



BIMSTEC embarrassment for India

Posted at: 12/09/2018

Highlights

- India is facing an embarrassing situation at the first-ever military exercise of the regional grouping BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) with Nepal and Thailand backing out from sending full contingents.
- The exercises were proposed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his speech at the BIMSTEC summit in Kathmandu last month that brought together leaders of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka from South Asia and Myanmar, and Thailand.
- All participating nations except Nepal have confirmed their Army Chiefs would attend the Chiefs' conclave .

MILEX 18

- The MILEX 18 exercise, being held from September 10 to 16 at the Aundh Military Station in Pune, is aimed at helping BIMSTEC nations practise "planning and conduct of counter terrorist operations".
- Each country was asked to send a contingent of 30 personnel including five officers and 25 soldiers in addition to three observers.

Nepal's new chief

- Nepal, which had initially confirmed a full contingent, pulled out in the last minute and instead sent three observers.
- Nepal conveyed that its Army Chief would not be able to attend the Chiefs' conclave at the exercise citing the reason as their new Chief has just taken charge and has a large number of commitments.
- **General Purna Chandra** took charge as the Chief of Nepal Army.
- Interestingly, Nepal is scheduled to hold its second military exercise with China next week.

Thailand Saga

- Thailand, which was the last to confirm its participation in the exercise, conveyed that it could only send observers.
- Thailand Ambassador to India Chutintorn Gongsakdi said, "Thailand is absolutely committed to BIMSTEC, but this level of participation is due to fiscal year ending in September and MILEX being an unforeseen event."
- BIMSTEC was set up in 1997 and includes India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.