Bhutan exits BBIN

Why in news?

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Bhutan recently announced that it is unable to proceed with the **Motor Vehicles Agreement** with Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

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What is BBIN?

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- It is the regional sub-grouping India had planned for **ease of access among the four countries.**
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- It was an alternative proposed by the government after Pakistan rejected the Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) at the SAARC summit in Kathmandu in 2014.
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- It seeks to allow trucks and other commercial vehicles to ply on one another’s highways to facilitate trade.
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- Of the other SAARC members, Sri Lanka and the Maldives are not connected by land, and Afghanistan could only be connected if Pakistan was on board.
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What are the consequences?

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- After Bhutan’s decision, India, Nepal and Bangladesh will have to decide whether to wait for Bhutan to reconsider or to press ahead with a truncated ‘BIN’ arrangement.
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- Reconsidering will not be easy as the main concern expressed by Bhutanese citizen groups and politicians is over **increased vehicular and air**

pollution.
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- The upper house of parliament has refused to ratify the MVA that was originally signed by all four BBIN countries in 2015.
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What should be done?

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- It should be seen as a road block, and not a dead end.
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- Despite the setback, New Delhi must persevere with its efforts.
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- Dry runs have been conducted along the routes, and officials estimate the road links could end up circumventing circuitous shipping routes by up to 1,000 km.
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- Bhutan’s concerns may be eased if India considers the **inclusion of waterways and riverine channels** as a less environmentally damaging substitute.
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- A similar initiative for the Asian Highway project under the BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar) corridor got a boost this week as the countries moved to upgrade the dialogue to the governmental level.
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- Connectivity is the new global currency for growth and prosperity and India must continue to make the most of its geographic advantages.
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Source: The Hindu

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