



MEDIA RELEASE
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DEFEND MYANMAR DEMOCRACY CONDEMNS BIMSTEC HANDING REGIONAL SECURITY LEADERSHIP TO MILITARY JUNTA AMIDST SECRETARY GENERAL'S WEEK-LONG VISIT

Despite the military junta's ongoing campaign of terror against Myanmar people, the new Secretary General of BIMSTEC is in Myanmar this week for an "introductory visit" and a regional security meeting hosted by the junta.

So far, the Secretary General and BIMSTEC member state security officials have met with junta head Min Aung Hlaing, who is responsible for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, legitimizing the illegal junta as Myanmar's representative to BIMSTEC.

On July 26, the junta is hosting the 4th Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs. This means that BIMSTEC is allowing the military junta – which is committing war crimes and crimes against humanity with impunity – to coordinate on regional security matters.

Defend Myanmar Democracy wrote to the BIMSTEC Secretary General prior to his visit, urging him to meet with Myanmar's elected leaders, cancel meetings with the junta and ban the junta from BIMSTEC meetings, but no response was received.



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The Secretary General's visit, scheduled from July 21-27, was announced in a tweet as well as in a BIMSTEC newsletter in May.

The Secretary General's agenda for the week does not appear to have been published, but the tweet refers to the trip as an "introductory visit" and states that "Myanmar is the lead member state for cooperation in the Agriculture and Food Security Sector", indicating likely exchange on this topic.

Engagement between BIMSTEC and the Myanmar military junta has continued during the past 3.5 years despite the military's ongoing coup attempt.

Most recently, the military junta's 'foreign minister', Than Swe, attended the BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers Retreat on July 12.

In 2022, the junta's then 'foreign minister' Wunna Maung Lwin attended the 5th BIMSTEC Summit, which adopted the bloc's charter.

For Myanmar, the charter was signed by Min Aung Hlaing, as "Chairman of the State Administration Council and Prime Minister".

Concerns have also arisen over whether BIMSTEC-facilitated transport projects and trade will continue with junta-controlled entities, risking funds being diverted to the junta.



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The new Secretary General, Ambassador Indra Mani Pandey, a senior Indian diplomat, began his three-year appointment in January. So far, he has continued the same illegitimate approach to representation for Myanmar as his predecessor.

Spokesperson for Defend Myanmar Democracy, Naw Aung, comments: "When the BIMSTEC Secretary General comes to Myanmar to meet with the military junta and allows the criminal junta to lead on regional security matters, it sends a clear signal that he does not care about our human rights or democratic representation".

"If he wants to engage with Myanmar as a nation, he should respect our democracy by meeting with our elected representatives, not the illegal junta that is murdering people on a daily basis."

BIMSTEC (the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) is a regional intergovernmental organization that facilitates cooperation across a wide range of sectors.

There are seven member states of BIMSTEC: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Further comments and more information:
Naw Aung
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