



17th ASEAN-India Summit

Why in News

Recently, India has participated in the **17th ASEAN-India Virtual Summit** on the invitation of Vietnam, the current Chair of [Association of Southeast Asian Nations](#) (ASEAN).

- The summit focused on **measures to recover from the economic turmoil triggered by the [Covid-19 pandemic](#)** and ways to **further broad-base strategic ties**.

Key Points

- **ASEAN's Centrality with respect to:**
 - **India's Act East Policy:**
 - Against the backdrop of aggressive moves by China, including the [Ladakh standoff](#), India placed the ASEAN at the centre of India's [Act East policy](#) and held that a cohesive and responsive ASEAN is essential for security and growth for all in the region.
 - **India's Indo-Pacific Vision and Security And Growth for All in the Region Vision:**
 - India underscored the importance of strengthening convergence between India's [Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative](#) (IPOI) and the ASEAN Outlook on [Indo-Pacific](#), to ensure a free, open, inclusive and rules-based region.
 - It also highlighted the importance of cooperation by ASEAN in for the [Security And Growth for All in the Region](#) (SAGAR) Vision.
 - **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership:**
 - India would explore ways to **increase trade despite** its exit from the 15-nation [RCEP agreement](#) in 2019.
 - The RCEP free trade agreement is **expected to be signed on 15th November 2020** between **China, Australia, South Korea, Japan, and the ASEAN Members**.
 - However, experts have warned that **once the RCEP is adopted, trade between RCEP nations will assume primacy**, which **could affect trade ties with other countries** including India.
 - **South China Sea:**
 - Affirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, stability, safety and security in the [South China Sea](#), and **ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight**.
 - Noted the importance of promoting a rules-based order in the region including through **upholding adherence to international law**, especially the [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea](#) (UNCLOS).
 - **Regulating Covid-19 Pandemic:**
 - India welcomed ASEAN's **initiatives to fight the pandemic** and announced a

contribution of USD 1 million to [Covid-19 ASEAN Response Fund](#).

- It also underlined the importance of cooperation and regular exchanges in the field of traditional medicines as a source of healthy and holistic living.
- **Trade and Investment:**
 - India underlined the **importance of diversification and resilience of supply chains** for post-Covid-19 economic recovery.
 - India called for an early review of [ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement](#) (AITIGA), which is pending for a long time.
- **Connectivity:**
 - Underscoring the importance of greater physical and digital connectivity, India reiterated its offer of **USD 1 billion Line of Credit to support ASEAN** connectivity.
- **India's Significance Highlighted by ASEAN:**
 - Towards **promoting peace and stability in the region** and India's support to ASEAN centrality.
 - Welcomed the adoption of the new **ASEAN-India Plan of Action for 2021-2025**.
 - Acknowledged **India's capacity-building initiatives**, including the **PhD Fellowship Programme** at IITs and **setting up of Centres for Excellence** in Software Development and Training.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

- It is a **regional grouping** that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.
- It was established on **8th August 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**.
- **Ten Members:** Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Chairmanship:** It 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 USD 2.8 trillion](#). It is **India's 4th largest trading partner** with about USD 86.9 billion in trade.
- 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.

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ASEAN GROUPING



Way Forward

- A cohesive and responsive ASEAN is essential for security and growth for all in the region and cementing the connection between India and ASEAN on all fronts, including economic, social, digital, financial, maritime, is an important priority area.
- ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership stands on a strong foundation of shared geographical, historical and civilisational ties. A fruitful exchange with ASEAN leaders and a successful Summit will further strengthen this relationship.

Source: PIB

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