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# India Hosts the 5th BIMSTEC Security Chiefs Meeting

16 July 2026

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CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# India Hosts the 5th BIMSTEC Security Chiefs Meeting

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## WHY IN NEWS

On July 16, 2026, in New Delhi, National Security Adviser **Ajit Doval** chaired the **5th BIMSTEC National Security Advisers (Security Chiefs) Meeting**. All seven member states attended, along with BIMSTEC Secretary-General **Indra Mani Pandey**. The meeting focused on counter-terrorism, cyber security and maritime security in the Bay of Bengal region.

## A SECURITY ARCHITECTURE FOR THE BAY OF BENGAL

The **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** connects South Asia and Southeast Asia around a shared maritime space. As a regional grouping it has gained weight precisely as **SAARC has stalled**, giving India a working platform to pursue both its **Neighbourhood First** and **Act East** policies at once.

Hosting the 5th Security Chiefs Meeting reinforces India's role as the **net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region**. India leads the grouping's **Security Pillar**, and the New Delhi meeting used that leadership to translate broad intent into concrete, operational guidelines rather than statements alone.

## What the Meeting Delivered

The discussions centred on three interlinked threats: terrorism, cyber attacks, and threats at sea. On terrorism, India reiterated its position of **zero tolerance**, stressing the need for collective action against **cross-border terrorism** and its support networks. Two operational documents were adopted:

- **Guidelines for the maritime component of HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief)**, so that member navies and coast guards can coordinate rapidly during cyclones, tsunamis and other Bay of Bengal disasters.

- **Guiding principles for maritime law-enforcement conduct at sea**, setting shared norms for interdiction, anti-piracy and anti-trafficking operations.

## BIMSTEC at a Glance

| FEATURE           | DETAIL                                                                         |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Full form         | Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation |
| Members           | <b>Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand (7)</b>      |
| Established       | <b>1997</b> , via the <b>Bangkok Declaration</b>                               |
| Secretariat       | <b>Dhaka</b> , Bangladesh                                                      |
| Secretary-General | <b>Indra Mani Pandey</b>                                                       |
| India's lead role | <b>Security Pillar</b>                                                         |

## Why BIMSTEC Matters for India

BIMSTEC serves several strategic ends. It provides a **SAARC alternative** that excludes Pakistan and therefore avoids the paralysis that has frozen South Asian cooperation. It anchors India's **maritime neighbourhood** at a time of growing external naval presence in the Indian Ocean. And it offers a forum to build **interoperability** (<https://ujiyari.com/terms/interoperability/>) among regional forces on disaster relief and law enforcement, reinforcing India's credentials as a first responder in the region.

The counter-terrorism track is especially significant. By securing agreement among seven littoral states on cooperation against terrorism, India advances its consistent stand that terrorism in all its forms, including **cross-border terrorism**, must be met with **zero tolerance** and collective resolve.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

**GS Paper 2:** International relations, India and its neighbourhood, regional groupings and agreements involving India, and **bilateral** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/bilateral/>), regional and global groupings that affect India's interests.

### Prelims pointers:

- BIMSTEC established in **1997** via the **Bangkok Declaration**; Secretariat at **Dhaka**.
- Seven members: **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand**.
- Secretary-General: **Indra Mani Pandey**; India leads the **Security Pillar**.
- The 5th Security Chiefs Meeting adopted **maritime HADR guidelines** and **maritime law-enforcement principles**.

- Chaired by NSA **Ajit Doval** in New Delhi on **July 16, 2026**.

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**Mains question:** “BIMSTEC has emerged as the natural fulcrum for India’s Neighbourhood First and Act East policies.” Discuss, with reference to the security cooperation agenda in the Bay of Bengal.

## FACTS CORNER

### ★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGEPIEDIA

Event: 5th BIMSTEC National Security Advisers (Security Chiefs) Meeting, New Delhi, July 16, 2026.

Chair: NSA Ajit Doval; Secretary-General Indra Mani Pandey and all seven members attended.

Focus areas: counter-terrorism, cyber security, maritime security.

Outcomes: guidelines for the maritime component of HADR; guiding principles for maritime law-enforcement conduct at sea.

BIMSTEC: founded 1997 (Bangkok Declaration); Secretariat in Dhaka; India leads the Security Pillar.

India’s stand: zero tolerance for terrorism, including cross-border terrorism; India as net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.

**Sources:** *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in/>), *Ministry of External Affairs* (<https://www.mea.gov.in/>), *BIMSTEC Secretariat* (<https://bimstec.org/>), *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/>)

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