International Relations · GS - II

Do you think that BIMSTEC is a parallel organisation like SAARC? What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the two? How are Indian foreign policy objectives realised by forming this new organisation?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2022	GS - II	International Relations

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

BIMSTEC and SAARC both promote regional cooperation, but differ in membership, geographical orientation and strategic environment. BIMSTEC connects South and Southeast Asia around the Bay of Bengal, offering India opportunities to strengthen connectivity, economic integration and its Act East and Neighbourhood First policies.

Model Answer

Introduction

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) promote regional cooperation, but they are not identical or complete substitutes.

Body

Similarities

Both organisations aim to improve regional cooperation, economic development, connectivity and people-to-people relations. India is a member of both.

Dissimilarities

1. Membership: SAARC has eight members, while BIMSTEC has seven, including Thailand and Myanmar, which are not SAARC members.

2. Geographical Orientation: SAARC focuses on South Asia, whereas BIMSTEC connects South and Southeast Asia through the Bay of Bengal.

3. Cooperation: BIMSTEC emphasises areas including connectivity, trade, energy, security and technology. SAARC has a broader South Asian framework but faces persistent political obstacles.

4. Political Constraints: India–Pakistan tensions have frequently obstructed SAARC cooperation. BIMSTEC provides India with an alternative regional platform without Pakistan's membership.

Importance for India

BIMSTEC advances India's Act East and Neighbourhood First policies, promotes links with ASEAN countries, supports northeastern connectivity and strengthens cooperation in maritime security and disaster management.

Conclusion

BIMSTEC is not simply a parallel SAARC; it has a distinct geographical and strategic role. India should strengthen BIMSTEC while supporting wider regional cooperation wherever feasible.

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