

23rd Bimstec Day: Bimstec leaders for joint efforts to combat Covid-19 impact

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BIMSTEC logo

The platform must be utilized to address the challenges of the post-Covid era, says Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina

The 23rd Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) Day will be observed on Saturday.

This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there will be no event to celebrate the day, according to a press release issued on Friday.

To mark the day, the heads of states and governments, and foreign ministers of Bimstec member nations' have issued separate messages.

In her message, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said she was delighted to extend the warmest felicitations to the governments and the people of the Bimstec member states on the occasion of 23rd Bimstec Day.

"I am pleased to observe that Bimstec has come a long way in its commitment to harness shared and accelerated growth through intimate cooperation in different areas of common interests," Sheikh Hasina said.

“I firmly believe that Bimstec will advance in an accelerated pace towards making a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable Bay of Bengal region, as we agreed in the 4th Bimstec Summit along with the Bimstec leaders,” she added.

“The Covid-19 pandemic posed a serious challenge. It will leave long-lasting multiple impacts on the lives and living of people of this region, causing repercussions in the economic and social progress.

“Bimstec forum provides an excellent platform to combat the devastating impact of Covid-19. We should not leave any stone unturned to utilize this platform in addressing the challenges of the post-Covid-19 era,” the Bangladesh prime minister added.

In his message, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: “Over the years, Bimstec has proved to be an effective bridge between South and Southeast Asia, reinforcing the traditional bonds of mutual goodwill and shared cultural heritage.

“The continued strengthening of Bimstec in recent times has brought our countries even closer together with the common objective of building a more secure and prosperous Bay of Bengal region,” Modi said.

“The world is currently fighting the common challenge of Covid-19 pandemic. No individual country can, by itself, overcome its huge consequences. In our common endeavour to deal with this unprecedented threat, India stands ready to share its expertise, resources, capacities and knowledge with all countries in the region,” the Indian prime minister added.



Bhutanese Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering in his message said: “Amidst the ongoing global battle against the Covid-19 pandemic, I wish to take this opportunity to convey Bhutan's sincere prayers and well wishes to the governments and more than 1.5 billion citizens of the Bimstec Region.”

Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi said: “With its huge markets and rich natural resources, Bimstec has vast potential for contributing towards the socio-economic development of the region.

“Substantial progress has been made during Bimstec's 23-year journey since its inception, but there is much that still needs to be done to achieve its aims and purposes, guided by the principles of the 1997 Bangkok declaration.”

Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli said: “Our common desire to deliver better opportunity and economic prosperity to our people has brought us together to establish this regional organization. Today, Bimstec represents our collective hope for achieving economic growth, social progress, sustainable development and prosperity, in our region.”

Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa said: “Sri Lanka, a founder member of Bimstec, has supported all collective initiatives throughout the years and has been a partner in its progress in facilitating trade, economic development and people to people contact.”

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen, in his message, said: “Since its inception in 1997, Bimstec has been working to advance the common visions and shared endeavours of the Bay of Bengal region. Hosting of the Bimstec Secretariat in Dhaka is the manifestation of Bangladesh's firm commitment to the Bimstec process.”

Bhutan Foreign Minister Dr Tandi Dorji, Nepal Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, Thai Foreign Affairs Minister Don Pramudwinai, also greeted the people of the region on the occasion.

Bimstec Secretary-General Ambassador Mohammad Shahidul Islam, in his message, said: “Bimstec has been actively promoting physical and economic connectivity in the region through trade, transport, tourism, technology and energy. Bimstec is also mandated to promote collective action to address vulnerabilities like climate change, natural disasters, food security, terrorism, transnational crimes and communicable diseases.

“Like most other countries of the world, Bimstec countries' initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic was to restrict trade, travel and other forms of connectivity. Bimstec leaders are putting renewed emphasis on developing regional transport connectivity that will be resilient to disruptions caused by any future pandemic or other calamities with particular focus on coastal shipping, waterways and railways.”