

Editor's Desk

We are happy to present the August 2024 issue of *Thinking Aloud* on the theme "Third Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue 2024". The first page article, "Moving Towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in BIMSTEC" explores the opportunities and challenges of establishing a CEPA among the member countries of the BIMSTEC. Comprising seven member states—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand—BIMSTEC has the potential to emerge as a pivotal platform for fostering economic cooperation, enhancing connectivity, and promoting sustainable development. As the region grapples with economic challenges and opportunities, moving towards a CEPA within BIMSTEC will represent a strategic move to bolster economic integration and regional prosperity. As the curtain raiser to the sixth BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok in 2024, the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) in collaboration with the Chulalongkorn University, Institute of Trade and Development (ITD) and The Asia Foundation (TAF) organised the third Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue titled "The New World Order and BIMSTEC" on 11-12 July 2024 in Bangkok. This 2-day international conference was attended by over 100 senior experts, scholars, diplomats, and practitioners in both in-person and virtual modes. Besides, inaugural and valedictory sessions, a total of six plenary sessions and a special session were organized. The conference reiterated that, although the BIMSTEC made some tangible progress in recent years, the region would require an additional push to scale up to a higher level. The conference provided several recommendations on gender and trade, digital economy, governance, environment and climate, digital public infrastructure, SDGs, and GVCs, among others. This conference was also the follow-up conference that SANEM organized in October 2022 in Colombo at the sideline of the 5th BIMSTEC Summit. The second, third, and fourth pages of this issue present the Bangkok Declaration, shared in the Third Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue 2024.

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Moving Towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in BIMSTEC

Bangkok Declaration 2024: The New World Order and BIMSTEC

Agenda of Third Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue 2024

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Moving Towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in BIMSTEC

Selim Raihan

In an era of unprecedented global connectivity, regional collaborations play a pivotal role in shaping geopolitical and geo-economic landscapes. The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) occupies a pivotal position, balancing strategic significance with untapped economic possibilities in the Bay of Bengal region. Comprising seven member states—Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand—BIMSTEC has the potential to emerge as a pivotal platform for fostering economic cooperation, enhancing connectivity, and promoting sustainable development. As the region grapples with economic challenges and opportunities, moving towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) within BIMSTEC will represent a strategic move to bolster economic integration and regional prosperity.

BIMSTEC, founded in 1997, aims to foster cooperation across sectors including trade, investment, technology, and infrastructure. As an organization, it represents a vibrant and diverse economic zone, with member countries spanning a wide spectrum of economic development and strategic priorities. While this diversity poses challenges, it also provides a unique opportunity for collaborative growth.

The combined economic potential of BIMSTEC member states is substantial. According to recent estimates, the region has a collective population of over 1.5 billion people and a combined GDP of approximately \$4.5 trillion. The economic activities in these countries span a wide range of sectors, from agriculture and manufacturing to services and technology. Such a broad economic base provides a solid foundation for comprehensive economic integration.

BIMSTEC is strategically positioned as a bridge connecting South Asia and Southeast Asia, two regions with burgeoning economies. The bloc offers a unique opportunity to harness the complementarities between these regions. A Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) would be the cornerstone of this economic integration. By eliminating tariffs, reducing non-tariff barriers, and facilitating trade and investment, a CEPA can unlock the full potential of the BIMSTEC region. It can lead to increased trade, job creation, technology transfer, and overall economic growth.

A CEPA is an advanced form of trade agreement that goes beyond traditional free trade agreements (FTAs). While FTAs typically focus on reducing tariffs and facilitating trade in goods, a CEPA encompasses a broader range of issues, including services, investment, intellectual property rights, and regulatory cooperation. For BIMSTEC, a CEPA would offer several key benefits. For example, by reducing barriers to trade and investment, a CEPA would create more accessible markets for businesses across BIMSTEC countries. This enhanced market access would be particularly beneficial for smaller economies within the group, providing them with opportunities to tap into larger markets. A CEPA would also establish a more predictable and transparent investment environment, encouraging cross-border investments. This would facilitate the flow of capital into infrastructure projects, technology ventures, and other critical sectors, fostering economic development and regional connectivity. Investing in transportation and digital infrastructure is crucial for seamless trade and people-to-people contact. Also, identifying and promoting cooperation in sectors such as agriculture, energy, tourism, and pharmaceuticals can yield significant benefits. Furthermore, a CEPA would address regulatory divergences and streamline standards across member states. This would reduce

compliance costs for businesses and improve the efficiency of trade and investment processes. Simplifying customs procedures, harmonizing standards, and improving infrastructure are essential for reducing trade costs. Finally, by integrating economies more closely, BIMSTEC countries can leverage each other's strengths, promote diversification, and reduce dependency on external markets. This would contribute to greater economic stability and resilience.

While the benefits of a CEPA are clear, several challenges need to be addressed to ensure its successful implementation. BIMSTEC member states have varying levels of economic development and different sectoral priorities. Balancing these diverse interests and crafting a CEPA that accommodates all members' needs is a complex task. Moreover, the regulatory frameworks across BIMSTEC countries vary significantly. Harmonizing these regulations and establishing effective institutions to oversee the CEPA will require considerable effort and negotiation. Furthermore, the geopolitical landscape in the region is influenced by various external factors and bilateral relations. Also, political instability in some member countries can create uncertainties for investors. Navigating these dynamics while maintaining a cohesive regional strategy will be crucial for the success of a CEPA. It is also important to mention that infrastructure bottlenecks, particularly in landlocked countries like Nepal and Bhutan, hinder trade facilitation in this region. Also, some member states may have limited administrative and technical capacities to implement the agreements effectively. Providing support and building capacity will be essential to ensure equitable benefits across the group. However, the biggest challenge is to energize the BIMSTEC cooperation process which has remained slow and fragmented. Despite numerous promises and its 27 years of existence, BIMSTEC's progress toward deeper regional integration remains limited.

To advance towards a CEPA, BIMSTEC member states can strategically undertake several key steps. First, comprehensive feasibility studies should be conducted to assess the potential impacts of a CEPA on various sectors and economies within the BIMSTEC region. These studies will provide valuable insights and guide the negotiation process. Second, it is crucial to strengthen negotiation mechanisms by establishing effective working groups. Engaging experts and stakeholders from diverse sectors will facilitate informed and balanced discussions. Third, promoting inclusivity and capacity building is essential. Ensuring that all member states actively participate in the negotiation process and receive the necessary support for implementation will contribute to an equitable and effective agreement. Fourth, robust engagement with both public and private sector stakeholders is vital. This engagement will help identify key priorities, address concerns, and garner broad-based support for the CEPA. Finally, fostering regional cooperation and trust-building among member states will create an environment conducive to successful negotiations and the subsequent implementation of the CEPA.

To achieve a comprehensive CEPA, BIMSTEC member countries must demonstrate strong political will and commitment. Regular high-level meetings, technical-level negotiations, and capacity building are essential. Building trust and confidence among member states is also crucial. In addition, the private sector can play a vital role in driving economic integration. Business associations and chambers of commerce can advocate for trade facilitation measures, identify investment opportunities, and promote regional cooperation. The road to a BIMSTEC CEPA is undoubtedly challenging, but the rewards are immense. By overcoming obstacles and harnessing the region's potential, BIMSTEC can emerge as a dynamic and prosperous economic bloc.

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1. BIMSTEC started its journey in 1997 in Bangkok, where the four countries of the Bay of Bengal region, namely, Bangladesh, India Sri Lanka and Thailand convened a meeting and jointly formed a new sub-group on 6 June 1997 by the name BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand – Economic Cooperation). Myanmar attended this summit as an observer and obtained full membership in December of that year. To acknowledge the additional membership, the acronym was changed to BIMSTEC. Subsequently, Nepal and Bhutan also joined in 2004. In the first Summit of Heads of Governments held on 31 July 2004, the leaders of the group formally announced the complete name of the grouping as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, in short BIMSTEC. In 2011, a permanent secretariat was established in Dhaka. At the highest level, five BIMSTEC Summits have been held so far; one in 2004, held in Bangkok, 2008 in Delhi, then in 2014 at Nay Pyi Taw, 2018 in Kathmandu and one in 2022 in Colombo. India hosted the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach meeting at Goa in October 2016. Thailand, the current chair of the BIMSTEC, is going to host the 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok in 2024.

2. To commemorate the 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok in 2024, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) in collaboration



with the Chulalongkorn University, Institute of Trade and Development (ITD) and The Asia Foundation (TAF) organised the third Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue titled “The New World Order and BIMSTEC” as the curtain raiser to the sixth BIMSTEC Summit. This 2-day international conference was attended by over 100 senior experts, scholars, diplomats, and practitioners in both in-person and virtual modes. Besides, inaugural and valedictory sessions, a total of six plenary sessions and a special session were organized. This conference was also the follow-up conference that SANEM organized in October 2022 in Bangkok at the sideline of the 5th BIMSTEC Summit.

3. The geographical contiguity, abundant natural and human resources, rich historical linkages and shared cultural heritage are some of the unique advantages that BIMSTEC enjoys. BIMSTEC shares high trade potential and economic complementarities. Not only an energy hotspot, BIMSTEC’s strategic location is its greatest asset.

4. BIMSTEC becomes highly relevant in the following ways. First, BIMSTEC with its unique geographic location can play the role of bridging South Asia and Southeast Asia through trade and connectivity. Second, BIMSTEC member states

surround the Bay of Bengal, which is not only a space to support regional trade and transport connectivity, but also connects international maritime trade routes between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. Maritime and digital connectivity are the keys to trade and security. Third, BIMSTEC member states are a powerhouse in some of the global products such as garments



(Bangladesh), digital services (India), maritime services (Sri Lanka), consumer durables (Thailand), and tourism (Nepal and Bhutan), among others. Therefore, greater intra- and inter-regional cooperation may pave the way for higher trade and growth.

5. Global growth is not expected to be high in immediate years due mainly to polycrisis and rising bipolarism. BIMSTEC today is in a disordered world. De-risking, de-coupling and reconfiguration of production away from Asia’s



largest market amid trade/tech tensions are on the rise. Trade barriers are rising across the world. Crisis like the Red Sea is forcing countries to move towards near-shoring and/or multi-sourcing. There are rising challenges in the areas of SDGs, economic, social and environmental. Therefore, economic and geopolitical forces are reshaping the global order. In such an unfolding situation, this conference has recognised regional cooperation



and integration as the best way forward.

6. Although the BIMSTEC has made some tangible progress in recent years, the region requires an additional push to scale up to a higher level. Global uncertainties are yet to be overcome, and the BIMSTEC faces several challenges both in

economic and non-economic areas. A deeper regional understanding of global challenges provides sustainable solutions. BIMSTEC countries need to work on governance, connectivity and trade facilitation, disaster management, climate issues particularly green financing, counter-terrorism, global value chains, digitalization, cross-border digital payment and interoperability, foreign direct investment, implementation of the BIMSTEC master plan of transport connectivity, among others.

7. There are many interesting developments in BIMSTEC. Some of the BIMSTEC member states like Bangladesh and Nepal will graduate to the developing world. The period between the 5th and 6th BIMSTEC Summits appears to be a phase of energetic engagements. The conference has noted some major developments. Out of seven members, six countries have established democratic governments and/or rules-based democratic practices. Regional programmes are followed based on need and supported by democratic values and governance. Good governance also means good economics. Toward that direction, BIMSTEC introduced the BIMSTEC Charter in 2022 and implemented it in June 2024. Following the 19th Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok in early 2023, a number of new areas of cooperation emerged. During the Meeting, the Ministers considered and approved several key



documents emanating from decisions of BIMSTEC Summits, including the Rules of Procedure for Core BIMSTEC Mechanisms (i.e. the Summit; the Ministerial Meeting; the Senior Officials’ Meeting; and the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee); BIMSTEC Sectoral Mechanisms; and BIMSTEC’s External Relations. The Rules of Procedure will be submitted to the 6th Summit for adoption. BIMSTEC has set up an Eminent Persons Group (EPG), which is mandated to make recommendations on the future directions of BIMSTEC; the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation, which is expected to be signed during the sixth Summit; and the BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, which is to be launched during the 6th Summit. BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers had their first retreat in Bangkok in July 2023 and second retreat in 2024 in Delhi.

8. BIMSTEC leaders have tasked the Working Group on Rules of Origin to build on the progress made during its 21st Meeting to finalise the Rules for Determination of Origin of Goods and Operational Certification Procedures and Product Specific Rules as a priority in order to finalise the Agreement on Trade in Goods of the BIMSTEC FTA. Besides, the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Working Group (BTCWG) has been instructed to

expedite the implementation of the agreed activities under the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity. BIMSTEC leaders have asked to initiate the process of drafting the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) according to the Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation for discussion in the Joint Shipping Committee. They have also urged the BTCWG to finalise the Concept Note of the BIMSTEC Framework Agreement on Transit, Transshipment and Movement of Vehicular Traffic between and among BIMSTEC Member Countries in order to facilitate the formulation of the draft Framework Agreement. The conference has emphasised simultaneous negotiation and finalisation of the BIMSTEC Motor Vehicle Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger, Personal and Cargo Vehicular Traffic between and among the BIMSTEC Member States.

9. Regional cooperation has high potential in BIMSTEC. The conference has provided several recommendations on gender and trade, digital economy, governance, environment and climate, digital public infrastructure, SDGs, and GVCs, among others. Stronger digital integration may help embrace sustainable digital transformation as a way to prosperity. It will also strengthen the GVC formation in the region. Greater engagement of the private sector will have a long-lasting impact on the regional integration in BIMSTEC.



Creating a Bay of Bengal Investment Fund to support the entrepreneur projects is recommended. To move in this direction, this Conference has recommended strong political leadership.

10. While these developments are certainly strengthening the foundation of BIMSTEC, institutions can only be sustained if we promote strong governance in it. Strengthening governance is only possible through the protection and promotion of a vibrant and constructive space for civil society. By promoting reforms in governance and enhancing accountability practices, civil society organizations can significantly contribute to more effective and equitable development outcomes. Regional cooperation can be identified as a vital part of sharing best practices and strengthening governance. The conference has recommended writing a non-white paper on governance.

11. Trade is one of the priority areas of the BIMSTEC. However, BIMSTEC is yet to make substantial progress in the reduction of non-tariff barriers; streamlining regulatory frameworks and harmonisation of standards. BIMSTEC leaders have urged the Trade Negotiating Committee and its Working Groups to accelerate the finalisation of the BIMSTEC Free Trade Area and its constituent agreements including their annexures. They

have also tasked the Working Group on Rules of Origin to build on the progress made during its 21st Meeting to finalise the Rules for Determination of Origin of Goods and Operational Certification Procedures and Product Specific Rules as a priority in order to finalise the Agreement on Trade in Goods of the BIMSTEC FTA. Trade and transit facilitations must be given top priority



along with energy and digital connectivity. The Conference recommended that the BIMSTEC FTA should be concluded in a year's time. Productivity enhancement, knowledge exchange and mutual recognition of standards and certification, paperless trade, currency cooperation, etc. can make the BIMSTEC FTA more effective and translate comparative advantage into competitive advantage. The conference has recommended setting up a digital dashboard on trade barriers with coverage of NTMs. On the other hand,



BIMSTEC-wide through transit is felt essential in order to scale up the integration.

12. Enhancing regional identity and cooperation through regular institutional meetings and the establishment of the BIMSTEC Development Fund are important. BIMSTEC’s cooperation with MDBs such as the AIIB, NDB, etc. shall be strengthened. BIMSTEC Technology Bank is a project that is envisaged to offer many important leads in



regional development. These programmes may lead to transforming the region’s comparative advantage into a competitive advantage.

13. To enhance people-to-people interactions among member countries, initiatives such as educating youth about BIMSTEC’s importance,

expanding educational exchange programmes, investing in cross-border infrastructure, and facilitating affordable digital connectivity need to be promoted. Education can be identified as a powerful tool for creating connections, with the inauguration of integrated scholarship programs. The student exchange programme at the school level may also be impactful in cultural exchange. The exchange of parliamentarians, scholars, etc. is important to strengthen regional integration in BIMSTEC.

14. The gender gap in trade is wide and growing. Conference has called for gender equality in particular formulation of the trade policy. Women lack funding, venues and opportunities to market their products and engage in cross-border trade. The conference has called for adopting comprehensive measures to promote women-led entrepreneurship, their access to finance, marketing assistance, helping start-ups, access to facilities, etc. Building enabling environments for women in trade will help us in setting in place an equitable and integrated BIMSTEC.

15. Without a stronger Secretariat, BIMSTEC integration may not be able to infuse the needed momentum. BIMSTEC Secretariat requires funding, skilling of resources, financial support, etc. The BIMSTEC Secretariat operates with limited financial resources. Inadequate funding hampers its capacity to implement projects, organize



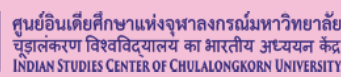
events, and facilitate cooperation among member countries. There is a need to allocate sufficient financial resources to the Secretariat to drive meaningful initiatives.

16. Bangladesh is going to take over the chairmanship of BIMSTEC from Thailand after the 6th Summit. The Conference has identified a set of supportive recommendations leading to add further momentum.

17. Organisers of the third BoBED thanked the host, Chulalongkorn University, for extending an excellent support and cooperation in organising the curtain raiser to the 6th BIMSTEC Summit. Participants of the conference appreciated the BIMSTEC Secretariat and the Secretary Generals, both former and current, for whole-hearted support to the programme. The BoBED has been grateful to The Asia Foundation (TAF) for extending its valuable support. The organisers are equally grateful to the UNESCAP for their support and participation.

18. This Declaration is handed over to the BIMSTEC Director, Mr. Tshewang Dorji T requested him to report it back to the sixth BIMSTEC Summit.

12 July 2024, Bangkok



Third Bay of Bengal Economic Dialogue 2024

The New World Order and BIMSTEC

Curtain Raiser to the Sixth BIMSTEC Summit
11-12 July 2024 | Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Agenda

11 July 2024

09.30–10.30 Inaugural Session

- Welcome by Asst. Prof. Sineenat Sermcheep, Director, ASEAN Studies Center, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
- Remarks by Dr Selim Raihan, Executive Director, South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) and Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Remarks by Ms Salinee Phonprapai, Deputy Director-General, Department of International Economic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand
- Remarks by Assoc. Prof. Nopphol Witvorapong, Dean, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
- Remarks by Assoc. Prof. Surat Horachaikul, Director, Indian Studies Center, Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
- Remarks by Mr MD Zakaria, Program Director, The Asia Foundation, Bangladesh
- Keynote Address by H.E. Mr Indra Mani Pandey, Secretary General, BIMSTEC Secretariat

11.00–12.30 Session I: New World Order, Global Challenges and BIMSTEC

Chair: Dr Selim Raihan, Executive Director, SANEM and Professor, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

Special Remarks: Dr Rupa Chanda, Director, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand

Panelists:

- Prof. Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Dr Ganesan Wignaraja, Advisor to the President of Sri Lanka on Strategic Trade Policy, Colombo, Sri Lanka (Online)
- Dr Sabyasachi Kar, RBI Chair Professor, Institute of Economic Growth (IEG), New Delhi, India
- Dr Nihal Pitigala, Former Senior Economist, The World Bank, USA (Online)

Q&A

13.30–15.00 Session II: Trade, Investment, Connectivity and BIMSTEC

Chair: Dr Prabir De, Professor, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi, India

Special Remarks: Dr Alexey Kravchenko, Economic Affairs Officer, UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand

Panelists:

- Dr Selim Raihan, Executive Director, SANEM and Professor, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Dr Sathaporn Opasanon, Associate Professor, Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

- Dr Paras Kharel, Executive Director, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Kathmandu, Nepal
- Asst. Prof. Sineenat Sermcheep, Director, ASEAN Studies Center, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

15.30–16.30 Session III: Governance and BIMSTEC

Chair: Mr Wimon Pungkong, Deputy Executive Director (Academic), The International Institute for Trade and Development (ITD), Bangkok, Thailand

Special Remarks: Prof. Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow, CPD, Dhaka

Panelists:

- Dr Zaw Oo, Executive Director, Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD), Yangon, Myanmar
- Dr Hiramani Ghimire, Director (Governance), Centre for Innovative Governance Practices, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Dr Constantino Xavier, Senior Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), New Delhi, India
- Asst. Prof. Torplus Yomnak, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Q&A

16.30–17.30 Session IV: People to People Relations and BIMSTEC

Chair: Asst. Prof. Charit Tingsabath, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Special Remarks: Amb. Sumith Nakandala, Former Secretary General, BIMSTEC

Panelists:

- Mr Tshewang Dorji T, Director, Environment and Climate Change, BIMSTEC Secretariat, Dhaka
- Dr Abdullah-AL-Mamun, Associate Professor, Department of Japanese Studies, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Ms Ngu Wah Win, Researcher from Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand
- Asst. Prof. Jirayudh Sinthuphan, Director, South Asian Studies Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
- Asst. Prof. Piyanat Soikham, Director, India Studies Center, Ubon Ratchathani University, Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand (Online)

Q&A

12 July 2024

09.30–10.15 Special Session on BIMSTEC: Breaking Barriers and Way Ahead

Chair: Amb. Sumith Nakandala, Former Secretary General, BIMSTEC

Special Lecture: Prof. Suthiphand Chirathivat, Professor (Emeritus), Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

10.15–11.15 Session V: Trade and Gender and BIMSTEC

Chair: Asst. Prof. Sineenat Sermcheep, Director, ASEAN Studies Centre, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

Special Remarks: Ms Nandita Baruah, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation, India (Online)

Panelists:

- Dr Witada Anukoonwattaka, Economic Affairs Officer, Trade Policy and Facilitation Section, UNESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand
- Ms Selima Ahmad, President, Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Ms Tshering Choki, Director, Athang Training Academy, and CEO, Athang Learning Institute, Thimphu, Bhutan

Q&A

11.30–13.00 Session VI: Sixth BIMSTEC Summit and Way Ahead

Chair: Prof. Mustafizur Rahman, Distinguished Fellow, CPD, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Panelists:

- Asst. Prof. Sineenat Sermcheep, Director, ASEAN Studies Center, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
- Mr Bijay Chhetri, Senior Program Officer, The Asia Foundation, Nepal
- Dr Constantino Xavier, Senior Fellow, Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), New Delhi, India
- Mr Kavi Chongkittavorn, Senior Fellow, ISIS, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
- Dr Paras Kharel, Executive Director, SAWTEE, Kathmandu, Nepal
- Dr Dayaratna Silva, Executive Director, Pathfinder Foundation, Colombo, Sri Lanka
- Dr Selim Raihan, Executive Director, SANEM, Dhaka, Bangladesh

13.00–13.30 Valedictory Session and Takeaways

- Remarks by H.E. Mr Pisan Manawapat, Former Ambassador of Thailand to India
- Bangkok Declaration
- Vote of Thanks by Dr Selim Raihan and Asst. Prof. Sineenat Sermcheep

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SANEM is a non-profit research organization registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms in Bangladesh. Launched in January 2007 in Dhaka, it is a network of economists and policy makers in South Asia with a special emphasis on economic modeling. The organization seeks to produce objective, high quality, country- and South Asian region-specific policy and thematic research. SANEM contributes in governments' policy-making by providing research supports both at individual and organizational capacities. SANEM has maintained strong research collaboration with global, regional and local think-tanks, research and development organizations, universities and individual researchers.