



36th ASEAN Summit

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Why in News

Recently, the 36th **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit** was held via video conference to focus on the **Covid-19 pandemic** response, post-pandemic recovery and further cooperation with partner countries.

- The **theme** for the Summit was "**Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN**".
- The Summit was **chaired by Vietnam** which is also **holding the chairmanship** of ASEAN currently.

Key Points

- **ASEAN Covid-19 Response Fund:**
 - The summit has decided to establish the ASEAN Covid-19 response fund with a reserve for medical supplies to meet urgent needs during epidemics.
A special ASEAN meeting convened in April to tackle the pandemic had failed to agree on an emergency fund.
 - It has also decided to build the **ASEAN standard procedures of epidemic response** in case of health emergencies.
- **Crippling Economies:**
 - The Summit has stated that the **ASEAN region's economy** is expected to **contract for the first time in 22 years**.
 - It has also focussed on the crippling cost of the coronavirus, which has ravaged the **economies of tourism and export-reliant** countries such as **Thailand and Vietnam**.

- **South China Sea Issue:**

- The Summit noted concerns over **land reclamations and recent developments** in the **South China Sea**.
 - China claims most of the resource-rich South China Sea but is also **contested by Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Taiwan**.
 - **Vietnam had also accused China of sinking its trawler**. This incident had prompted the USA to warn that China is trying to exploit the pandemic situations of other states to expand its unlawful claims.
 - **The USA is not a claimant to any territories in the South China Sea** but has sent its navy to patrol the area in support of freedom of navigation, while China had slammed this move as an interference in regional affairs by an outside power.
- Both Vietnam and Philippines lodged protests with **China** after it **unilaterally** declared the **creation of new administrative districts on islands**. Also, in April China has **officially named 80 islands** and other geographical features in the disputed waters to which Vietnam and the Philippines also have competing claims.
- The Summit has also called on parties to refrain from **escalating tensions and abide by responsibilities** under international laws.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations



- ASEAN is a regional grouping that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.
- It was established in **1967 in Bangkok, Thailand**, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (**Bangkok Declaration**) by the **founding fathers of ASEAN**, namely **Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand**.
- It consists of **ten** members namely, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

- Chairmanship of ASEAN **rotates annually**, based on the alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.
- ASEAN countries have a total population of 650 million people and a combined **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** of \$2.8 trillion.
- The group has played a central role in Asian economic integration, signing six free-trade agreements with other regional economies and helping spearhead negotiations for what could be the world's largest free trade pact.

Way Forward

The pandemic has already thrown the challenges within the political, economic and social environment of the world and in each region.

- The major economies like the US, EU and India etc. are witnessing economic shutdowns due to the lockdown imposed by the pandemic. This, in turn, has reduced the demand for oil and dragged the oil prices to a historic low.
- Irresponsible acts which are also violations of international law are affecting the environment of security and stability in certain regions. Thus, cooperation among regions as well as among countries to manage such geopolitical tensions and pandemic situations are expected to resolve such scenarios.

Source:TH