International Relations · GS - II

“Regional cooperation based on mutual respect and peaceful coexistence is essential for maintaining stability in the Bay of Bengal region.” Discuss the significance of BIMSTEC in advancing India’s regional and strategic interests.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

BIMSTEC; South Asia–Southeast Asia connectivity; Neighbourhood First Policy; Act East Policy; regional economic integration; maritime security; counter-terrorism; disaster management; energy cooperation; people-to-people contacts; institutional challenges; consensus-based cooperation.

Model Answer

Introduction

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a regional organisation comprising seven countries from South Asia and Southeast Asia. It provides India with a platform to promote regional development, connectivity and cooperation through peaceful engagement.

Significance of BIMSTEC for India

1. Regional Connectivity: BIMSTEC can strengthen road, rail, maritime and digital connectivity, facilitating trade and movement between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

2. Economic Integration: Cooperation in trade, investment, technology and energy can expand regional markets, strengthen supply chains and generate employment.

3. Strategic Importance: BIMSTEC supports India's Act East Policy and complements its Neighbourhood First Policy. It also provides a platform for deeper engagement with Southeast Asian countries.

4. Maritime Security: Cooperation against piracy, human trafficking, terrorism and other transnational threats can improve security in the Bay of Bengal.

5. Disaster Management and Climate Resilience: Member countries face cyclones, floods, earthquakes and other natural disasters. Sharing expertise and coordinating humanitarian assistance can strengthen regional preparedness.

6. Peaceful Regional Order: Mutual respect for sovereignty, non-interference and dialogue can help build trust and promote stable relations among neighbouring countries.

Challenges

Differences in economic capacity, slow implementation of regional projects, political instability in parts of the region, inadequate connectivity and limited institutional coordination constrain BIMSTEC's effectiveness.

Way Forward

India should promote time-bound implementation of connectivity projects, facilitate trade, strengthen maritime cooperation and expand cooperation in renewable energy and disaster management. Regular high-level dialogue and capacity-building initiatives can improve institutional effectiveness.

Conclusion

BIMSTEC offers India an important platform to connect South Asia with Southeast Asia and address shared regional challenges. Its effectiveness will depend on sustained political commitment, practical cooperation and respect for the sovereignty and interests of all member states.

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