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Education  
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**Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar  
Open University**

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## **FUTURE OF BIMSTEC COOPERATION TO BE DRIVEN BY YOUTH, EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE PARTNERSHIPS**



The International Conference on “Strengthening BIMSTEC’s Role in Connectivity, Culture and Cooperation” was recently organised by Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University (BAOU) and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. On this occasion, Gujarat Education Minister Dr Pradyuman Vaja launched BAOU’s new

course, “India and BIMSTEC: Strategy, Diplomacy and Regional Cooperation.” Dr Hemang Joshi, Member of Parliament, emphasised youth-driven regional development and called for stronger collaboration among universities, innovation hubs and research institutions across BIMSTEC nations. Former Ambassador Preeti Saran highlighted BIMSTEC’s growing role in enhancing regional connectivity, trade and cooperation. The conference, inaugurated on BIMSTEC Day 2026, brought together distinguished diplomats, policymakers, academicians and experts from all seven BIMSTEC member countries. Dr K. K. Khandelwal emphasised that connectivity, culture and cooperation are the three pillars that can further strengthen BIMSTEC. Ambassador Sugandh Kumar Rajaram outlined India’s 21-point Action Plan, highlighting digital connectivity, scholarships, youth exchanges and collaborative research. Former Ambassadors Akhilesh Mishra and Anil Trigunayat underscored the importance of cultural ties and trade in advancing regional cooperation. Presenting the conference report, Dr Ami Upadhyay noted that the recommendations, such as the establishment of a BIMSTEC Research Centre, a BIMSTEC Digital Knowledge Grid, academic partnerships, multilingual MOOCs and youth engagement initiatives, position BAOU as an important knowledge partner in the BIMSTEC region. She further stated that BAOU is steadily progressing towards greater international recognition and emerging as a significant centre for regional academic, cultural and knowledge cooperation.