BIMSTEC Summit 2018 - Kathmandu declaration

Why in news?

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The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) summit was recently held in Kathmandu, Nepal.

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What are the major outcomes?

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- BIMSTEC comprises of India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal.
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- The fourth summit of the BIMSTEC was attended by leaders of the seven nations of the grouping.
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- The regional grouping's Kathmandu declaration was released at the end of the summit.
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- **Terrorism** - The Declaration focussed on backing of terror by state and non-state actors, and transnational organised crimes.
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- It described terrorism as a "great threat" to international peace and security.
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- It advocated targeting terrorists, terror organisations and networks.
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- Besides, it called for identifying and holding accountable states and non-state entities that -
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i. encourage, support or finance terrorism
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ii. provide sanctuaries to terrorists
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- The declaration did not name any specific country.
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- But Pakistan is often accused by its neighbours, including India, of providing safe havens to terrorists.
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- **Connectivity** - The declaration underscored the importance of multidimensional connectivity.
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- This would be a key enabler to economic integration for shared prosperity.
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- **Energy** - An MoU was signed on establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection.
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- It provides for optimisation of using energy resources in the region.
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- It also facilitates promotion of efficient and secure operation of power system.
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What was India's role?

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- The BIMSTEC Region is a meeting point for India’s Neighbourhood First, and Act East policies.
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- It offers opportunities for connectivity covering trade, economy, transport, digital and people-to-people.
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- Indian PM thus made a strong pitch for enhanced regional connectivity.
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- India also expressed its commitment to working with the members on combating terrorism and drug trafficking.
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- BIMSTEC member states are largely situated between the Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal.
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- They hence face frequent natural disasters such as flood, cyclone and

earthquake.
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- India thus called for “cooperation and coordination” in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.
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- India will also host the International Buddhist Conclave in 2020.
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- The BIMSTEC leaders were invited to attend the event as guests of honour.
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- India expressed its commitment to enhance its national knowledge network.
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- This was in reference to the field of digital connectivity in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.
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- India also plans to extend it to Myanmar and Thailand.
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- India would set up a Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies at the Nalanda University.
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- This is to promote research on art, culture and other subjects in the Bay of Bengal.
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Source: The Hindu

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