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# TODAY'S ANALYSIS

(07 April 2025)

## TOPICS TO BE COVERED

- WHY ARE TENSIONS HIGH IN THE ARCTIC?
- 6<sup>TH</sup> BIMSTEC SUMMIT
- MCQs



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## WHY ARE TENSIONS HIGH IN ARCTIC?

- The Arctic, once isolated and difficult to access, is now a center of geopolitical tensions.
- The accelerating **melting of ice** due to climate change is making it more accessible for exploration.
- This opening creates **new opportunities for natural resource extraction**, new trade routes, and military positioning.
- The **absence of a clear legal framework** like Antarctica's Treaty leads to disputes over sovereignty and territorial claims, heightening conflict risks.

### KEY FACTORS DRIVING TENSIONS

- **Climate Change Impact**
  - **Melting Ice:** Rapid ice melting is opening up new areas that were previously blocked by sea ice, allowing access to previously inaccessible regions.
  - **New Opportunities:**
    - **Resources:** Countries are eyeing Arctic resources like fossil fuels, rare earth elements, copper, and untouched fishing grounds.

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- **Trade Routes:** The emerging shipping routes through the Arctic are reducing travel time between Europe and Asia, providing a major advantage for global trade.

- **Legal Frameworks and Governance :**

- **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea):** The Arctic is governed by UNCLOS, which allows countries to claim rights over areas within their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and beyond, if they can prove natural prolongation of their continental shelf.
- **Claims Extension:** Countries such as Canada, Denmark, and Russia are submitting overlapping claims to the Arctic seabed, which are being reviewed by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS).
- **Freedom of Navigation:** The waters between the Arctic territories are classified as international waters, leading to disputes over which countries have the right to control them.

- **Control Over Arctic Territory :**

- **Arctic Council:** This is an intergovernmental forum made up of eight countries that have sovereignty over parts of the Arctic land. However, territorial disputes arise over the waters and seabed.

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- **Members:** Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.
- **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs):** While each country has sovereignty over its own EEZ, disputes occur when countries attempt to extend their claims beyond 200 nautical miles to claim more of the Arctic seabed.
- **Military and Infrastructure :**
  - **Russian Military Presence:** Russia has the largest infrastructure in the Arctic, including a fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers, making it the dominant military and logistical power in the region.
  - **Arctic Ports:** Russia has been developing key ports like Murmansk to solidify its military presence and strengthen trade routes.

## KEY PLAYERS & INTERESTS

### Russia

- **Territorial Claims:** Russia has made extensive claims to the Arctic seabed, including the Lomonosov Ridge, a subsea mountain range under the Arctic Ocean.
- **Military Build-Up:** Russia has greatly increased its military presence, building new bases, holding large military exercises, and expanding its fleet of icebreakers.

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- **Strategic Importance:** Russia sees the Arctic as crucial for its national security and access to valuable natural resources, especially amid Western sanctions following the Ukraine conflict.

## United States

- **Greenland's Importance:** Greenland is strategically valuable for its location and for hosting the U.S. Pituffik military base, a key asset in Arctic defense.
- **Northwest Passage Dispute:** The U.S. insists that the Northwest Passage through Canada's Arctic Archipelago is an international waterway, while Canada claims it as internal waters.
- **Military Presence:** The U.S. maintains military bases in Alaska and operates an icebreaking fleet through the Coast Guard, but it lacks the extensive infrastructure that Russia has.

## Canada

- **Northwest Passage Dispute:** Canada asserts that the Northwest Passage is part of its internal waters, which is contested by the U.S. as an international waterway.
- **Security and Sovereignty:** To assert control over Arctic resources and protect its interests, Canada has strengthened its military presence in the region.

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## Denmark (Greenland)

- **Strategic Position:** Greenland is of strategic value due to its location between North America and Europe and its rich natural resources.
- **Independence Movement:** Greenland has been pushing for more autonomy from Denmark, and Denmark has responded by strengthening security to prevent Russian or Chinese influence in the region.

## China

- **Arctic Interests:** In 2018, China declared itself a "**Near-Arctic State**" and began investing in Arctic resources, particularly rare earth minerals.
- **Polar Silk Road:** China is looking to use the **Northeast Passage** as part of its Belt and Road Initiative, transforming it into a key trade route between Asia and Europe.



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- **Icebreaker Development:** China is also building a nuclear-powered icebreaker to access the Arctic and facilitate its growing presence there.

## TENSIONS & DISPUTES

### Greenland and U.S.-Denmark Relations



- **Trump's Offer to Buy Greenland (2019):** U.S. President Trump's attempt to buy Greenland for national security reasons caused diplomatic tension with Denmark, which rejected the offer.
- **Security Concerns:** Denmark has increased its focus on Greenland's security to deter external threats, particularly from Russia and China, both of which are expanding their influence in the region.

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## Canada-U.S. Northwest Passage Tensions



- **Sovereignty vs. International Waters:** Canada claims the **Northwest Passage** as internal waters, giving it control over navigation, while the U.S. views it as international waters, meaning all countries should have access to it.
- This disagreement is becoming more important as the passage is increasingly navigable due to melting ice.

## Russia vs. NATO Members

- **Svalbard Dispute:** Russia has suggested that Norway's Arctic island of Svalbard should fall under its control, a claim Norway, a NATO member, strongly rejects.

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- **NATO's Arctic Presence:** After Russia's actions in Ukraine, NATO has increased its military presence in the Arctic, especially after Sweden and Finland joined NATO. This has raised fears of military escalation.
- **Strategic Importance:** The Greenland-Iceland-UK (GIUK) gap, located in the Arctic, is critical for NATO's naval defense against Russian submarines and is a key strategic area.

## GEOPOLITICAL & STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

### Resource Richness

- **Oil & Gas:** The Arctic region is estimated to hold around 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and 30% of its untapped natural gas reserves, mainly under the seabed.
- **Minerals:** Greenland, in particular, is rich in rare earth elements that are essential for electronics and green technologies, making it a highly sought-after resource.
- **Fishing:** As the ice melts, the Arctic's fish stocks are becoming more accessible, leading to competition for fishing rights.

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## New Shipping Routes

- **Northeast Passage:** This route along Russia's Arctic coast can save up to 8,000 kilometers on shipping trips between East Asia and Europe, greatly reducing transportation costs.
- **Polar Silk Road:** China's Belt and Road Initiative aims to establish the Northeast Passage as a key global trade route, furthering China's influence in Arctic geopolitics.



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## 6<sup>TH</sup> BIMSTEC SUMMIT



The **6th BIMSTEC Summit** was hosted by **Thailand**, the current chair of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).

- **Theme: "BIMSTEC: Prosperous, Resilient, and Open."**
- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Participation:** PM Modi participated and presented a **21-point action plan** to enhance cooperation among the BIMSTEC countries.

### PM's STATEMENT

#### Opening Remarks:

- **Gratitude to Thailand:** PM Modi expressed **Gratitude** to **Prime Minister Her Excellency Shinawatra** and the **Government of Thailand** for organizing the Summit so well.

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- **Condolences for Earthquake Victims:** On behalf of the people of India, PM conveyed **deep condolences** for the **loss of lives and property** caused by the recent **earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand** and wished a speedy recovery to those affected.

### **BIMSTEC's Importance and Leadership:**

- **Leadership Acknowledgment:** PM Modi praised **Prime Minister Shinawatra** and her team for their **strong leadership** in guiding BIMSTEC over the last 3 years.
- **BIMSTEC as a Bridge:** He highlighted that **BIMSTEC** acts as an **important link** between **South and Southeast Asia** and is becoming a **strong platform** for **regional cooperation, growth, and shared prosperity**.
- **BIMSTEC Charter:** PM mentioned that the **BIMSTEC Charter** came into effect last year and expressed confidence that the **Bangkok Vision 2030** will help build a **more prosperous, secure, and inclusive** Bay of Bengal region.

### **Proposals for Strengthening BIMSTEC:**

- **Institutional Strengthening:**
  - PM emphasized the need to **expand BIMSTEC's role** and **strengthen** its

institutions.

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- The **Home Ministers' Mechanism** will help fight **cybercrime, terrorism, drug trafficking**, and **human trafficking**.
- India offered to host the **first meeting** of this mechanism later this year.
- **Connectivity Initiatives:**
  - **Physical, digital, and energy connections** are key to regional progress.
  - The **BIMSTEC Energy Centre** in **Bengaluru** has started its work.
  - PM proposed faster progress toward **electric grid connection** across the region.
  - India shared its **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** and offered to conduct a **study** to understand the needs of BIMSTEC countries in this area.
  - **Connecting payment systems**, especially linking **India's UPI** with other BIMSTEC countries, will benefit **trade, business, and tourism**.
- **Economic Connectivity:**
  - PM proposed creating a **BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce** and holding an **annual BIMSTEC Business Summit** to increase **economic ties** among member nations.

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- He also suggested a **feasibility study** to look into **trade in local currencies** within BIMSTEC countries.

### **Maritime and Security Cooperation:**

- **Indian Ocean Security:** PM confirmed the shared goal of a **free, open, and safe** Indian Ocean.
- The **Maritime Transport Agreement** signed at the summit will boost cooperation in **shipping** and **cargo transport**.
- **Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre:** India proposed setting up this Centre to support **capacity building, research, innovation, and better coordination** on maritime policies.
- It will also work on improving **maritime security** in the region.

### **Disaster Management and Public Health:**

- **Disaster Management:**
  - In light of the recent earthquake, PM emphasized the region's vulnerability to **natural disasters**.

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- India proposed the **BIMSTEC Centre of Excellence for Disaster Management** to improve **preparation, relief, and recovery** efforts.

- India will also host the **4th Joint Exercise for BIMSTEC Disaster Management Authorities** later this year.

- **Cancer Care and Traditional Medicine:**

- India committed to providing **training and support** for cancer care in BIMSTEC countries and setting up a **Centre of Excellence** to promote **research** on **traditional medicine**.

- **Agriculture:**

- PM proposed creating a **Centre of Excellence** in India to share **agricultural knowledge**, promote **research**, and build **skills** for farmers in the region.

### **Scientific and Technological Cooperation:**

- **Space Cooperation:** India proposed sharing its **space expertise**, including **training for personnel, developing nano-satellites**, and using **remote sensing data** for BIMSTEC countries.

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## Youth Development and Cultural Initiatives:

- **BODHI Initiative:**

- The **BODHI (BIMSTEC for Organized Development of Human Resource Infrastructure)** initiative will train **300 young people** from BIMSTEC countries every year in India, focusing on **skills development**.

- **Scholarships and Training:**

- India will offer **scholarships** to BIMSTEC students at India's **Forestry Research Institute** and expand the **scholarship scheme** at **Nalanda University**.
- An annual **training program for young diplomats** from BIMSTEC countries will also be organized.

- **Cultural Heritage:**

- PM highlighted the region's **shared cultural heritage**, including examples like **'Bali Jatra' of Odisha, Buddhist and Hindu traditions, and linguistic connections**.
- To celebrate this, India will host the **BIMSTEC Traditional Music Festival** later this year.

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- **Youth Exchange Programs:**

- India will host the **BIMSTEC Young Leaders' Summit** and launch the **BIMSTEC Hackathon** and **Young Professional Visitors Programme** to encourage **innovation** and **collaboration**.

**Sports and Celebrations:**

- **BIMSTEC Athletics Meet:** India will organize the **BIMSTEC Athletics Meet** in 2025.
- **BIMSTEC Games (2027):** India will host the **first BIMSTEC Games** in **2027** to celebrate BIMSTEC's **30th anniversary**.
- **Inclusive Development and Collective Security:**
  - PM Modi stated that BIMSTEC is a **model for inclusive growth** and **collective security**.
  - It is also reflecting the spirit of "**Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Prayas**" (Together, For Everyone's Growth, Through Everyone's Effort).
- **Congratulations to Bangladesh:**
  - In conclusion, PM Modi warmly welcomed **Bangladesh** as the **incoming Chair of BIMSTEC** and wished them success in leading the group.

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## About Tripitaka (World Tripitaka):

- **Presented to PM Modi:** The Thai Prime Minister presented PM Modi with **The World Tipitaka: Sajjaya Phonetic Edition**, a significant Buddhist text.
- **Significance of Tipitaka:** The **Tripitaka** (meaning "Three Baskets") is the foundation of **Buddhist scriptures** and consists of three parts:
  - **Vinaya Pitaka:** Rules for monastic life.
  - **Sutta Pitaka:** Buddha's discourses and teachings.
  - **Abhidhamma Pitaka:** Philosophical and psychological analyses of Buddhism.
- **Pali Canon:** Another name for the **Tripitaka** in Theravada Buddhism.

## KEY AGREEMENTS & DOCUMENTS

- **Summit Declaration:** Highlights the shared vision and commitments for a **Prosperous, Resilient, and Open BIMSTEC**.
- **BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030:**
  - A comprehensive roadmap for the next 5 years.
  - Aligns with the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
  - Focuses on:

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- **Prosperity** (trade, sustainable development, poverty alleviation),
  - **Resilience** (agriculture, public health, disaster preparedness),
  - **Openness** (tourism, connectivity, inclusiveness).
- **BIMSTEC Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement:**
    - Aims to enhance **cargo** and **passenger movement** across the **Bay of Bengal**.
    - Establishes a **Joint Shipping Coordination Committee** and a **structured dispute resolution mechanism**.
  - **Rules of Procedure for BIMSTEC Mechanisms:**
    - Complements the **BIMSTEC Charter (2022)**, enhancing **institutional clarity, decision-making, and functional coherence**.
  - **MoUs with International Organizations:**
    - **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):** Expands external cooperation on **maritime** and **blue economy** sectors.
    - **UNODC:** Strengthens collaboration in **counter-narcotics, criminal justice reform, and transnational crime prevention**.
  - **Approval of Eminent Persons Group (EPG) Report:**
    - Provides strategic recommendations for:  
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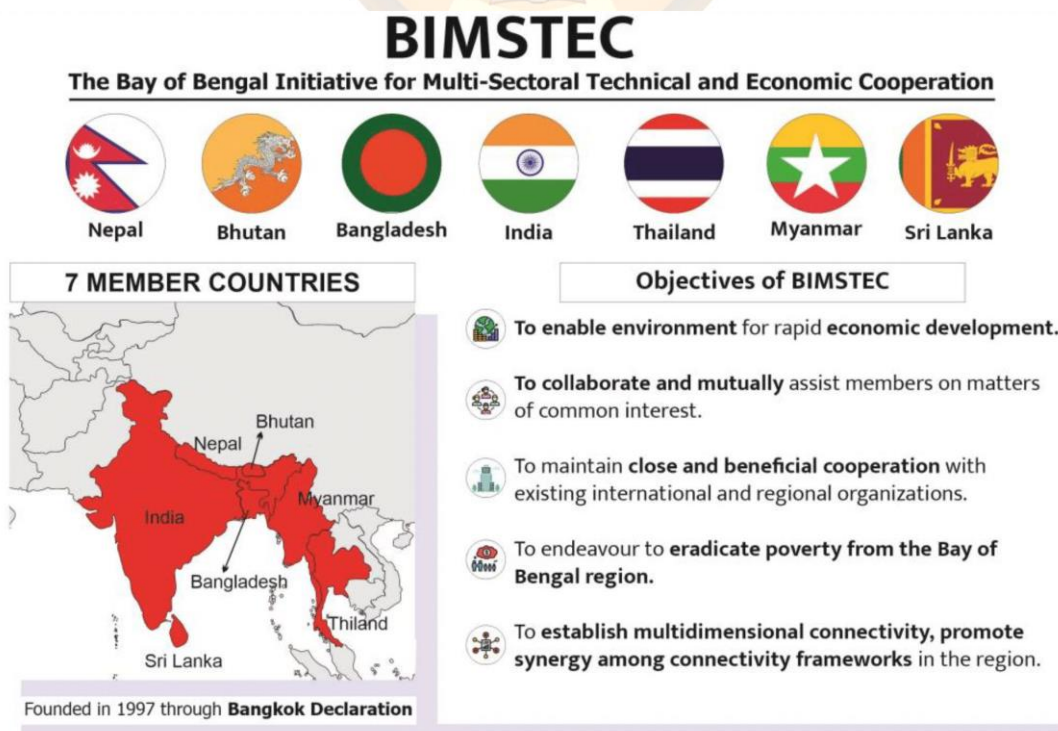
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- Institutional reform,
- Sectoral prioritization,
- Long-term visioning for BIMSTEC.

## ABOUT BIMSTEC

- **Formation:** Founded in **June 1997** as BIST-EC, later expanded to BIMSTEC in 2004.
- **Members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand.
- **Represents:** Over **1.7 billion people** (22% of the global population).
- **GDP:** A combined GDP of approximately **USD 4.5 trillion**.
- **Permanent Secretariat:** Located in **Dhaka**, Bangladesh.



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## BIMSTEC's STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE FOR INDIA

- **Strategic Bridge:** Acts as a link between **South Asia** and **Southeast Asia**, central to India's **Act East Policy**.
- **Alternative to SAARC:** BIMSTEC excludes **Pakistan**, facilitating smoother cooperation.
- **Connectivity & Energy:**
  - **India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway** is a key project connecting India's Northeast with ASEAN nations.
  - India hosts the **BIMSTEC Energy Centre** in **Bengaluru**, working on projects like **electric grid interconnection** and **renewable energy**.
- **Security Cooperation:** India leads **counter-terrorism**, **cybersecurity**, and **disaster management** initiatives within BIMSTEC.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** India promotes **youth engagement**, **sports**, and **cultural exchanges** through various initiatives like the **BIMSTEC Games (2027)** and **Traditional Music Festival**.

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## CHALLENGES FACED BY BIMSTEC

- **Slow Implementation of Projects:**

- **FTA** signed in 2004 remains **unimplemented**.
- Connectivity projects like the **Trilateral Highway** and **Kaladan Project** face delays due to funding and land acquisition issues.

- **Weak Institutional Capacity:**

- The **BIMSTEC Secretariat** is understaffed and underfunded.
- Lack of a **permanent funding mechanism** hinders the execution of large-scale initiatives.

- **Political Consensus:**

- BIMSTEC functions on a **consensus model**, which sometimes leads to **policy paralysis**.

- **Regional Tensions:**

- **Myanmar's political instability** and other bilateral disputes occasionally affect cooperation.

- **Low Intra-Regional Trade:**

- Intra-regional trade remains **below 10%**, despite efforts to implement the **FTA**.



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- **Visibility & Public Awareness:**

- BIMSTEC lacks the **visibility** of groups like **ASEAN** and faces challenges in raising public and private sector engagement.



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## MCQs

1. Which of the following are the factors for tensions in the Arctic?

1. Climate Change
2. Overlapping claims on the Arctic Seabed

- (A) Only 1
- (B) Only 2
- (C) Both 1 & 2
- (D) Neither 1 nor 2



**Ans. (C)**

2. The Svalbard Island is under the territorial jurisdiction of which country?

- (A) Denmark
- (B) Norway
- (C) Sweden
- (D) Russia

**Ans. (B)**

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3. Which of these countries is not a member of BIMSTEC?

- (A) Myanmar
- (B) Bangladesh
- (C) Sri Lanka
- (D) China

**Ans. (D)**

4. Which country will host Joint Exercise for BIMSTEC Disaster Management Authorities?

- (A) Thailand
- (B) Bangladesh
- (C) Sri Lanka
- (D) India

**Ans. (D)**

5. Consider the following pairs and mark how many of them are correctly matched:

1. **Vinaya Pitaka**: Buddha's discourses and teachings.
2. **Sutta Pitaka**: Rules for monastic life.
3. **Abhidhamma Pitaka**: Philosophical and psychological analyses of Buddhism.

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- (A) Only 1 pair is correctly matched.
- (B) Only 2 pairs are correctly matched
- (C) All the pairs are correctly matched
- (D) None of the pairs are correctly matched.

**Ans. (A)**



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