

China-South Asia grouping

July 23, 2021

In news

Recently, the Bangladesh Foreign Minister said that a six-nation grouping launched earlier this month was not meant to exclude India.

About China-South Asia grouping

- **Name:** The grouping is called China-South Asian Countries Emergency Supplies Reserve, and a Poverty Alleviation and Cooperative Development Centre.
- **The Centre aims to pool strength,** integrate resources, and exchange wisdom to support and help the South Asian countries' economic development and livelihood improvement, jointly promoting the cause of poverty reduction.
- **Evolution:** The grouping evolved as the outcome of a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of China, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in April 2021.
- After Bangladesh requested vaccines from China, Foreign Minister of China decided to convene the six-nation China-South Asia meeting.
- **The centre would deal with economic issues** arising in South Asia due to COVID.
- It is an e-commerce economic cooperation forum and an emergency storage facility for vaccines.
- It is being **established in the Southern Chinese city of Chongqing.**

India's response to the grouping

- Officially India has not reacted to the two centres set up by China and its immediate neighbours joining the

China-led initiative.

- However, this centre is being seen as an alternative to the eight-member South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which has been inactive since 2014 when leaders of the India-led grouping met in Kathmandu for their summit.
- The 2016 summit was to be hosted by Pakistan but it had to be called off after India, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan cited terrorism emanating from Pakistan as a major threat to the region and announced their boycott.
- India is the only country of all eight SAARC nations that has not requested or accepted Chinese COVID vaccines.

China-South Asia Emergency Supply Reserve

- China has also set up this Reserve at Chengdu International Railway Port at Chengdu in July 2021.
- The reserve is a joint stockpile of emergency supplies as part of efforts to tackle the covid-19 pandemic and other crises.
- The centre is part of efforts to foster longer-term cooperation under China's multi-billion dollar Belt and Road Initiative.
- Its establishment is also part of a meeting among the foreign ministers of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh hosted by Chinese foreign minister in April.