

BIMSTEC Member States discuss draft text of Coastal Shipping Agreement**BIMSTEC Member States discuss draft text of Coastal Shipping Agreement**

Member States of BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) met in New Delhi this week to discuss modalities for promoting coastal shipping in the region. In this first meeting of the Working Group on 27th and 28th of November, member countries discussed the draft text of BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement drafted by the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India.

The objective of the above agreement is to facilitate coastal shipping in the region, thereby giving a boost to trade between the member countries. The agreement would apply to coastal shipping, that is shipping within 20 nautical miles of the coastline. The requirements for movement of vessels in this part of the sea are different from standard requirements of deep sea shipping. Coastal ship movements require smaller vessels and lesser draft, and therefore, involve lower costs. Once the agreement is ratified by the member countries and becomes operational, a lot of cargo movement between the member countries can be done through the cost effective, environment friendly and faster coastal shipping route.

The meeting of the Working Group is a follow up of the BIMSTEC leaders' call at the Retreat hosted by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in Goa in October 2016, to enhance connectivity in the region. India is the lead country in BIMSTEC for cooperation in transport and communication. Other BIMSTEC member countries include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Nepal. The Ministry of Shipping, Govt of India was represented by Director Shri Abhishek Chandra.

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