



17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting

Why in News

Recently, the External Affairs Minister of India participated in the **17th [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

▪ 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.

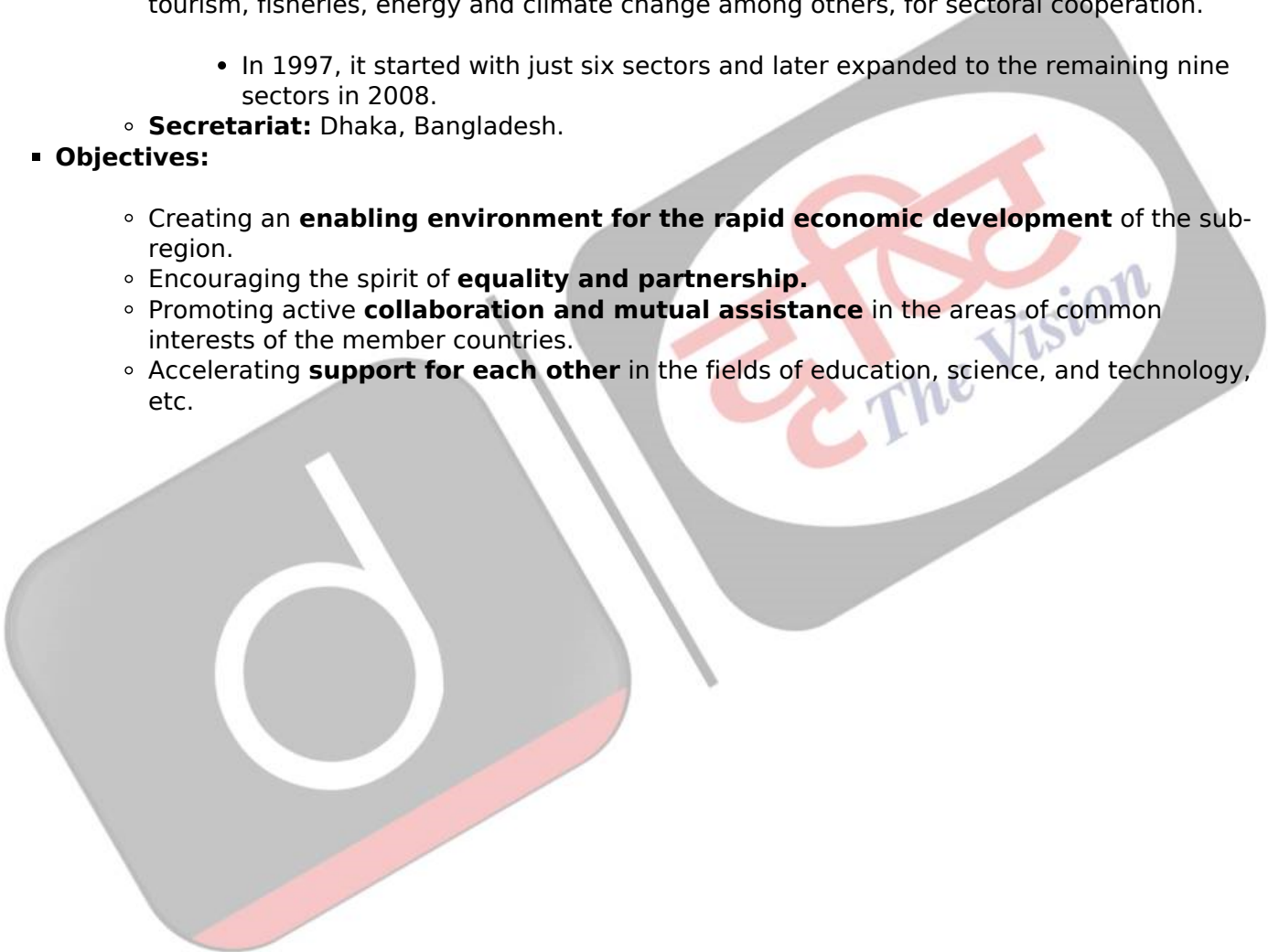
BIMSTEC

▪ 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

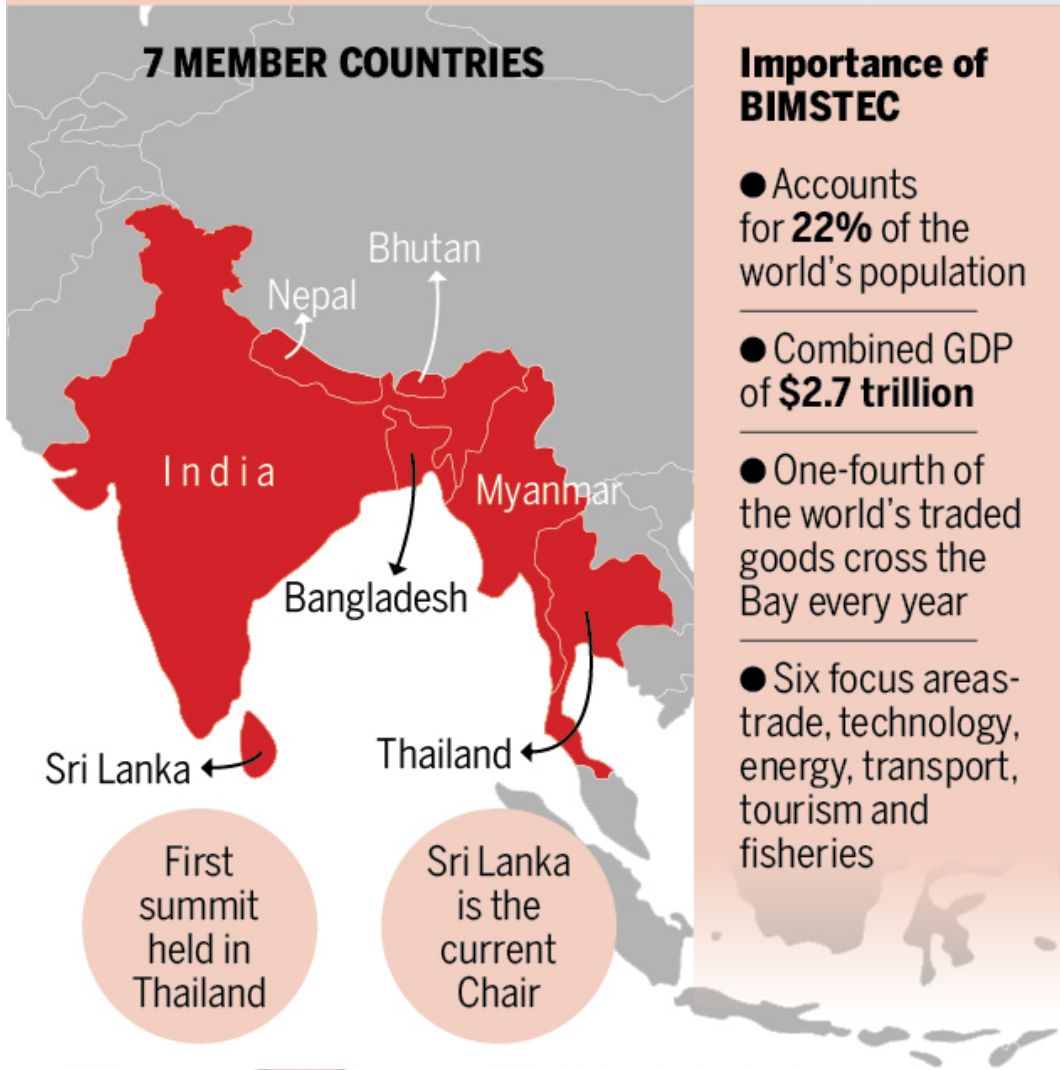
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



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

