was chaired by Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF. The panelists were the senior most members of the delegations of all the seven countries: Major General Md. Abdur Rashid, Bangladesh; Mr. Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Director, RIGSS, Bhutan; Shri Hemant H. Kotalwar, JS NSCS, India; Ms. Daw Aye Aye Mu, Myanmar; Ambassador Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada, Nepal; Admiral Jayanath Siri Kumara Colombage, Sri Lanka; and Mr. Apirat Sugondhabhirom, Thailand. It was emphasised that for stability, prosperity and growth in the Bay of Bengal region, security challenges must be addressed cohesively and therefore, there is need for continuous dialogue among the security agencies as well as among the think tanks in the region. Further, the capacity of BIMSTEC Secretariat should be strengthened to facilitate research on security issues.

All delegates, participants and attendees appreciated the initiative taken by the VIF to hold the first Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security. Suggestions were made to ensure continuity of the dialogue into a robust platform that would generate new ideas for common action against common security risks, threats, and challenges in the BIMSTEC security space.

Outcome Document

First Meeting of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security was held at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), New Delhi on 13-14 November 2018. Delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka and BIMSTEC Secretariat participated in the meeting.

The meeting was held in pursuance of the decision taken in the First and Second Meetings of the National Security Advisers and Security Chiefs of BIMSTEC Member States held on 21 March 2017 at New Delhi and 28 March 2018 at Dhaka respectively wherein dialogue of think tanks and strategic communities towards formalising security cooperation in the BIMSTEC region was emphasised.

Mr. Pankaj Saran, Deputy National Security Adviser, Government India, in his inaugural address underlined the need for cooperation amongst the security institutions of BIMSTEC Member States to deal with the common challenges of terrorism, radicalisation, transnational crimes, cyber security, climate change, and maritime security. Emphasising the importance of connectivity in regional integration, he stated that besides physical connectivity there should be connectivity between people, organisations and security agencies.

Deliberations and recommendations

Theme: Threat of Terrorism, Radicalisation and Response by BIMSTEC Countries

The Meeting deliberated on various aspects of terrorism, radicalisation and necessity of cooperation among the BIMSTEC Member States to deal with these threats. The Meeting reviewed the existing BIMSTEC mechanism to deal with both traditional and non-traditional security matters. Appreciation was expressed for the work undertaken by the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) and its Sub-Groups. The importance of recognising the Bay of Bengal as a common security space which was initially mooted by the First Meeting of the National Security Chiefs held on 21 March 2017 was underscored. The Meeting recognised the Outcome Document of the First National Security Chiefs Meeting as guiding norms for security cooperation. It was also agreed that BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat 2016 has given a new dimension to BIMSTEC cooperation including security cooperation.

The Meeting also took note of the directives given by BIMSTEC Leaders in the Fourth BIMSTEC Summit held at Kathmandu, Nepal on 30-31 August 2018. The delegates shared their perceptions

about security challenges in the region and put forward the following recommendations to strengthen the security cooperation within BIMSTEC to deal with threats of terrorism and radicalisation:

- i. New collaborative approaches will be required to meet the growing contemporary security challenges of terrorism and radicalisation. BIMSTEC Member States must express necessary political will and determination, and pool their resources to meet these challenges.
- ii. There is need to have consensus on regional level to deal with terrorism and radicalisation. Pending BIMSTEC Conventions should be finalised and ratified at the earliest to provide the legal framework for cooperation amongst BIMSTEC Member States. Effective implementation of legal frameworks/laws too is equally important.
- iii. To deal with the threat of terrorism, radicalisation, and violent extremism, the security agencies should cooperate with each other at different levels including real time intelligence/information sharing. Trust amongst the security agencies of the BIMSTEC Member States should be enhanced.
- iv. Future cooperation should be established on common heritage, culture, and understanding shared by BIMSTEC Member States.
- v. Terrorism must not be used as a tool of state policy. It is important that states providing help and safe haven to terrorists are held accountable for their deeds.

Theme: Maritime Security (Maritime Order, Capacity Building, Maritime Connectivity, Piracy)

The Meeting emphasised that maritime security is critical for promoting overall security in the Bay of Bengal region. The region has emerged as a strategic hub and the centre of the world's economic activities and the role of the Blue Economy in the Bay of Bengal was also emphasised. The following recommendations were made towards promoting maritime security in the Bay of Bengal:

- i. Rule-based maritime order must be established in the Bay of Bengal. There should also be common maritime strategy. There is need to find regional solutions to regional problems.
- ii. There is a need to improve maritime infrastructure by the BIMSTEC Member States, while sharing the burden of infrastructure development for common prosperity through better connectivity and accessibility.
- iii. Concept of SAGAR 'Security and Growth for All in the Region' promoted by India may be considered for implementation by all the BIMSTEC Member States.
- iv. BIMSTEC should also develop links with like-minded organisations such as IORA and IONS.
- v. Maritime domain awareness, maritime connectivity, and cooperation amongst Coast Guards should be promoted. BIMSTEC Member States should promote search and rescue operations and coordinated patrolling.

Theme: Transnational Crime (Arms smuggling, Narcotics, Human Trafficking)

Delegates have expressed concern on the proliferation of transnational crimes such as human trafficking, drug abuse, cyber threats, climate change, arms smuggling, terror financing and money laundering in the Bay of Bengal region. The Meeting took note that developments in communication and information technology, especially social media has given a new dimension to transnational crimes. The Meeting made the following recommendations:

- i. While there is reasonably good cooperation at the bilateral level, there was an urgent need to build mechanisms amongst BIMSTEC Member States to step up efforts to deal with transnational crimes.
- ii. Member States have varying levels of capabilities to deal with transnational crimes. There is urgency to build capabilities in all the BIMSTEC Member States.
- iii. Cyber security is becoming a major challenge which will require cooperation amongst technical agencies, law enforcement agencies of BIMSTEC Member States and there is need that Member States coordinate their positions closely on the issues pertaining to cyber norms in cyberspace.

Theme: Disaster Management (HADR)

The Meeting agreed that BIMSTEC Member States are more vulnerable to climate change than any other region in the world. The Meeting deliberated on BIMSTEC's preparedness and resilience towards disaster management and emphasised the importance of disaster risk reduction. The following recommendations were made:

- i. All Member States are subject to natural disasters. They are vulnerable to the ill-effects of climate change. BIMSTEC Member States should pool in their resources and capabilities to deal with natural disasters.
- ii. The BIMSTEC Weather & Climate Centre (BCWC) at Noida, India, should be renamed as BIMSTEC Disaster Management & Climate Change Centre. It should be converted into an R&D Centre on Disaster Management.
- iii. The Disaster Management Training Centre at Nagpur, India, should provide training on disaster management to the BIMSTEC Member States.
- iv. The BIMSTEC Member States may adopt the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) on disaster management model for disaster management.
- v. The Member States must take collaborative efforts towards Early Warning Systems including use of Remote Sensing Satellites.

Theme: BIMSTEC Security Dialogue – Way Forward

The Meeting emphasised that for stability, prosperity and growth in the Bay of Bengal region, security challenges must be addressed cohesively and therefore, there is need for continuous dialogue among the security agencies as well as among the think tanks in the region. The Meeting made the following recommendations.

- i. Future course of action on security cooperation should be based on sound evidence-based research undertaken by think tanks individually and collectively.
- ii. The capacity of the BIMSTEC Secretariat should be strengthened to facilitate research on security issues.
- iii. Think tanks have a crucial role to play through deliberations on complex issues and by offering independent advice to governments. Such dialogues, which involve diverse actors, should be held on a regular basis to promote interaction between think tanks, academia, civil society and experts to build greater awareness about regional security issues and develop concrete suggestions and actions plans.
- iv. To enhance regional cooperation in the field of security, BIMSTEC Member States need to engage with each other in more meaningful and innovative ways. The destiny of the people of the region is closely linked with the well-being of the Bay of Bengal.

The Meeting underscored the importance of annual convening of Meeting of BIMSTEC Think Tanks Dialogue on Regional Security. The BIMSTEC Secretariat will hold consultations with the Member States to decide the timing and venue of the Second Meeting.

Delegates welcomed the initiative taken by the Vivekananda International Foundation to hold the first Think Tank Dialogue on Regional Security. They were optimistic that the Dialogue will grow into a robust platform for generating ideas for common action against common security risks, threats, and challenges in the BIMSTEC security space. They expressed their appreciation of the support provided by the Government of India towards holding of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks Regional Security Dialogue. Delegates also appreciated the efforts of the BIMSTEC Secretariat in coordinating the Meeting.

Extracts from Speaker's Presentations

Inaugural Session

Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director VIF

BIMSTEC – Reviving a Natural and Historical Sub-Regional Grouping

In the not-too-distant past, the region was a holistic region marked by intense two-way connectivity, commerce, cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts. The natural phenomena of the Bay also ensured that the people of the region shared their destinies.

Unfortunately, during the second half of the 20th century, the region got fragmented and isolated on account of a number of geopolitical considerations. South Asia and South East Asia went their separate ways. There were no political institutions which could forge a common identity for the people of the region.

The Bay of Bengal is a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. It has an identity of its own. The concept of BIMSTEC is recognition of this fact. It is up to the member countries to ensure that the integrity of the Bay of Bengal region is restored once again.

Amb. Kanwal Sibal, Former Foreign Secretary, Government of India

BIMSTEC – A Conflict-free Region in a Conflict-prone World

The world is entering a turbulent phase with talk of the breakdown of current global order. The threat of serious clashes between powerful countries is growing day by day. In this context, we have to look at the shared problems collectively, and build cooperative linkages.

Political and economic power is shifting to Asia that is now the core geographical area where the destiny of the world will be determined. Devoid of civilisational clash, the BIMSTEC region holds strong prospects for regional cooperation.

India wishes to give a higher profile to BIMSTEC. From India's perspective, there are no territorial or maritime disputes with other members of BIMSTEC. India's military strength is defensive in nature. Economically rising India is good for BIMSTEC countries.



(From L to R) Amb. Pankaj Saran, Deputy National Security Advisor, Government of India; Dr Arvind Gupta, Director VIF and Amb. Kanwal Sibal, Former Foreign Secretary, Government of India during the Inaugural Session.

Amb. Pankaj Saran, Deputy National Security Advisor, Government of India

Strengthening BIMSTEC by Strengthening BIMSTEC's Agenda

Twenty-one years since its founding, the process of BIMSTEC's evolution has been slow and deliberate. It took many years before the first summit was convened in 2004 and the BIMSTEC Secretariat was established after a long delay in Dhaka in 2014. However, there is strong convergence of interests between the member countries which has sustained over the years.

The Outcome Document issued after the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit in October 2016 emphasised on the pledge to make BIMSTEC stronger and agenda-driven, with cooperation on issues of counter terrorism, transnational crime, disaster management, trade, investment, energy, etc.

Threats emerging from the cyber domain need to be given due attention by the member countries. Regional connectivity is paramount to regional security as it facilitates smooth working with each other. Connectivity cannot be just physical contact; it has to involve contact between people, organisations and security agencies.

Session 1- Threat of Terrorism, Radicalisation and Response by BIMSTEC Countries

Chair – Lt. Gen. Rameshwar Roy (Retd.)

Role of Leadership and its Vision

Our relevance is always decided in reference to our environment. That is why it is important that we as individuals or as a nation state have to form groups and strengthen our relevance by projecting and contributing to the cause, if we want to remain relevant.

We mutate to a greater level of resistance to whatever we are facing now. If we are not threatened, we will never feel the necessity to grow our capabilities. Therefore, threats must be taken as a positive force which pushes us towards better growth and progress.

Economic independence and economic growth will always lead to more assertiveness by the nation-states. This is one of the reasons where cooperating nations find it difficult to continue behaving in the same way as they did at the start of the cooperation. Therefore the grouping of nations must keep converging towards common goals as they move forward in their groups.

Today's leadership, be it individual, social, regional, or world level, is all about solving conflicts. We are not looking for leaders to lead us into conflicts; we are looking at leaders who will have the capability to solve conflicts and help in post-conflict stabilisation.



(From L to R) Amb. (Dr.) Shambhu Ram Sikhada (Retd.); Major General Md. Abdur Rashid (Retd.); Lt. Gen. Rameshwar Roy (Retd.); Ambassador Sumith Nakandala; and Mr. S.M. Sahai during the First Session.

The failure of global responsibilities and the global institutions has pushed us into looking for regional solutions.

Before the final use of hard power, the entire process of radicalisation and associated threats travels through many stages and in those many stages, we need to have good governance and happier societies if we have to break the cycle of unchecked violence.

Only Bhutan, in their Constitution, has this index of happiness. No other country in the world has got that as part of constitutional responsibility.

Unless you have an international law and legal framework that gets ratified by all the countries, strict implementation and punishment of defaulters will not be possible.

Ambassador Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada (Retd.), Nepal

Machiavellian Dilemma – Maintaining Law and Order

While geography's role cannot be denied, regional organisations are not biological constructs, they are political constructs.

We must deal with terrorism at the level of thought, right at its start. We must exercise our power and force, as it is necessary to prevent and in fact, to respond to acts of terror and radicalisation, but that is only to specific acts of terror.

Thoughts of terror challenge governance in its exercise of power. Whether we talk of Chanakya, Confucius, Aristotle or Plato, Nehru or Lee Kuan Yew, there has been the classic dilemma of political thought in between the acquisition of power and its exercise.

In such a context, when people probably have forgotten what happened during those two great wars in Europe, and with the locus of power in what we call the 21st century shifting to Asia and in our region, the question is how we prepare ourselves not to get engaged and involved in (similar) tragic events.

Major General (Retd.) Md. Abdur Rashid, Executive Director, Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies, Bangladesh

Operational Challenges – Use of Force, Targeting Terror Financing and Real-time Intelligence

There is a big gap between the perception of common people, policymakers, and civil society, and the perception of the law enforcing agencies on how to counter terror. Civil societies believe that terror is of ideological origin, so it must be fought ideologically. They, then say we must have a counter narrative and make the people understand they should not eat this poison of religious fanaticism. I have not yet found a good counter-narrative which can defeat terrorism.

The law enforcer whose job is to apply force faces opposition from civil society. That's the big dilemma that ties the hands politically, that ties the hands of the general(s) to fight the battle. I don't know as a law enforcer, how could I go in the face of bullet(s) and capture a terrorist alive and bring them to the law? So, that's a big challenge, you know, these intricacies created all the problems.

We see in the South Asian context that some of the threats which India faces, same threats Bangladesh also experiences, which come from Pakistan.

We have to see that terror must not be financed and there are many kinds of ways to financing terrorism.

In Bangladesh, we are currently seeing the fourth generation of terrorism. The first generation comprised the (former) Palestine fighters who came back to Bangladesh and formed the first terrorist organisation.

The second generation wreaked havoc with the (former) Afghan fighters. Those who came back to Bangladesh formed the first major organisation, the HUJI, the Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami.

The next (third) generation, was before development of IS. So we have another organisation outfit known as JMB, or Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh. JMB is of two types, one is the new JMB, and the old JMB, and JMB network, and actually, we found that after the Burdwan blast in India, they had established a network across the border also.

The Bay of Bengal region is very closely-knitted, so automatically, we have to exchange our information, and anywhere the threat is spawning, we must be able to warn the target country. It was through information exchange between India and Bangladesh that we could uproot the existent JMB. And then another came up, the new JMB, which actually did the very big attack on our diplomatic area in Dhaka city, that's called the Holy Artisan attack, where about 23 people were killed, mostly foreigners, including one Indian.

Ambassador Sumith Nakandala, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka

Lack of Legal Frameworks and Legal Expertise in BIMSTEC

Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) is part of the 14 areas of cooperation identified by the seven member states. Now, I understand that we have Joint Working Group on CTTC, and then, we have a number of sub-groups, I think we have enlarged the sub-groups, have increased the sub-groups, including the Sub-Group on Violent Extremism and Radicalisation. That decision came from the BIMSTEC Retreat which was held in Goa on 16 October 2016.

We have the BIMSTEC Convention on International Terrorism signed by everybody, but I think only one or two countries have ratified it. It takes considerable time for the member states not only to

sign but also to ratify. We also need another two conventions, which we have been negotiating – BIMSTEC Convention on Extradition and BIMSTEC Convention on Transfer of Sentenced Persons. Now, these are legal framework on which we can respond.

Dr. Gupta's suggestion to create a Himalayan Science Council is an important matter. The Himalayan Science Council can look into the impact of climate change in the Bay of Bengal.

The document that we released on 21st March 2017 is a very powerful document. It shows the outcome of the first National Security Advisors' meeting. That document identifies the Bay of Bengal as a common security space. Now what does it mean? The common security space, that identification itself provides the member states to work together.

While countering terrorism and responding, we need real time intelligence. Now, we don't have a system of doing that. Unless and until we have a framework on how do you, the member states share the vital intelligence, I don't think the real cooperation will come. Cooperation is there bilaterally though.

Threat is not going to go away unless some countries do not stop practicing terrorism as an instrument of state policy.

I think secretariat must be strengthened, it should have international legal personnel housed inside and it should also work with the member states very closely. We could not sign the BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance. Now, that's very disappointing because everything has been finalised.

I think there was a mention of space cooperation in the declaration. By and large, we do not use communication satellites because of the expensive nature, but the Bay of Bengal connectivity undersea submarine cables.

Our experience from Sri Lanka is that we always get the assistance from India on satellite technology, including infrared imagery. In addition to that, Japan will provide us with two Doppler radar weather satellites. That will be done in another three years. But in order to answer your question, we have a very good, optimal cooperation with India on satellite technology.

Mr. S.M. Sahai, Additional Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat, NSCS

Socio-economic Challenges and Subnational Identities

The truth about the BIMSTEC countries is that we have got a problem of development resulting from other things like the youth bulge. We all know from history and its lessons that any country that has an increase of population by about 25 per cent in its male population, the younger population lets loose the devil. We all have populations where the age group below 30 is almost close to 60–65 percent.

The epicentre of the ISIS was initially in Syria and has now shifted into our neighborhood in the AF-PAK region. What exactly is happening in Afghanistan and what is happening in its neighborhood in Pakistan's Northern Areas?

We need to have real time intelligence and real cooperation.

But having said that, you may put in place legal processes, you may have intelligence sharing, but where does the challenge lie? The challenge actually does not lie in fighting terrorism, the challenge actually lies in managing the peace, and if you as a country are not able to do that, you will always leave a residual issue, and the residual issue will erupt again. And that is I think the primary issue that most of our countries need to focus on. Once the problem gets over, we want to move on to the next best thing without actually resolving what was left behind.

Most of the problems that we find are actually a challenge of sub-nationalism; and those sub-national challenges were created for various reasons. They may have a feudal background to it. Whether it was the relocation of population for certain political purposes, or for economic purposes, or whether it was the relocation of population for even things like carrying out agriculture, or for other economic activities; those populations began to get an identity. A monolith sovereign state must accommodate the sub-national identities.

Session 2- Maritime Security (Maritime Order, Capacity Building, Maritime Connectivity, Piracy)

Chair – Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha (Retd.)

Maritime Dynamics of Regionalism

To mind, the revival of BIMSTEC is a compulsion, an outcome of changing geopolitical realities in the world. The economic and strategic significance of the Bay of Bengal is growing very rapidly with the re-emergence of the idea of a larger Indo-Pacific in the geopolitical context that emanates from the security connect between the Indian and Pacific Oceans since 2006-07. (The) Bay of Bengal has the potential to become the epicentre of the whole idea of Indo-Pacific. If you see both sides stretching from the shores of East Africa to those of the Americas, you will find that (it) is somewhere close to the centre.

SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) is a vision enunciated by Prime Minister Modi in 2014, which offers an opportunity for all the neighboring countries to get linked through maritime-economic connectivity. We have already signed an agreement with Bangladesh. And, I think, with Sri Lanka it is in stages to be finalised now.

The Bay of Bengal is also plagued with a large number of non-traditional security threats. Some of it was mentioned in the beginning, trafficking of narcotics, trafficking of weapons, people,



(From L to R) Admiral Jayanath Siri Kumara Colombage (Retd.), Colonel Preeda Sataworn, Vice Admiral Shekhar Sinha (Retd.), Barrister Shah Ali Farhad, Amb. Yogendra Kumar and Captain Gurpreet Khurana during the Second Session.

illegal exploitation of natural resources, rebel insurgencies, terrorist groups, natural disasters and climate change and the cyber threats. Any attempt to foster greater connectivity by way of transportation must take these disruptions into account.

BIMSTEC nations ought to focus on joint actions through common institutions to address these interconnected challenges and opportunities. The first ever military exercise – MILEX 2018, was held in Pune in September this year and this was immediately after the summit at Kathmandu.

Once the confidence among the nations increases, then white shipping data should actually go further to grey shipping data and to black shipping data, and that is what actually will strengthen your security a great deal.

Admiral (Retd.) Jayanath Siri Kumara Colombage, Sri Lanka

Constructing BIMSTEC Maritime Architecture with a Future Orientation

There are a lot of spheres of influence coinciding in the Bay of Bengal from major powers, middle powers, residential powers and not so residential powers in the Bay of Bengal.

For smaller states it is all about development, economic prosperity, trade and acquiring technology, but for bigger powers it is basically strategic influence in that domain.

The BIMSTEC region is one of the most peaceful, stable maritime regions in the world. There are no maritime disputes in the region and the general rule-based maritime order is upheld; freedom of maritime commerce and maritime trade is continuing.

The waters of the Bay of the Bengal could be contested in the near future. We do understand that the world needs unfettered flow of oil and cargo to move across the Indian Ocean for the sake of global trade, and if that is interrupted, no shipping, no shopping. So, that will not be the best for the world, and therefore, the Bay of Bengal has increasingly become a very significant hub of economic activity, and therefore, strategic focus.

We are entering gradually into a multi-polar world. So, in that sense, even our security architectures will have to be multi-polar.

Blue economy, a few words about it because the land resources are depleting, populations are increasing, human kind has no choice but to look for resources from the ocean and there will be many more industries in the ocean; many more players in the ocean, and therefore, the need for maritime security and above all, the need for maritime governance.

The International Maritime Organization reported that 57 percent of world's maritime/merchant shipping does not report their position accurately, and also they are not operating the automatic identification system all the time. And, the United Nations came out with a figure, saying 40 percent of the fishing taking place in the Indian Ocean is illegal.

We also have the Mumbai attack, the Sri Lankan LTTE dominating the ocean, and also we have the piracy which actually took world shipping by surprise.

Now all these indications suggest that we are maritime blind – as individual nations we are maritime blind, or as a region we have been maritime blind.

From 2009 to 2018 September, 440 warships have visited Port of Colombo, 440 warships, which is good business for us – we provide provisions, they come and have a drink, that's great, we earn money, but that means a large number of warships are available or are present in the Indian Ocean. The 440 warships belong to 28 different nations. Yearly average of warships coming into Colombo in 2008 and earlier was around 20.

How we going to counter China? Are we going to work with China? Are we going to Engage with China? That's a question begging an answer!

When you talk with Chinese counterparts, they say they want comprehensive, collaborative, complete and sustainable security. So, in that sense, if we have some kind of mechanism, they would have to be part of it.

In this scenario, I would like to mention that in 1971, Sri Lanka proposed through the United Nations that the Indian Ocean be made a zone of peace and at that time, we were worried about militarisation, freedom of navigation, overflight, and trade. And unfortunately, nearly 45 years down the line, we are worrying for the same thing in the Indian Ocean.

We know the Indian Navy is the biggest in the Indian Ocean region and can be the security provider. We need to share our burdens together. We need to move from cooperation to collaboration. Take action more constructively, and we need to share our burden for common prosperity,

As concerns maritime domain awareness right now, we have trilateral agreements. But how do we incorporate that into BIMSTEC? I think BIMSTEC wide maritime domain awareness could be the way forward for us to handle.

The Indian Ocean or the Bay of Bengal has many initiatives. We have SAARC, we have BIMSTEC, we have IONS, we have IORA, we have the Indian Ocean Conference, we have the Galle Dialogue from Sri Lanka, and we have WPNS. We have many initiatives, but are we, or is anyone coordinating these initiatives, or at least analysing the outcome. So, I would propose as a way forward, that SAGAR can be used as a platform to encompass all the outcomes of these initiatives.

How do we do it? Through a code of conduct, is it through the existing regional security architecture, or do we need to develop one?

Colonel Preeda Sataworn, Thailand

Problems of Coordination in Maritime Security

We see the two-sided seashore as being very important from the perspective of the threat and challenge it poses to Thailand's maritime security. We have divided Thailand's maritime security into two groups. The first group is environment and illegal fishing. Illegal fishing is a big problem for the Royal Thailand Government which taken several steps. Now the situation is under control. The second group relates to violation of the law, eco-system, illegal shipping, trafficking of drugs, smuggling, illegal fishing and piracy.

On strategy implementation, we have divided maritime security into various levels. There is a policy level which consists of the National Maritime Interest and Policy Administration Committee. This is headed and led by our Prime Minister. At the operational level, we have the Thai Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center also known as Thaimex. Thaimex is the platform for many organisations to work together.

Our major problem is that there are too many organisations dealing with maritime security and we have so many laws related to the ocean and the sea. We are in the process of creating divisions within this platform to ensure more effectiveness. The Royal Thai Navy is the secretary of the centre.

The Royal Thai Police is under the Prime Minister. We have a provincial police force and a marine police force. The police deployed along the seashore have an important role in the implementation of all sea laws. This is the mission of Thai Marine Police – to enhance national maritime security. We are working together with the Royal Thailand Navy.

Barrister Shah Ali Farhad, Bangladesh

Bangladesh – Outlining Maritime Security after Arbitral Award in Maritime Delimitation

Even for Bangladesh, which is a coastal and riverine country, maritime security has not been a priority on the security issues for a long time.

As a result of international arbitration verdicts, Bangladesh has obtained absolute maritime territory additionally. Now this total area which Bangladesh has got as a result of their arbitral verdicts is 81 per cent of the mainland of Bangladesh. It is like having a slightly smaller version of another Bangladesh to itself.

The current government in Bangladesh which is led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, came up with the vision of a Blue Economy for furthering the growth of the country. So, now that we have got such a huge amount of maritime territories which was previously not delineated properly, there are further prospects of trade, marine life, fisheries, energy, minerals, shipping, etc.

We have maritime piracy and armed robbery, drug trafficking, illicit arms trafficking, human trafficking and uncontrolled fishing.

Between 2011 and 2016, it was reported by the Cox's Bazar Fishing Trawlers Association that 1,000 incidents of piracy happened between four (to five) years, in which about 400 fishermen got killed. Now because those incidents are very low key and only reported in local media, they do not make international headlines that you would otherwise associate with maritime piracy.

Drug transportation is also a big problem, especially drug transportation between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Human trafficking is also an issue as well, and our honorable chair of the panel was mentioning before the discussion started about the 171, mainly Bangladeshi males, who were found dead in a Thai jungle, who were victims of the slave trade.

One of the biggest incidents of arms trafficking which caught international attention was the one in Chittagong in 2004 where enough arms were seized by which you could easily takeover a city the size of Delhi.

Bangladesh has a ship breaking industry. So in Bangladesh you have a big ship breaking industry in Chittagong. You have of course the issue of chemical waste dumping, and the very new and contemporary but equally devastating issue of electronic waste dumping.

Bangladesh currently is hosting about a million forcibly displaced Rohingyas and what implication that might have for maritime security cannot be assessed right at the moment, but they can be dangerous because the terrorists are there, and because they are right now situated in camps which are in the coastal districts, maritime security may also be threatened.

Regarding the issue of China, Bangladesh has actually quite successfully avoided any overtures from China, even the USA, regarding them establishing any permanent ports or bays in Bangladesh.

In October 2017, the Bangladesh Navy ordered two maritime patrol aircraft from Germany which support surveillance and patrol fights. In 2016, Bangladesh bought two Ming class submarines from China for (beefing up) its underwater capabilities.

While the navy plays the major role in Bangladesh, actually the new law enforcement agency is the Bangladesh Coast Guard. And the Bangladesh Coast Guard has been going under a lot of transformation under the current government's plan called the Coast Guard Plan 2030 under which the Coast Guard has been strengthened in terms of its equipment as well as its surveillance capabilities.

Bangladesh has also beefed up its maritime control and surveillance capabilities. It is now implementing a multi-million dollar project with Korea for establishing seven stations across its coastline.

Bangladesh has two research institutes now – the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Maritime University has been set up which is trying to build up skilled manpower and human resources in the maritime sector, including in the area of maritime security. Bangladesh has also since 2015 set up the Oceanographic Research Institute.

It is ultimately clear that no country can manage maritime security issues on their own. So we must have regional and sub-regional initiatives, and effective enforcement of these initiatives, or at least come up with one effective initiative.

Ambassador Yogendra Kumar (Retd.), India

Strengthening Maritime BIMSTEC by Strengthening Norms and Legal Structures

BIMSTEC might be called the Bay of Bengal Community.

While the Bay of Bengal is literally experiencing an economic opening up, a prospect of the spilling over of the geopolitical tensions from the adjacent waters of the South China Seas can potentially materialise, given the geo-strategic significance of the Malacca Straits.

In terms of the maritime system defence challenges, they involve both the creation of norms as well as the capacity for enforcement with a view to maintaining the current strategic equilibrium.

As PM Modi's SAGAR construct envisages, the primary responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity of the Indian Ocean, is that of the Littoral States themselves, whilst recognising outside countries' stakes in a climate of trust and transparency, respect for international maritime rules and norms, sensitivity to each other's interests and peaceful resolution of maritime issues. Its other aspects are deepened economic and security cooperation, including strengthening

the maritime security capacities and economies, with the involvement of regional governance mechanisms like IORA and IONS.

Consistent with the SAGAR construct, norms can be developed such that outside powers do not develop a naval base in these littorals. Ground rules also need to be devised so as to ensure freedom of navigation of ships and of overflights, especially at choke points.

Homogenisation of standards on port security, port control measures, patrolling interceptions. BIMSTEC Secretariat's capacity needs to be strengthened to handle highly technical maritime security challenges and help shape the agenda for the organisation as a whole. As a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia, the organisation needs to develop a consultative process with ASEAN and related organisations on regional, including maritime and security issues. Consultative engagement is also necessary with the UN, IMO, International Tuna Commission and other regional organisations.

BIMSTEC to create a legal group of experts to specifically study relevant maritime law aspects, including UNCLOS, SUS, SOLAS and so on and so forth. Within the organisation, a consultative mechanism (through designated focal points) can be set up so that the maritime interests of non-member countries of IORA, IONS and HACGAM (Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies) can be taken on board in their norm-setting work; some of these relate to maritime crime and database for maritime safety and security at sub-regional level. The intra-BIMSTEC consultative mechanism can even improve upon the normative template should a consensus be elusive in the wider IORA forum. Amongst others, SOPs for offshore upstream facilities, export terminals, etc., could be worked upon.

Navies and Coast Guards of maritime BIMSTEC countries could strengthen the interaction with each other for capacity building through sale, transfer to hardware, training as well as development of SOPs, including the required national legal interface for system defence rules. This cooperation, where both maritime as well as non-maritime member countries are involved, would require a strategy to counter the disruptive effect of non-state actors presenting a major system defence challenge.

The Prime Minister, in his speech at the Kathmandu Summit offered to establish a Centre of Bay of Bengal Studies at Nalanda University for research on, inter-alia, maritime laws. Although capacities exist, there is a need for comprehensive maritime domain awareness for the Bay of Bengal region; this capacity is critical in respect of IUU fishing and piracy/armed robbery at sea challenges. Indian Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) and the Singapore-based ReCAAP and the Information Fusion Centre are critical links. As with the IORA, the MDA in the Bay of Bengal region would have to be through a network of communication-information sharing arrangement amongst its stakeholder countries.

In addition to the developmental effect of the MDA, there is requirement of capacity to mount effective surveillance over various emerging situations as well as the capability for proactive

action. This would require effective coordination and sharing of real time intelligence across a spectrum of diverse law enforcement agencies, involve the coastal EEZ and the waters outside the national maritime zones. It would also require robust BIMSTEC think tank linkages focused on specific over the-the-horizon challenges.

There are already India's SAGARMALA port and connectivity plan, a draft BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity prepared by the Asian Development Bank, envisaged to be linked up with the ASEAN Master Plan on Connectivity. All of these plans would shape up as a larger connectivity vision for the entire Indo-Pacific region, witnessing significant engagements by Japan as well as the US.

Captain Gurpreet Khurana, Executive Director, National Maritime Foundation, India

Need for a Bottom-to-Top Approach in outlining Maritime Security Architecture

It is odd that the BIMSTEC is a sub-regional grouping named after a sea body, but the graphic in its logo is devoid of the blue color (maritime context). All its members have inherently had land-centric perspectives, more aptly called 'sea-blindness'. It is high time now that this disposition should change, and there is need for the 'blue' in BIMSTEC, at least figuratively.

The recent resolution of maritime boundary disputes amongst Bangladesh, India and Myanmar has enhanced mutual trust, leading to emphasis on harnessing the living and non-living marine resources and increased geo-economic connectivity among the sub-regional littoral States. The delineation of maritime boundaries has provided a symbolic heft to economic connectivity. Notably, even the two land-locked countries – Nepal and Bhutan – have stakes in the oceans, and have the legal right to maritime access, as per the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS, 1982).

From India's perspective, the specific imperative are to capitalise on the cost-effectiveness of maritime routes, and secondly, to amalgamate India's North Eastern states into national development, and this has led to the SAGAR vision and various related initiatives like SAGAR MALA and transnational maritime connectivity not only for external trade, but also, for movement of people, tourism and people-to-people contacts. And a specific manifestation of this has been the India-Bangladesh Protocol on Land Water Transport and Trade.

The entire north-eastern ocean is well known to be prone to natural disasters. The 2004 Tsunami clearly indicated this. The problem is not restricted to tropical cyclones as what is less well known is the fact that India has an active volcano in the Barren Island in the Andaman and Nicobar. The reason is that the seismic fault line stretches across the entire subterranean ridge along the Andaman and Nicobar group of islands. The answer lies *inter alia* in a coordinated approach of regional maritime forces to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) measures.

Search and Rescue (SAR) is an international obligation for states as well as their maritime forces and is codified in international law. However, many countries of the BIMSTEC have not ratified the SAR Convention, 1979, due to geopolitical sensitivities. The answer lies *inter alia* in forging a web of bilateral SAR MoUs among the regional countries.

The submarine-operating countries are increasing. Bangladesh has recently acquired submarines and Thailand will do so soon. India and Indonesia are adding new submarines. This leads to some critical imperatives; notably, the de-confliction of unintended naval encounters, water-space management and submarine safety. With regard to submarine rescue, the Indian Navy has recently acquired an effective capability of submarine-rescue, and is willing to share it with other submarine-operating navies that do not have such a capability.

The transnational maritime crimes like trafficking of drugs and weapons are quite rampant in the area. The answer lies *inter alia* in enhanced information-sharing. There is the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram which will in a couple of years house the foreign International Liaison Officers (ILOs) of the regional countries at the IOR-IFC (Information Fusion Centre) similar to the Singapore facility.

India's core strength lies not in hardware, but in software. It, therefore, lies in its ability to provide capability enhancement assistance to the regional countries by way of training, doctrines, hydrographic assistance, and maritime domain awareness and so on.

Admiral Colombage talked about a combined maritime security strategy for BIMSTEC. I think that is a wonderful idea, but before we go there, we need to cross a hurdle. We need to have a doctrine first so that we can be on the same platform as to the common usage, understanding and application of maritime terms and concepts.

BIMSTEC needs to be contextualised with the pan-IOR Maritime Security and Safety (MSS) Structures. There is an exigent need to develop BIMSTEC's MSS agenda to contribute to the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), whose own MSS structure is at a nascent stage and needs to be supplemented. The inclusion of Indonesia in BIMSTEC as a member could enhance the BIMSTEC's MSS agenda substantively.

Session 3- Transnational Crime (Arms Smuggling, Narcotics, Human Trafficking)

Chair – Mr. K.C. Verma, IPS (Retd.)

Complexities of Law Enforcement in Combating Transnational Crime

Any deliberations on Transnational Crime – such as relating to the trafficking of drugs, humans and firearms – must acknowledge that such criminal activity has several unique characteristics.

These crimes are defined by the value system of societies and offences are wholly dependent on the legal position. The statutory position may differ from country to country and even from time to time. Another peculiarity is that often there is no obvious victim, and the perpetrator and the victim may be in league, believing that the illegal activity is to the advantage of both parties. As a consequence, the extent of detection of such crimes is dependent on enforcement.

Unlike many other crimes, the effect of crimes such as drug trafficking or smuggling of arms and people is felt only in the long term. Hence these crimes do not attract immediate attention. These crimes are also affected by geography. The domestic legal framework of different states assumes great importance, especially when states lie in close proximity to each other, as the members of the BIMSTEC are.

Fortunately, for our countries, the templates for cooperation are well established. All members of the BIMSTEC are signatories to the major conventions on drugs and organised crime, including the Single Convention of 1961, the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988 Convention against Illicit Trafficking. All members of the BIMSTEC are also signatories to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the three Protocols relating to trafficking in persons and firearms. In addition, there is a comprehensive BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking. The Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime and the sub-groups set up by the JWG have been meeting regularly.



(From L to R) Mr. Bhaskar Koirala, Captain Pakorn Thongjeen, Mr. KC Verma, IPS (Retd.), Mr. Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Dr. Kin Zaw Win and Mr. PC Haldar during the Third Session.

The cornerstone of all conventions and treaties is the process of communication between member states and parties. Our deliberations here today are part of this same process. I am confident that our discussions shall contribute to greater cooperation among member states of the BIMSTEC.

Mr. Bhaskar Koirala, Director, Nepal Institute of Strategic Studies

Lack of Political Stability in Nepal and Tackling Trans-national Crime

Last 10 or 11 years, there've been 10 different governments, coalition governments. Because of this, there is also the politicisation of the bureaucracy and unfortunately even I would say the same holds true for the security services and that's very important for us because we are looking at a very nuts and bolts issue here as it concerns the issue of transnational crime.

Marked increase in the engagement with China has tended to spike the interest of the United States and the European Union in Nepal, and one of the things that we see as a result, is the proliferation of NGOs.

BIMSTEC which deals with terrorism and transnational crime, conducts its business through the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime and is divided into six sub-groups and I won't list the sub-groups, but you know, they are narcotics, intelligence sharing, legal, money laundering and so on and so forth. I went through this and saw that Nepal is not a Lead Sherpa in any of these. A very important state like Nepal, in a very important area, is not part of these groupings.

There are groups that can shift from making money in one sector and then very rapidly shift to making money in another. So making money in the illicit sector and then making money in the legal sector, how are we going to understand the relationship between the two?

Is there political will within these communities to tackle these kinds of transnational crimes because when you start experiencing these crimes, there are very big disruptions.

Captain Pakorn Thongjeen, Thailand

Strengthening Governance in Tackling Transnational Crime

In our project on 'Comparative Study of Police Organization and Laws in ASEAN Countries', we studied the different models of police organisation in ASEAN and the interesting thing that we found is that most of the countries in the region are facing the same kinds of issues, problems, which is transnational crime, and the inability of police forces to deal effectively with transnational crime in the region.

In this research, we are dealing with this issue from three angles. The first one is through the lens of criminology. We want to find out what motivates the offenders, the criminology theories.

Second, we are looking at it from the perspective of policy, the nation's policy and public administration, and the last one is to look at it from the point of laws and the criminal justice system in our country.

The rise of developing markets and the inequality of incomes between and within member countries is one of the important reasons/factors responsible for the rise in transnational crimes.

We have to look at transnational crimes as a very profitable business. Government authorities are not driven by profit while performing their tasks, but those involved in transnational crimes are solely driven by profit. They are very creative when carrying out or committing transnational crimes.

The ecosystem of transnational crime in our country, as you can see from my slides, the foundations for transnational crimes are two – money laundering and forging of travel documents. As transnational crimes are spread across various multiple domains, the bad guys need fake documents to carry out their activities and when they get the money and gain financial benefits, they launder money for support and finance their criminal activities.

It may come as a surprise to most of you to know that 45 percent of the money in Thailand is laundered money. Most of the victims are female. Most of the criminals involved in cybercrime are very well educated.

Mr. Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Director, Royal Institute for Governance & Strategic studies, RIGSS, Bhutan

Understanding Psychology of Transnational Crime

Where issues related to drugs are concerned, we are told that over 90 percent of the controlled substances – narcotics that are getting imported into Bhutan – are basically from three major towns, from the borders that we share with India, and that's understandable because we share borders with India and not with other BIMSTEC countries. This of course has been a major issue that has been raised at different bilateral platforms as well.

The youth unemployment figures in our country are at over 10 percent. So this is a serious issue that we are currently facing, and of course with Bhutan, we have the legislative tools, the frameworks working on the demand side and to an extent on the supply side as well. And I think, particularly, this is kind of becoming a vicious cycle, eggs come first or chicken first situation, whether it is the demand driving the supply, or whether there is supply, there's demand.

Dr. Kin Zaw Win, Director, Tampadipa Institute, Myanmar

Convergence of Domestic Politics, Geopolitics and Transnational Crime

There are interconnections, spillovers and impacts. A long time ago, a lot of acetic acid came from India, across the border. It's a perfectly legal industrial chemical in India but once it crosses

the border, it goes to what we call the refineries where all the opium is refined into heroin, and it becomes an acronym called AA.

Myanmar's history shows that drugs and drug profits feed into armed conflicts that have been raging for 70 years.

What I want to point out is that the hashed areas, the shaded areas, are areas that are under the control of what we call the ethnic armed organisations. We have about a 100 of them, which is very surprising really, and the circles around them show the number of armed conflicts that have taken place over the years.

Now just take a quick look at it, you will see that most of these problem areas are on the eastern border. They are a little bit on the Northern Rakhine which is close to Bangladesh, and so I would say that this map is self-explanatory when it comes to the source of the arms and the weapons.

We know that a large amount of arms are coming in – not only small arms – but weapons, even armored personal carriers, heavy machine guns, missile launchers – where do they come from? We share very long borders with the biggest countries in Asia and I would say that a large proportion of that (weapons) what comes across the border, is unregulated. So, like we say, is it just an arms smuggling or an arms trafficking issue, or is it a civil war issue, or is an ethnic aspirations issue, and the peace process is still going on and we don't know where it will end.

Myanmar is a smugglers paradise. What I feel and find particularly painful is that many wildlife, much of wildlife, is being smuggled too. We have lots of deep forests and jungles, there was a big tiger population, and most of it has been decimated, because every part of a tiger is of medicinal value in China. The same thing is happening with elephant skins for goodness sake because they are medicinal ingredients, and elephants are just being shot and killed for their skin, and this, I will also say, is from the years of isolation when Myanmar was closed off, that accounts for many of the problems that we are facing today.

It's no surprise that (Myanmar) women are being smuggled into China today. And you know the disparity between men and women in China because of the one child policy; it's led to a shortage of marriageable women in China. It's not limited to Myanmar alone; many Vietnamese women are also trafficked into China, perhaps even more than from Myanmar.

And we know now with the new technologies – IT and everything – the sophistication of the criminal networks, be it in and around Myanmar and everywhere in the region. What are you going to do? Are you going to fight the terrorists using military, police, and drones, or are you going to address the root causes like poverty and radicalisation?

Mr. P.C. Haldar, Policy Perspectives Foundation, India

Steady Convergence on Legal Frameworks in BIMSTEC on Transnational Crime

Each country has a different set of laws, and agreeing to a new set of laws can pose a problem. But we can work first on moving together to have a workable agreed protocol of cooperation, which would mean that before it goes to the level of a BIMSTEC summit, the number of tiers of officials from the seven member countries must meet and exchange ideas, and identify doable protocols that can be put in place.

Terror groups become part of the organised crime spectrum and the organised crime becomes almost an integral part of this thing, which would cover human trafficking, drugs. Even our miniscule number that has gone to the IS, have used the smuggling route, the human trafficking route to get to the IS. So this is an indication that these routes are active.

So let us not look for new law. Let us try and find out what the possibilities are within each country's law that we have. If we put our minds together intensely, and obviously the working level meets each other, that probability can be possible

Environmental crime is illegal mining, illegal wood cutting. I think in India we are familiar with it. It has been seen that in the areas where conflict arose, militancy arose. Illegal mining, illegal wood filing and other activities of extortion and taxes. Extortion and taxes would mean that you cut your wood or any other material that you are trying to take, you know there's an unauthorised barrier on the road and the local militia or armed group is collecting funds from you.

For the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation on International Terrorism, Organised Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking, out of seven member states, it has been ratified by six. We are waiting for ratification from Bhutan and they have assured us that after the formation of the new government, probably they will send the instrument of ratification to us. Regarding the BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, out of seven member countries, six have given their agreements to sign the convention, and we are awaiting ratification from Bhutan.

Regarding extradition, already one draft has been prepared on the BIMSTEC Convention on Extradition, which we were supposed to discuss in the meeting in Kathmandu on 30 and 31 October. Of course, we could not discuss that and there's another convention on trafficking of persons. We had the second round of negotiations in Kathmandu on 30 and 31 October in a sub-group meeting, so we could finalise quite a few number of articles... So quite a few conventions which are in the process of being ratified and finalised or being negotiated.

The challenge is also what you legalise and what you do not legalise and that is something that will become very serious, because this is marijuana. Other things that he mentioned are natural products which become... You also have synthetic pharmaceuticals/drugs and one which is being used in the IS areas is a psycho stimulant, which gives you a mind in which you go and commit a crime.

One recommendation which I forgot to mention, that in the field of crime, not terror crime, but crime, can we pool data and create a BIMSTEC level of data. Then we can also make it available to the researchers, etc., who can add value to it.

Session 4 – Disaster Management

Chair – Mr. K.M. Singh IPS (Retd.)

India's Role as Lead Sherpa in Disaster Management

It is an accepted norm in disaster management, that no development can be sustainable unless disaster mitigation is ingrained into the developmental project. This is because any major disaster takes the country 10 years back on the economic front, leave alone loss to life and property.

As far as India is concerned, an effort was made to have regional cooperation on disaster management among the SAARC countries on the pattern of ASEAN AHA Centre (ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance). But this initiative did not work – Mr. Kanwal Sibal mentioned this very well yesterday that any such cooperation cannot work if a territorial dispute or maritime dispute/issue is there between two countries. Significantly, BIMSTEC Countries have no such issues.

The main focus of the 2017 (BIMSTEC HADR) exercise was to assess the level of response preparedness of member countries, and to ensure a swift inter-governmental decision-making process in place for the speedy deployment of regional resources for disaster response. In this context it may be relevant to mention that following the triple disaster in Japan in March 2011, NDRF was deployed in Fukushima. This was the first deployment of NDRF abroad. It took nearly 10 days for the government to take the decision, an unusually long time. On the contrary, in the Nepal earthquake of 2015, wiser with the previous experience, the Indian NDRF reached Kathmandu in five hours. This is the difference when inter-government decision-making process is well-defined.

As far as India's role relating to cooperation with BIMSTEC countries in the field of disaster management is concerned. I have two main recommendations:

Where disaster response is concerned, India is already planning to have an international standard training institution for the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at Nagpur. This new training institution should have provisions for training the trainers of BIMSTEC countries also with the same set of training equipment and same methodology of training so that they have the synergy at the time of a major disaster.

The BIMSTEC Weather and Climate Change Centre at Noida should be upgraded to BIMSTEC Disaster Management and Climate Change Centre. This BIMSTEC Disaster Management and Climate Change Centre should be a think tank on the AHA pattern and this think tank should:

- Firstly deliberate on regional preparedness and resilience of each country;
- Secondly, synergise efforts to institutionalise regional cooperation among member countries;
- Thirdly, exchange and share best practices among the BIMSTEC member countries;
- Fourthly, ensure effective activation of inter-governmental disaster management process; and
- Lastly, lay down a structured protocol of doables of member countries as part of preparedness.

Tsunami in 2004 caused havoc in the Indian Subcontinent. However, after that INCOIS was setup in Hyderabad, and India has a state-of-the-art Tsunami early warning system. It caters to all the neighboring countries, including West Asia and South Asia, providing one or two hours of advance prediction about the precise area of landfall where the Tsunami is going to hit. Thus, there has been qualitative improvement in Indian preparedness as far as cyclone and Tsunami are concerned.



(From L to R) Dr. Naing Awe Oo, Mr. Bhaskar Koirala, Mr. KM Singh IPS (Retd.), Mr. Ashique Rahman and Ms. Kanchana Wikramasinghe during the Fourth Session.

Dr. Naing Awe Oo, Executive Director, Thayninga Institute of Strategic Studies, Myanmar

Structures for Disaster Management in Myanmar

The Myanmar government has a four point agenda/plan for disaster preparedness and the responsibility for this lies with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. In 2009, Myanmar planned for the ASEAN plan for disaster risk management resolution that was adopted and three emergency coordination centres were set up. It proved to be at the heart of Myanmar's disaster management operations as was witnessed during the floods of 2015.

(Severe flooding in Myanmar began in July 2015 and continued into September, affecting 12 of the country's 14 states, resulting in about 103 deaths and affecting up to 1,000,000 people. Most of the casualties were reported from the Irrawaddy Delta)

HADR efforts came under the umbrella of Myanmar's Air Force. Effective coordination, formation sharing, monitoring, etc., is through coordination between the civilian agencies and the air force.

Despite having a large HADR apparatus, Myanmar still requires significant HADR assistance from its neighboring countries, including BIMSTEC countries.

Myanmar formed its national institution for disaster management called the National Natural Disaster Management Committee. Under this national committee, there are four working committees which are the National Natural Disaster Work Committee, Rescue and Search Work Committee, the Recovery Coordination Work Committee and the International Relations Work Committee.

The Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction 2017 fosters resilient development through an integrated action plan also known as the MAPDDR-2017, has been implanted with the help of the Department of Disaster Relief. This plan has been developed under the guidance of the National Disaster Management Committee. It has laid a long-term vision for building resilience by 2030.

Following a rigorous consultative process to address technical and ground level issues, four technical working groups led by four departments, i.e., Department of Meteorology and Hydrology, Ministry of Transport and Communication, General Administration Department, Ministry of Home Affairs, Planning Department, Ministry of Planning and Finance, Department of Highways, and Department of Construction drafted four theme-based chapters of the Action Plan.

An inter-agency task force led by the Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD), the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, with members drawn from the government, development partners, the private sector and civil society organisations coordinated the overall process.

The AHA Centre recently deployed ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team (ASEAN-ERAT) personnel to assist the work of the Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD) of

Myanmar. The deployment of the ASEAN-ERAT personnel covered three agendas: i) observing the status of ASEAN's relief items that had been provided through the AHA Centre; ii) supporting the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) of RRD in information management, secondary data analysis, and report writing; and iii) preparing for the next ASEAN-ERAT Induction Course that is taking place in Myanmar this year.

Mr. Bhaskar Koirala, Director, Nepal Institute of Strategic Studies

Nepal's Experience in Disaster Management

Focus should be on sharing of information that includes an early warning system that can be leveraged very easily by properly consolidating the extensive and varied information and data that is already available across the BIMSTEC region, and supplementing this with India's prowess in satellite technologies and capabilities.

The issue of disaster management doesn't just relate to earthquakes or cyclones, it can also be related to something very simple as waste management. So the lack of proper, solid waste management in Nepal, has led to excessive polluting of rivers which disrupts the natural ecosystem, and this in turn has led to increased incidents of flooding and landslides in Nepal.

Mr. Ashique Rahman, Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies

Bangladesh's Experience in Disaster Management

According to the fourth IPCC Report, it is mentioned that if there is even a one meter rise in sea level, in Bangladesh nearly 14 million people will be displaced. And in this BIMSTEC region, we have five countries with coastlines, and this is the impact of climate change on just one country.

Due to the nature of the geography, the land characteristics and the number of rivers, we get regular floods in Bangladesh. We have a large number of rivers, more than 500 rivers including the three major rivers – the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna. We also experience the monsoon climate and due to our coastal morphology, we experience numerous incidences of natural disasters, mostly cyclones, tidal waves and floods.

According to statistics, from 1980 to 2008, we have experienced 219 natural disasters and the total economic loss is estimated at US\$ 16 billion. Understandably, natural disasters are major issues for a developing country like Bangladesh. However, over the years, we have been able to reduce the number of deaths but if we look at the trend of economic loss due to natural disasters, it is rising. During the latest flood in the country in 2017, though we have been successful in reducing the number of deaths to only 157, the economic loss went up to almost two billion US dollars. And it is important to note that this US\$ 2 billion loss of economy is mostly because

of loss of agricultural production including rice production. During this flood, 68 percent of the country was inundated; as a result, the whole seasonal rice production got affected and was lost.

Over the last few decades, due to our necessity of coping with floods, Bangladesh has developed a very effective and efficient disaster response mechanism. The country has been able to lay out an efficient institutional setup and policy measures. At the top of this disaster management institutional arrangement is the National Disaster Management Council or Committee. It is the apex coordinating body during flood management. The honorable Prime Minister is the head of this committee. Then we have the National Disaster Management Advisory Council and the second highest body is the Inter-Ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committee. It involves all the ministers of the relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management.

We have in fact a dedicated ministry for disaster management called the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. It is the nodal ministry for disaster management in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, we also have coordination committees in every tier of our local government. We have district committees, we have *Upazila* committees that are at the sub-district level and at the ground level, and we have *Union* Disaster Management Committees at the *Union* level.

The level of poverty in most of the BIMSTEC countries including Bangladesh is relatively high. In Bangladesh, we have done impressive development in the last one decade and we have been able to reduce our poverty from around 30 percent to only 10 percent. Disaster management in terms of protecting human life and preventing economic loss is therefore, a priority issue not only for Bangladesh but also for all the countries of the region.

In BIMSTEC there have been some measures undertaken by the regional grouping. However, there is one major deficiency, that is, we do not have any legal framework or legal instrument. We have not even discussed about this legal document. The Fourth BIMSTEC Summit in August 2018 has given a positive direction and the various measures suggested during the Summit, I think, are a positive move to that direction.

One recommendation that I would like to make here is that we can think of a regional Food Bank under the aegis of BIMSTEC. In the South Asia region, we tried to establish a regional food bank but it is yet to materialise. And as we know, things are moving a bit slowly in SAARC, we can give serious thought for a regional food bank within the BIMSTEC framework. This would tremendously enhance the capability of the regional countries in coping with natural disasters such as floods and cyclones.

Ms. Kanchana Wikramasinghe, Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan Experience in Disaster Management – Issues regarding Disaster Insurance

In Sri Lanka as we all know, the disaster management aspect came into the policy discussions only after the 2004 Tsunami. So before that we had some mechanism to provide disaster relief because we have floods and droughts occurring at certain intervals.

Ministry of Disaster Management with the collaboration of a number of agencies undertakes disaster management activities in Sri Lanka. The Department of Meteorology, provides scientific information for disaster management. The National Building Research Organization mainly looks into landslide related issues. There are other institutions such as local authorities which (are) actively involved in disaster relief and other activities at the ground level.

Disaster insurance has received a prominent place in international disaster management initiatives as well local disaster management policy discussions in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka introduced national disaster insurance in 2016. It covers the entire population of the country and is fully subsidised by the government. It covers lives and properties. So that is in place, but there are local level issues in implementing the same. There are issues related to lack of awareness among the people about this insurance mechanism and about how they can benefit through this.

There are attempts to introduce agricultural insurance. Agricultural insurance schemes have been in place for decades in Sri Lanka, but still the coverage is very low. I think around four per cent of the paddy cultivated area is covered by agricultural insurance. So I would like to highlight the need for going for innovative approaches for promoting agricultural insurance.

Loss and damage assessments are very crucial in policy making to identify the policy actions and where they should be put in. No one has done a comprehensive assessment on loss and damage assessments for different sectors. So maybe that is one of the areas that countries can cooperate and maybe the disaster management centre as Mr. Singh mentioned, the BIMSTEC Weather and Climate Centre can also look into those new areas to increase the resilience in our regional countries.

Session 5 – BIMSTEC Security Dialogue: Way Forward and Q/A with Media

Chair – Dr. Arvind Gupta, Director, VIF

Major General Md. Abdur Rashid (Retd.), Bangladesh

Mr. Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Director, RIGSS, Bhutan

Shri Hemant H. Kotalwar, JS NSCS, India

Ms. Daw Aye Aye Mu, Myanmar

Ambassador Dr. Shambhu Ram Simkhada (Retd.), Nepal

Admiral Jayanath Siri Kumara Colombage (Retd.), Sri Lanka

Address of Associate Professor Surat Horachaikul, Director, Indian Studies Centre (ISC) of Chulalongkorn University (read in absentia) by Mr. Apirat Sugondhabhirom

Data/Intelligence Sharing HQ

Rapporteur's Note: The number one recommendation that emerged during the course of the entire dialogue was greater sharing of information and intelligence on all issues raised, be it for Counter-terrorism, Maritime Security, Transnational Crime or Disaster Management.

A common recommendation and everybody will agree that we must have regional, real time intelligence exchange for which I would recommend a regional control headquarter from where sharing would take place, because individual nations wants to interact, avail the sharing, but this takes a long time. So one important thing is a control headquarter for intelligence sharing.
– Major General Abdur Rashid

There is the issue of information sharing with ASEANPOL, INTERPOL, ODC and ESCAP and other relevant organisations. We need to look into their expertise also and learn from them as well. We must also be aware of the TNC agendas of the United Nations and other international organisations. – Ms. Daw Aye Aye Mu

Sri Lanka is the Lead Sherpa of this sub-group (on intelligence) and the initial meeting on this was held in 2013, then subsequent meetings we had in 2014 and 2015, and now, every country has accepted that we need a mechanism to share intelligence. The only issue is the establishment of data. In our last meeting, we were discussing on establishment of database, and there are some concerns by the member states as to where we are going to have it (location of database centre). In our next meeting to be held next year, we are hopeful about discussing and finalising the relevant things. – SL Brig. Chula Kodithuwakku



(From L to R) Ms. Daw Aye Aye Mu, Mr. Hemant H. Kotalwar, Amb. (Dr.) Shambhu Ram Simkhada (Retd.), Mr. Dasho Chewang Rinzin, Dr. Arvind Gupta, Admiral Jayanath Siri Kumara Colombage (Retd.), Major General Md Abdur Rashid (Retd.) and Mr. Apirat Sugondhabhirom (who read the Address of Associate Professor Surat Horachaiikul, Director, Indian Studies Centre (ISC), Chulalongkorn University) during the Fifth Session.

Reigning in Expectations and Prioritisation of Issues

New found attention in security matters reflects our collective realisation of the uncertain times facing us. However, there needs to be a clear communication and agreement among members of how far an organisation can go at one point in time into the new direction. To use ASEAN's parlance, we should go together 'at a pace comfortable to all', which admittedly sometimes can be said to be the same as the pace comfortable to the slowest. – Thailand

As think tanks if we have too many things on our plate, perhaps, we may not go very much forward. So some prioritisation both at this dialogue level and perhaps, if possible, at the BIMSTEC level, may be seen as a matter of urgency. – Chair, Dr. Gupta

Prevent Politicisation and Bureaucratisation of BIMSTEC

BIMSTEC is a member-driven organisation, it is not a security-driven organisation. We need to keep that distinction. – Mr. Sumith Nakanadala

Emerging from the painful experiences of the two world wars, collective security, prosperity and dignity were the underlying goals of the post-World War II political, economic and security

order. Institutions such as the United Nations at the global and SAARC at the regional levels were created to promote such goals, but largely failed. More recently climate change, trans-border trade and migration, transnational crimes and terrorism have made interstate cooperation even more vital. The EU presented a better model in regional cooperation in Europe. But it too is lately encountering problems.

The Fourth Summit has mandated the strengthening of the BIMSTEC Secretariat. An informal dialogue of BIMSTEC Think Tanks such as this must take up this issue seriously so that BIMSTEC also does not suffer from the same problems like many other organisations. In this context, the secretariat strengthening process must not allow over bureaucratisation and excessive politicisation, while making sure that the secretariat is given the mandate, resources and level of leadership necessary to promote collective regional security goals by taking the lead in harmonising individual national interests for greater regional good, security and prosperity. – Amb. Simkhada

Increased Cooperation between BIMSTEC and ASEAN

Both regional groupings and their sub-regional counterparts should cooperate more. I do feel that Thailand will endorse such a move/proposal.

A very important point that has come up again and again in the discussions is that of the cooperation between BIMSTEC and ASEAN. – Chair, Dr. Gupta

Recommendation to include Indonesia in BIMSTEC

Consider including Indonesia because how do we derive the Bay of Bengal without Indonesia is a question, so Indonesia is a major player in ASEAN, and they have also the global maritime fulcrum now, so recommend to include Indonesia. – Adm Colombage

Establish post of Director General, Maritime Affairs in BIMSTEC Secretariat

Establish a Director General or Director post for maritime affairs under the BIMSTEC who should be coordinating the future activities. – Adm Colombage

Start BIMSTEC-wide MDA with sharing of White Shipping Data

BISMTEC-wide MDA concept with developing of combined picture for the Bay of Bengal so that we know at least on white shipping before we actually come to the grey shipping and the black shipping. – Adm Colombage

BIMSTEC Code of Conduct for Maritime Affairs

Maybe a Code of Conduct for the BIMSTEC region based on UNCLOS, a legally binding one for the BIMSTEC region Code of Conduct in the absence of a regional mechanism, because we need to shape our narrative, we need to find regional solutions to regional issues. – Adm Colombage.

Speeding up Connectivity Initiatives

We had pleaded for a BIMSTEC Master Plan on Connectivity, still some of the member countries are not submitting recommendations or observations. So, it is difficult. – Mr. Sumith Nakandala

On connectivity front, actually the Goa Retreat of 2016, has laid down a certain direction to the secretariat and to the member states. These directions have come in two forms – one is the outcome document, and the second is Agenda of Action. In the outcome document, it talks about having a BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement and in the Agenda of Action, it talks about having a BIMSTEC Master Plan on Connectivity, then BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement, and then also it talks about having similar kind of integration with ASEAN countries.

So, the Coastal Shipping Agreement was drafted by India. We had the first round of discussion in November last year, and then beside the agreement, there are also standard operating procedures and coastal regulations, which we have circulated to the member states. So they have been considering these three documents as of now, then the Motor Vehicle Agreement, that has also been drafted by India. We had the first round of discussion in April this year in Delhi. That again we have circulated to the member states for final comments. So (we are) waiting for comments. And in fact, these are many documents spoken about in the summit at various forums.

Then the Master Plan on Connectivity, we are developing with the technical assistance of the ADB. We have got a technical assistance (arrangement) with the ADB till the 31st of December 2018. So financial support is given by the ADB for the whole of the Master Plan, even the consultant is engaged by the ADB. We had one working group meeting last year in Bangkok, then we had a workshop after the summit again in Bangkok, and we are going to have the third that is the BTCWG, BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group, meeting, probably in Delhi.

We thought of having in December, so we have to see how it can be arranged. Our objective is to finalise in that meeting, and we are going to circulate the final version on the 23rd of this month. So, collectively, we have been working on these documents as of now. So nothing more. – Mr. Pankaj Hazarika, BIMSTEC

Dual Approach to BIMSTEC Regionalism – Security and Economy

There is always an economic content as far as security is concerned. So I think there is a requirement for talking about (the) economy, there is a requirement for talking about trade, there is a requirement for talking to each other's commercial organisations. – Lt Gen Ravi Sawhney, VIF

Greater Synergy between BIMSTEC Law Enforcement Agencies

Law enforcement agencies of BIMSTEC countries must work together proactively against the criminals who are really thinking beyond the limits of national boundaries. So the good guys must also think likewise. We should try to share information more and work together more on the preventive actions. BIMSTEC should see there might be a regional mechanism that can be deployed on this matter perhaps along the line of the EUROPOL in Europe or the ASEANOPOL in ASEAN. – Thailand

Space Cooperation

On the space cooperation, because we can even think of having a BIMSTEC satellite so that resources could be shared, the advantages of space cooperation whether for exploring resources, for maritime cooperation or whether the transnational crimes and the other things. So these could actually work together to have this particular thing. – Mr. Hemant Kotalwar

Cooperation on Cyber Security

The other is cyber security, of course, there is a mention of cyber security in this outcome document that has been circulated, and we are organising a cyber workshop for BIMSTEC countries. But I think we could think of further integrating and having deeper cooperation in the field of cyber security, so that we move beyond the bilateral cooperation that we have on cyber security. – Mr Hemant Kotalwar

Greater Interaction between BIMSTEC Parliamentarians

India is in touch with other BIMSTEC member states to create a forum of parliamentarians at a regional level to ensure improved people-to-people contacts. The Indian Parliament is one of the leading development partners and we appreciate it very much. We should exchange our experiences on law making. – Ms. Daw Aye Aye Mu

Expanding Role of BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) to Security

At BIMSTEC level, there exists already the mechanism for Track II cooperation, namely the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) of which the Indian Studies Centre, ISC has the honor and privilege to be a member representing Thailand. BNPTT was established subsequent to the decision taken at the Second BIMSTEC Summit held in New Delhi on 13 November 2008. The first meeting of the BNPTT was held in New Delhi from 18 to 19 February 2010, and the second meeting of BNPTT was held in Bangkok for 8 to 9 October 2015.

Certainly it is true that under the current framework of BIMSTEC, BNPTT and Track II cooperation of BIMSTEC Think Tanks is considered to be in the sector of people-to-people contacts and not yet in the security area, but we may make use of this existing framework without having to reinvent the wheel, BIMSTEC may task the BNPTT with additional specific institutions to look into security matters and even invite more think tanks in BIMSTEC countries which are directly involved in strategic and security matters to join BNPTT as needed. – Thailand

Relaxing Visa Regulations

Relaxing of visa rules and connectivity to enhance people-to-people linkages. – Adm Colombage

More Academic Work on BIMSTEC by Think Tanks

The specialist forum that you mentioned, but probably it's going to come from somewhere else, so there's already some work being done, but nevertheless, let the member countries supply us a list of what are the think tanks or even the experts who are available in various countries, we can make a kind of a directory and start using their expertise. And this idea of setting up a website or a link or something, that we can certainly look into, and as I said, if you can give us some papers we can publish, we have a national security journal, which we have ourselves launched some months ago. We call it a national security publication, in that we can include some of these thought provoking ideas that have been mentioned, which go in the name of the individual author. The idea is to reach out to more and more people. So please convert this into a network of/on BIMSTEC security issues. I think that is the way we can build. – Chair, Dr. Gupta

The excellent initiative taken here in New Delhi must not be allowed to lose momentum. So, a follow up meeting of BIMSTEC Think Tanks to further strengthen the dialogue held here on security as well as secretariat strengthening must be organised as soon as possible. – Amb Simkhada

About the VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

The Vivekananda International Foundation is an independent non-partisan institution that conducts research and analysis on domestic and international issues, and offers a platform for dialogue and conflict resolution. Some of India's leading practitioners from the fields of security, military, diplomacy, government, academia and media have come together to generate ideas and stimulate action on national security issues.

The defining feature of VIF lies in its provision of core institutional support which enables the organisation to be flexible in its approach and proactive in changing circumstances, with a long-term focus on India's strategic, developmental and civilisational interests. The VIF aims to channelise fresh insights and decades of experience harnessed from its faculty into fostering actionable ideas for the nation's stakeholders.

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