



Ministry of Culture

# Dr. Mahesh Sharma Inaugurates the 'Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist Heritage'

## Buddha an unifying force among BIMSTEC Countries: Culture Minister

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Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge) Dr. Mahesh Sharma has underlined the relevance of the message of peace and compassion of Lord Buddha in present time and said that it remains a unifying force among nations.

Dr. Sharma, while inaugurating the three days 'Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist Heritage' in New Delhi on December 08, 2017 said that the message of Lord Buddha is as relevant in the twenty first century as it was two and a half millennia ago and has been a unifying force among nations. The values of peace, accommodation, inclusiveness, and compassion that are part of our societies can be attributed to the influence of the teachings of Lord Buddha and Buddhism.

The Minister said that 'Bodhi Parva' has entwined various threads of the Buddhist heritage into a beautiful melange including an exhibition of international and Indian Buddhist art and architecture, discourses by eminent scholars and practitioners of Buddhism, guided meditation and chanting by Buddhist monks and choir, screening of film on Buddhism, dance and music performances, quiz show and a food trail. These will help in building an awareness of BIMSTEC's rich and common heritage.

He said that as a regional organization comprising seven Member States around the Bay of Bengal that brings together about one - fifth of the world population and a combined GDP of over US \$ 2.8 trillion, BIMSTEC has a crucial role in development of the region. BIMSTEC leaders have imparted fresh momentum to the organization at the Leaders' Retreat hosted by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in Goa in October 2016. He said that the robust agenda that was agreed at the Retreat to achieve greater connectivity, trade, people-to-people contacts, and sustainable use of resources is being steadily implemented.

Dr. Sharma said that India sees BIMSTEC as a natural platform to fulfil its key foreign policy priorities of 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East'. A number of initiatives have been taken to promote cooperation in BIMSTEC under the focus areas of security, transport and communication, environment and disaster management, tourism, traditional medicine and people-to-people exchanges. Several others are in the pipeline. He said that events such as 'Bodhi Parva' would also help immensely in promoting 'Brand BIMSTEC'.

The inauguration ceremony of the 'Bodhi Parva' was also attended by Shri Jeetendra Narayan Dev, Minister for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation of Nepal, Smt. Preeti Saran, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, Mr. Ibrahim Hossein Khan, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Bangladesh, Heads of Missions of BIMSTEC Member States and artists and scholars from India and other BIMSTEC Member States.

On this occasion, Mr. Jeetendra Narayan Dev said that there is immense potential in connecting transnational Buddhist Heritage in BIMSTEC. He stressed on the importance of conservation of Buddhist Heritage across BIMSTEC region, with its center at Lumbini.

India is hosting the "Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist Heritage" from 8 to 10 December as part of celebrations of 20th anniversary of BIMSTEC.

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