

## India to host first BIMSTEC war games

India will host the first military exercise of the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) group focussing on counter-terrorism in September. As part of this, a conclave of the Army chiefs of all seven member-states is being planned.

The exercise is scheduled to be held in Pune in the second week of September.

“The aim of the exercise is to promote strategic alignment among the member-states and to share best practices in the area of counter-terrorism,” a defence source said.

The initial planning conference to work out the modalities is scheduled to be held next week and the final planning conference is scheduled in August.

BIMSTEC was set up in 1997 and includes India, Bangladesh, Bhutan Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The theme includes counter-terrorism in semi-urban terrain and cordon and search, and each side will bring in some 30 soldiers.

### Counter-terror ops

The conclave of Army chiefs is scheduled on the last two days of the exercise. The chiefs will debate the challenge of terrorism and transnational crime, which is a major concern among all the states and on how they can promote collective cooperation, the source said.

BIMSTEC countries held a disaster management exercise in 2017, but this is the first military exercise of the grouping which brings together important neighbours of India in South and Southeast Asia.

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