

Background Note
Roundtable Discussion on
***Connecting Power, Enabling Shared Growth: Advancing Regional
Electricity Cooperation in BIMSTEC***

11 September 2026, 2.30 - 4.30 PM IST, New Delhi (Hybrid)

1. Background: BIMSTEC Regional Electricity Cooperation

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) bring together seven countries, connecting South and Southeast Asia through a shared regional framework of cooperation. With rising electricity demand and increasing renewable energy deployment, the Bay of Bengal region presents significant opportunities for deeper electricity cooperation.

BIMSTEC member countries possess highly complementary energy resources and electricity demand profiles. Greater interconnection among these systems could facilitate the exchange of electricity across countries, improve system flexibility, enhance energy security and support the integration of variable renewable energy. Cross-border electricity trade (CBET) can therefore serve as an important enabler of regional energy integration. Greater connectivity can allow countries to utilise complementary generation resources and seasonal variations in electricity demand and supply. It can also reduce the need for duplication of generation capacity, improve system resilience and enable surplus renewable electricity to be traded across borders.

While electricity cooperation has progressed through bilateral arrangements, particularly among India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh, regional cooperation overall remains fragmented. Differences in regulatory frameworks, grid codes, technical standards, electricity market structures and transmission infrastructure continue to constrain the scale and efficiency of cross-border electricity trade. Political and institutional considerations, financing constraints and gaps in technical capacity also present challenges to deeper integration.

Against this backdrop, strengthening regional electricity cooperation can become an important pillar of BIMSTEC's broader connectivity and economic development agenda. It can contribute to sovereignty through regional energy security, increase renewable energy integration and participation in power markets, compound green investment for economic growth, and strongly push the region towards a more resilient and low-carbon energy system.

2. CRF-ESBN Study on Regional Electricity Cooperation

Against the above backdrop, Chintan Research Foundation (CRF), in collaboration with the ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN), is undertaking a study on Regional Electricity Cooperation in

BIMSTEC. The study aims to examine the existing electricity landscape and cross-border electricity cooperation among BIMSTEC member countries and will attempt to identify pathways for strengthening regional integration. As part of the study, CRF has undertaken consultations with policymakers, regulators, utilities, industry, academia and research institutions. These consultations have helped identify the significant opportunities as well as regulatory, technical, institutional and financial barriers that need to be addressed to enable deeper regional cooperation.

To validate the emerging findings and obtain expert perspectives on key priorities and the proposed roadmap, CRF is organising a Roundtable Discussion in association with ESNB. The discussion will also focus on opportunities for capacity building and technology cooperation, to develop actionable recommendations for a practical BIMSTEC regional electricity cooperation roadmap.

3. Key Discussion Themes

Theme	Details
Private-Sector Participation and Investment	Identify regulatory, commercial and financing conditions to attract private investment in regional generation, transmission, trading and related infrastructure.
Regulatory and Technical Harmonisation	Explore alignment of regulatory frameworks, grid codes, technical standards and operational protocols to facilitate predictable and efficient cross-border electricity flows.
Evolving Electricity Markets	Examine opportunities to expand cross-border trade through day-ahead and real-time markets, power exchanges, energy storage and digital platforms.
Capacity Building and Technology Cooperation	Explore cooperation in capacity building, technology transfer, knowledge exchange and joint R&D, including replicating successful bilateral models across BIMSTEC.
Towards an Action-Oriented Regional Roadmap	Identify immediate, medium- and long-term priorities to strengthen institutions, mobilise investment, enhance market integration and develop regional power infrastructure.

4. Tentative Agenda

Time	Agenda item
02:30-02:35 PM	Welcome Remarks
02:35-02:40 PM	Special Remarks Dr Rupa Chanda, Director (Trade, Investment and Innovation Division) United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)
02:40-02:55 PM	Keynote address Dr Sushanta K Chatterjee, Chief (Regulatory Affairs), Central Electricity Regulatory Commission, India
02:55-03:10 PM	Presentation by CRF on Key findings and path forward for BIMSTEC Regional Electricity Cooperation
03:10-04:25 PM	Moderated discussion Moderator: Dr Debajit Palit, Centre Head, Centre for Climate Change & Energy Transition, CRF
04:25-04:30 PM	Concluding Remarks & Wrap-up
04:30 onwards	High Tea

About CRF

CRF is an independent think tank dedicated to shaping policy through rigorous research and thought leadership. CRF's research is focused on three core areas – Climate Change & Energy Transition, Economy & Trade, and Geopolitics & Strategic Studies. The Centre for Climate Change & Energy Transition aims to be a research and expertise hub, focusing on sustainable and clean energy, environmental stewardship, and climate actions.

For further information about CRF, please visit: <https://www.crfindia.org/>

About ESNB

The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network (ESBN) aims to work with business in the Asia-Pacific region to scale up business ambition and action to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the SDGs and the climate goals. As a purpose-driven network, the ESNB is a regional platform for convening companies and other relevant actors to work together to push sustainability ambition and action within and beyond their operations through collaborative action, policy advocacy and peer-to-peer learning and inspiration.

For further information about ESNB, please visit: <https://esbn.unescap.org/>