

Promoting Transport Connectivity in Southern Asia: A BIMSTEC Perspective

MD. SHAFIQUR RAHMAN
DIRECTOR (BANGLADESH)
BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka

BIMSTEC- A New Sub-regional Grouping ?

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established as an interregional grouping in June 1997 with the Bangkok Declaration.
- Its 7 country membership comprises Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
- The aim is to accelerate economic growth and social progress in the sub-region by promoting free trade, increased cross – border investment and tourism and technical cooperation.
- The organization had to wait for a decade and half to have a permanent Secretariat and it is now located in Dhaka.
- BIMSTEC is now in a position to service the needs of both a Bay of Bengal centric growth zone and also serve as a gateway with a larger hinterland.

BIMSTEC 's Regional Profile: An Evaluation

- BIMSTEC is a market of 1.8 billion people, 1/5th of global people.
- BIMSEC brings together US\$ 2.5 trillion economy which accounts for only 4 % of global GDP (2012) and 3.8 % of global trade.
- BIMSTEC as a region, has grown faster than the world average of 6.05 % GDP growth in recent years.
- FDI inflows in the region rose from 5 % in 1995 to 20% in 2011.
- Intra-regional trade is around 5.6% of the total trade (2011);
- BIMSTEC 's potential in enhancing trade among member states lies in geographical contiguity and common coastal link with the Bay of Bengal and the Eastern coast of the Indian Ocean.
- According to some estimate, once full FTA is in effect in 2017, the intra-regional trade would be scaled up to 47-59 billion annually.

BIMSTEC Grouping: Challenges and Opportunities

- BIMSTEC members are at different levels of development (2 developing, 4 LDCs and 1 middle income country) with different factor endowments.
- BIMSTEC's uniqueness lies in its bridging both South Asia and Southeast Asian regions.
- The uniqueness of BIMSTEC is in multi-sectoral approaches compared to another Asian blocs. This creates another layer of cooperation to ensure quicker integration.
- Its uniqueness lies in its structural process. BIMSTEC cooperation is focused on micro-issues (Sectoral cooperation) and gradually converging to macro-issues.
- Complementarities in sectoral comparative advantage has been already identified. (14 priority areas)

Transport Connectivity: A Priority Area Initiative?

- **Trade intensity** and the **transportation linkages** are two determinant of regional integration.
- BIMSTEC marks uneven connectivity and different factor endowments. The region has 3 critical elements missing- harmonization of railway network, all weather paved roads and modern port.
- This requires a sound infra-structure and transport base for movement of goods and people in the region.
- BIMSTEC underlines seamless connectivity in 5 area:

Transport Connectivity, Trade Connectivity, Investment Connectivity, Energy Connectivity, and People-to-People Connectivity.

Digital connectivity is one idea we are trying to float.

BIMSTEC Transport Initiative: BTILS Study

- BIMSTEC Transport Infrastructure and Logistic Study (BTILS) project was commissioned in 2007. It was funded by ADB. BTILS submitted its Report in December 2009 endorsed by the Ministerial meeting.
- ADB was further requested to review and update its report on the status of connectivity with a timeframe up to 2020.
- The purpose of the BTILS was:
 1. To make a profile of the transports and logistics of the region
 2. To identify hard and soft infrastructure projects related to connectivity and trade
 3. To recommend on future BIMSTEC policies and strategies to enhance connectivity and trade
 4. To recommend an effective institutional mechanism to monitor and facilitate implementing the priority projects.

BTILS Study: Finding and recommendations

- BTILS has conducted the phase of study and finalized its report. It has identified a long list of 166 projects as being 'important' in a national context. Out of this, 65 projects have been identified as priority projects.

Proposed “Short List” of Priority Projects [2014-2020]

- | Country | Project |
|----------------|----------------|
| Bangladesh | 16 |
| Bhutan | 4 |
| India | 17 |
| Myanmar | 9 |
| Nepal | 6 |
| Sri Lanka | 5 |
| Thailand | 8 |
- BITL-identified projects are national projects of the country concerned either ‘governmental’ or donor infrastructure development programs.

BTILS - identified Road transport projects

- Road transport alone caters for 65-70% of all freight movement in the BIMSTEC sub region.
- All BIMSTEC states are members of Asian Highway (AH) initiative. Road Connectivity is uneven.
- **BTILS identified 35 projects in the Road Sector:**
 1. **Upgrading of Border Roads:10 Projects**
[BAN- 1, Ind-2, Myn-4, Nep-2 Thai-1]
 2. **Upgrading of Port Access Roads : 7 Projects**
[Ind-3, Myn-1, SL-2 Thai-1]

预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：

https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_4842

