



## 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

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### Why in News

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Recently, the External Affairs Minister of India participated in the **17<sup>th</sup> Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Ministerial Meeting**.

The meeting, **chaired by Sri Lanka**, was held in virtual mode.

### Key Points

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- **India's Stand at the Meeting:**
  - **India's Commitment:**

To further **build the momentum of regional cooperation** under the **BIMSTEC framework** and make the organization stronger, vibrant, more effective and result-oriented.
  - **Progress:**

**Highlighted progress** achieved in sectors where India is the Lead Country viz Counter Terrorism & Trans-national Crime, Transport & Communication, Tourism, and Environmental & Disaster management and other activities.
  - **Importance of Connectivity:**

Robust **connectivity is an essential prerequisite for economic integration** of the region with smooth cross-border movement of people and goods.

- **Outcome of the Meeting:**

- The meeting endorsed the **BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity** for adoption at the next BIMSTEC Summit, which will be held in Sri Lanka.

**India's northeastern states form a key part of the master plan,** with several road and river links passing through the region.

- Called for early **adoption of the BIMSTEC Charter.**
- The meeting also endorsed three MoUs/agreements relating to **convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal matters, cooperation between diplomatic and training academies and establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility in Colombo** (Sri Lanka).
- Took note that the **BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate**, being **hosted in India**, is fully functional with state of the art facilities to provide Disaster Early Warnings.

- **Concern:**

- Cohesion among the members has been difficult to achieve mainly because of the **Rohingya refugee crisis** which created **bitterness between Myanmar and Bangladesh.**
- This affected the working of the organisation to some extent as it could not develop a common charter.

## **BIMSTEC**

- **About:**

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a **regional organization.**
- It comprises **seven countries.** Five of these seven countries- **India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Bangladesh-** are from South Asia while the remaining two, **Thailand and Myanmar,** are from Southeast Asia.
- The group remained dormant for many years till it was revived a few years ago as an alternative to the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**, which despite having the potential, has not been able to move forward due to friction between India and Pakistan.
- With a focus on intra-regional cooperation, the BIMSTEC has also **formed a platform with the SAARC and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries.**
- Currently, the BIMSTEC is **involved in 15 sectors** including trade, technology, agriculture, tourism, fisheries, energy and climate change among others, for sectoral cooperation.

In 1997, it started with just six sectors and later expanded to the remaining nine sectors in 2008.

- **Secretariat:** Dhaka, Bangladesh.

- **Objectives:**

- Creating an **enabling environment for the rapid economic development** of the sub-region.
- Encouraging the spirit of **equality and partnership**.
- Promoting active **collaboration and mutual assistance** in the areas of common interests of the member countries.
- Accelerating **support for each other** in the fields of education, science, and technology, etc.

# BIMSTEC

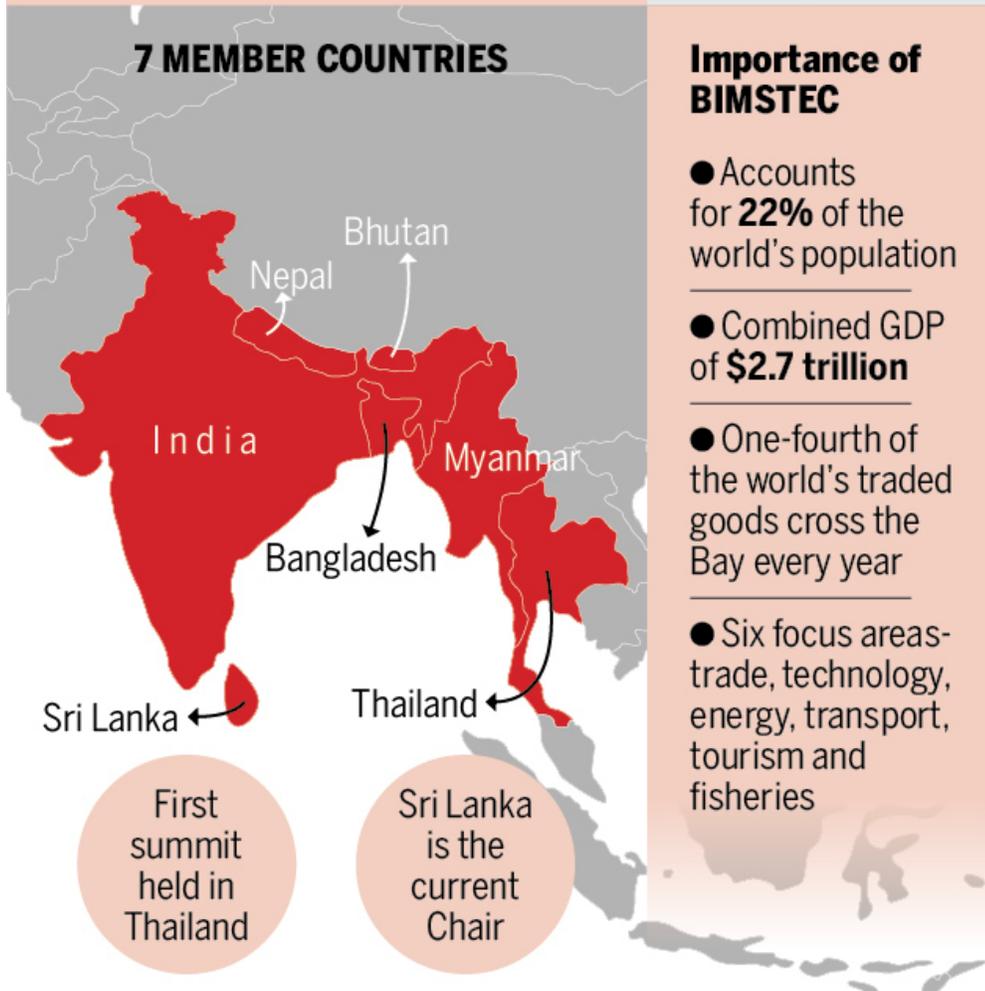
## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



Stands for **The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation**

Founded in 1997 through **Bangkok Declaration**

### 7 MEMBER COUNTRIES



### Importance of BIMSTEC

- Accounts for **22%** of the world's population

- Combined GDP of **\$2.7 trillion**

- One-fourth of the world's traded goods cross the Bay every year

- Six focus areas—trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries

First summit held in Thailand

Sri Lanka is the current Chair

**Source: IE**