



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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BAY OF BENGAL INITIATIVE FOR MULTI-SECTORAL TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION (BIMSTEC)

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)". The topic "Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)" has relevance in the "International Relations" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

BIMSTEC, its members and sectors

For Mains:

GS2: Important International Institutions and their mandate

Why in the news?

The inaugural Foreign Ministers' meeting of BIMSTEC commenced in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 17, 2023 with the presence of India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar.

Evolution of BIMSTEC

- BIMSTEC, or the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, is a regional organization that was founded on June 6, 1997, with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.
- Originally known as BIST-EC, it was renamed BIMSTEC and currently consists of seven Member States. Myanmar joined on 22nd December 1997, followed by Bhutan and Nepal in February 2004.
- In 2014, during the Third BIMSTEC Summit, it was decided to establish the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which provided a formal framework for enhancing cooperation among member states.
- The BIMSTEC Charter was signed and adopted during the Fifth BIMSTEC Summit held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 30th March 2022.

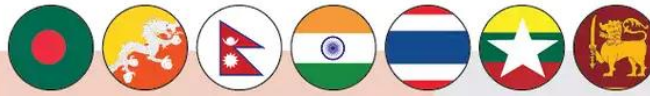
Aim : to combat the effects of globalisation by promoting regional development through collaboration and the use of regional resources and geographic advantages.

Members of BIMSTEC: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand

Secretariat: Dhaka, Bangladesh

BIMSTEC

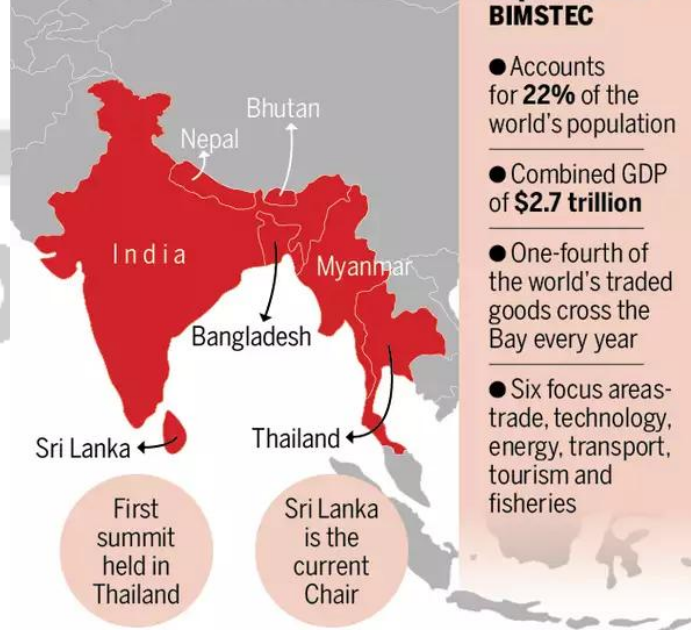
WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW



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

Sector Driven Group

- Initially, BIMSTEC, a sector-focused regional grouping, prioritized six sectors in 1997: trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism, and fisheries.
- Over time, the cooperation expanded in 2008 to include additional sectors such as agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people-to-people contact, and climate change.
- In 2021, the sectors and sub-sectors were rationalised and reorganised, with each member state leading specific areas of cooperation.

Country	Main Sector	Sub-sectors
Bangladesh	Trade, Investment, and Development	Blue Economy
Bhutan	Environment & Climate Change	Mountain Economy
India	Security	Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime, Disaster Management, Energy
Myanmar	Agriculture and Food Security	Agriculture, Fisheries & Livestock

Nepal	People-to-People Contact	Culture, Tourism, Poverty Alleviation, People-to-People Contact (forums of think tanks, media etc.)
Sri Lanka	Science, Technology & Innovation	Technology, Health, Human Resource Development
Thailand	Connectivity	

Why is BIMSTEC seen as a more promising regional organisation than SAARC?

- **Economic potential:** BIMSTEC has a combined GDP of over US\$2 trillion, which is larger than the GDP of SAARC. This means that BIMSTEC has a greater potential for economic cooperation.
- **Geostrategic location:** BIMSTEC countries are located in a strategically important region, at the intersection of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. This gives BIMSTEC a greater potential for regional cooperation and connectivity.
- **Political will:** The member countries of BIMSTEC have a stronger political will to cooperate than the member countries of SAARC. This is due in part to the fact that BIMSTEC countries have a shared interest in countering the influence of China in the region.
- **Recent progress:** BIMSTEC has made more progress in recent years than SAARC. For example, BIMSTEC has signed a framework agreement on security cooperation as well as BIMSTEC Charter.

BIMSTEC vs SAARC: At a Glance

Feature	SAARC	BIMSTEC
Type of organization	Regional	Interregional
Region	South Asia	South Asia and Southeast Asia
Year established	1985	1997
Motivation for establishment	Cold War era	Post-Cold War
Member countries	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand
Political relations	Mistrust and suspicion	Reasonably friendly
Economic relations	Low intra-regional trade	Increasing intra-regional trade
Security relations	Tense	Improving
Core objective	Economic cooperation	Economic and technical cooperation
Strengths	Long history, cultural ties	Strong economic potential, strategic location
Weaknesses	Political tensions, mistrust	Asymmetric power balance, lack of progress
Future prospects	Potential for improvement	Promising organisation

BIMSTEC and assertive China

Promoting an Alternative to Chinese Investments

- China's extensive financing and infrastructure development initiatives in South and Southeast Asia under the Belt and Road Initiative have reached all BIMSTEC countries except Bhutan and India.
- Consequently, BIMSTEC has emerged as a new battleground for India and China to assert dominance.

Countering Chinese Investments through BIMSTEC

- BIMSTEC presents India with an opportunity to counter Chinese investments by advocating for connectivity projects aligned with recognized international norms and best practices.
- Chinese projects have been widely criticised for disregarding these norms and engaging in debt-trap diplomacy.

Showcasing the Bay of Bengal as an Open and Peaceful Region

- BIMSTEC can serve as a platform to showcase the Bay of Bengal as an open and peaceful region, setting it apart from China's behavior in the South China Sea.
- Through BIMSTEC, codes of conduct can be developed to preserve freedom of navigation and ensure adherence to existing regional maritime laws.

Curbing the Escalation of Military Presence

- BIMSTEC has the potential to reduce the growing military presence in the region by establishing a Bay of Bengal Peace Zone.
- The objective would be to restrict aggressive actions by external powers and foster a more peaceful and stable environment.

Bay of Bengal has become an arena where India and China vie for influence and assert their respective agendas. BIMSTEC offers India a platform to counter Chinese investments, emphasize the importance of international norms, promote regional peace in the Bay of Bengal, and limit the escalation of military activities in the area.

Sources:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/jaishankar-bimstec-explained-members-significance-8843569/>

Image Credits: TOI

Q1. With reference Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), consider the following statements:

1. BIMSTEC is a regional organisation established in 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.
2. BIMSTEC has members only from South Asia.
3. Trade integration in SAARC is more deepened than in BIMSTEC.

Which of the statements given above is/are **NOT** correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (b)

Q2. Consider the following:

- **Thailand**
- **Bangladesh**

- Myanmar
- Sri Lanka
- Indonesia

How many of the abovementioned countries are both part of BIMSTEC and ASEAN groups?

- (a) Only One
- (b) Only Two
- (c) Only Four
- (d) All Five

Answer: (b)

Q3. Do you think that BIMSTEC is a parallel organisation like the SAARC ? What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the two ? How are Indian foreign policy objectives realized by forming this new organisation ? (2022)

Gaurav Nikumbh

RADIO COLLAR CAUSING INFECTIONS IN CHEETAHS

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Radio Collar Causing Infections in Cheetahs". The topic "Radio Collar Causing Infections in Cheetahs" has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About Radio Collars?

Challenges Associated with Radio Collars?

For Mains:

GS 3: Environment

Cheetah Reintroduction Project in India?

Project Implementation and Challenges?

Conservation Efforts and Measures?

Why in the news?

Suraj, the three-year-old cheetah found dead in the wild in Madhya Pradesh, had died of septicaemia caused due to skin chafing by his radio collar, the chairman of the Cheetah Task Force has said.

Radio Collars:

- Radio collars are used to track and monitor animals in the wild, providing data on behavior, migration, and population dynamics.
- They consist of a collar with a small radio transmitter and can be combined with GPS or accelerometers for additional information.
- Collars are designed to be lightweight and comfortable for animals, but potential risks like injuries or infections must be managed.

Challenges Associated with Radio Collars:

Festering Neck Wounds and Septicaemia:

- Two cheetahs in the Kuno National Park died due to suspected septicaemia caused by festering neck wounds from radio collars.

- Other cheetahs in the project have exhibited similar injuries, raising concerns about using radio collars in the cheetah reintroduction project.

Problems with Long-term Collar Usage:

- Long-term wear of collars can have downsides, including bacterial presence and skin issues like dermatitis in watch wearers and pet dogs.
- Tight-fitting collars can cause pressure necrosis and rapid hair loss around the neck in animals, similar to bedsores.

Weight Considerations:

- Radio collars should ideally be kept below 3% of the animal's body weight.
- Fitting collars on cheetahs can be challenging due to their small necks, especially for younger animals.

Vulnerability to Collar-Induced Injuries:

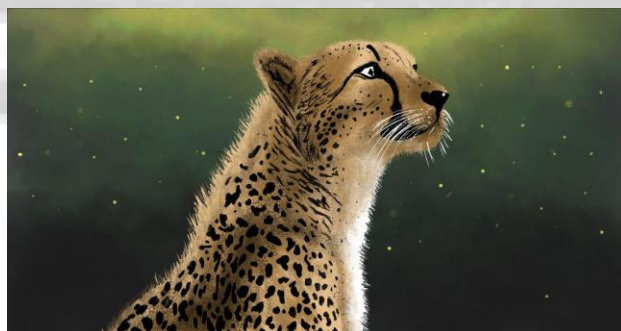
- Cheetahs' thick winter coat can retain more water, making them vulnerable to collar-related issues.
- Forces exerted by collars during movement can surpass the collar's weight, leading to potential injuries.

Lack of Adaptation to Monsoon Conditions:

- Secondary bacterial infections under collars may be more common in Indian conditions due to the monsoon and humidity.
- Cheetahs in historical times did not wear collars during the monsoon, suggesting a potential lack of adaptation to local climate conditions.

Cheetah Reintroduction Project in India:

- The Cheetah Reintroduction Project aims to restore the population of cheetahs in India, which were declared extinct in the country in 1952.
- The project involves translocating cheetahs from South Africa and Namibia to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.
- Radio-collared cheetahs were brought to Kuno National Park, and monitoring and conservation efforts are ongoing.



Project Implementation and Challenges:

The Cheetah Reintroduction Project is a collaborative effort between the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and cheetah experts from Namibia and South Africa. However, implementing the project comes with various challenges that need to be addressed:

- **Monitoring:** Effective monitoring of the reintroduced cheetah population is crucial to understanding their behavior, health, and adaptation to the new environment.

- **Protection:** Ensuring the safety and protection of the reintroduced cheetahs from poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and other threats is a significant challenge.
- **Management:** Proper management and coordination among various stakeholders are essential for the success of the reintroduction project.
- **Conservation Measures:** Efforts are being made to improve conservation measures based on consultations with international experts.
- **Cheetah Research Center:** The establishment of a dedicated Cheetah Research Center aims to provide valuable insights and data to support the conservation efforts.

Conservation Efforts and Measures:

To ensure the long-term success of the reintroduced cheetah population, the government is undertaking several conservation efforts:

- **Expert Review:** Independent experts are assessing monitoring protocols, protection status, managerial inputs, veterinary facilities, and capacity building to enhance the project's effectiveness.
- **Habitat Expansion:** Efforts are being made to expand the forest areas under Kuno National Park's administrative control to provide a suitable and secure habitat for the cheetahs.
- **Frontline Staff:** Additional frontline staff is being deployed to enhance the monitoring and protection of the cheetahs in their new habitat.
- **Cheetah Protection Force:** The establishment of a specialized Cheetah Protection Force will aid in safeguarding the reintroduced cheetahs from potential threats.
- **Second Home for Cheetahs:** The creation of a second home for cheetahs in Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary is intended to provide an alternative site for their conservation and population growth.

Characteristic	Asiatic Cheetah	African Cheetah
Physical Appearance	Smaller in size and more compact	Slightly larger and more slender
Geographic Range	Once found in parts of Asia	Found in various regions of Africa
Habitat Preferences	Prefers arid and semi-arid landscapes like deserts, scrublands, and mountains	Diverse range of habitats, including grasslands, savannas, and open woodlands
Coat Color and Pattern	Tawny or pale yellowish coat with few or no spots; some individuals may have faint spots	Tawny with black spots arranged in distinctive rows
Genetic Differences	Slightly different genetic makeup from African cheetahs	More genetic diversity due to larger population and range
Population Status	Critically endangered with fewer than 50 individuals remaining in the wild	Vulnerable with relatively higher population numbers in some areas
Behavior and Hunting Strategies	Similar hunting behavior, relying on speed and agility to catch prey; more solitary in behavior	Similar hunting strategies, using bursts of speed to chase and capture prey
Conservation	Conservation efforts focused on	Several conservation initiatives in

Efforts	protecting and increasing populations in Iran and nearby regions	different African countries to preserve and protect the African cheetah population
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SOURCE:

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/threeyearold-cheetah-dies-in-india-due-to-septicaemia-from-radio-collar-abrasions-in-ambitious-reintroduction-project-101689444890698.html>

Q.1 Consider the following:

1. Black-necked crane
2. Cheetah
3. Flying squirrel
4. Snow leopard

Which of the above are naturally found in India?

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Answer: (b)

Q.2 Which of the following statements about Cheetahs in India is/are correct?

1. The Cheetah was declared extinct in the country in 1952.
2. The Cheetah Project commenced with the translocation of cheetahs from South Africa and Namibia to Madhya Pradesh.
3. The Radio Collar is harmless to Cheetah.
4. The Cheetah Reintroduction Project is solely implemented by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in collaboration with international cheetah experts.

Select the correct option:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 3 and 4 only

Answer: (d)

Q.3 Discuss the significance of the Cheetah Reintroduction Project in India. Examine the challenges faced in reintroducing cheetahs and the measures taken by the government to ensure their long-term conservation.

Rishabh