

## Revitalising BIMSTEC

### What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Bolstering physical, digital, financial, and people to people connectivity between the 7-nation BIMSTEC is key for South Asia's progress.

\n

- This is in line with the larger picture of India's trans-national and sub-regional initiatives for enhancing development, peace and stability.

\n

\n\n

### What is BIMSTEC?

\n\n

\n

- Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was established in 1997.

\n

- It was a group of 7 littoral countries encircling the Bay of Bengal namely - Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.

\n

- Notably, BIMSTEC has 5 members from SAARC and 2 from ASEAN and can potentially act as a bridge between the two.

\n

\n\n



\n\n

## **What is the significance?**

\n\n

- \n
- In the India context, BIMSTEC stands at the very important intersection of 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East Policy'.
- \n
- While BIMSTEC has come a very long way since its establishment, the present geo-political scenario calls for enhancing its scope and engagements further.
- \n
- Despite its strategic significance and potential, the region remains one that is poorly inter-connected - which needs to be worked upon.
- \n
- BIMSTEC therefore presents immense opportunities for growth and development and has particular benefits for 7 north-eastern states.
- \n

\n\n

## **What are the organisational reforms needed?**

\n\n

- \n
- The 2016 Goa summit of the BIMSTEC (in collaboration with BRICS), and the subsequent regional business congregations have set the tone for the future.
- \n
- The mission is to evolve a comprehensive vision for fresh, knowledge-intensive, academic, policy and industry space over the next decade.
- \n
- Strengthening BIMSTEC Secretariat and enhancing government-to-business interface have been suggested.
- \n
- Also, creation of a BIMSTEC fund has been mooted.
- \n

\n\n

## **What are reforms needed for facilitating businesses?**

\n\n

- \n
- Lack of connectivity and timely availability of business information are greatest hindrances to closer economic engagement.
- \n
- Multimodal connectivity and a speedy conclusion of the BIMSTEC FTA would

have a multiplier effect on trade and investment.

\n

- Creating regional value chains that could feed into global value chains are vital for business integration.

\n

- The prospects for MSMEs are massive and these need to be augmented by encouraging competitiveness, employment generation and inclusive growth.

\n

- Integration of women entrepreneurs into supply chains and building innovative business models for women are essential.

\n

- However, the most important need is the strengthening of all modes of connectivity: physical, digital, financial and people to people.

\n

\n\n

### **What is the way ahead?**

\n\n

\n

- On a backdrop of shared history, new connections have to be forged between students, entrepreneurs, artists, and elected representatives.

\n

- In addition, it is important to pay attention to the role of the media as an opinion shaper and influencer.

\n

- BIMSTEC holds catalytic potential to transform economies of member states and create a peaceful, prosperous and integrated neighbourhood.

\n

- The road from potential to reality will be successfully traversed only when all actors and stakeholders come together actively for the cause.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: Business Line**

\n