

AIR Spotlight: ASEAN-India Summit and East Asia Summit

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on the ASEAN-India Summit and East Asia Summit.

Participants:

1. Anil Wadhwa, Former Ambassador
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Context: Vice President Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar recently led the Indian delegation at the 19th ASEAN-India Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Introduction:

- The Vice President, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar led the Indian delegation, including the External Affairs Minister, Dr S. Jaishankar, at the 19th ASEAN-India Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- This Summit is being hosted by Cambodia under the theme A.C.T (Addressing, Challenging, Together).
 - This theme aims to counter regional issues, seeking prosperity, growth and stability among the states, in accordance with the central theme of ASEAN.
 - Cambodia has played an important role in India-ASEAN engagements, the 1st India-ASEAN Summit took place in 2002 during the first chairship of Cambodia.
- The Vice President hailed the deep cultural, economic and civilizational ties that have existed between India and South East Asia from time immemorial.
- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations(ASEAN) is central to India's Act East policy. It is at the heart of India's Indo-Pacific outreach.
 - The Indian Prime Minister at [Shangri La Dialogue](#) laid out India's Indo-Pacific policy that highlighted that ASEAN will remain at the core of India's policy outreach in the region.

Significance of the 19th ASEAN-India Summit:

- The 19th ASEAN-India Summit commemorates the 30th Anniversary of Asean-India dialogue relations and the year 2022 has been declared as the ASEAN-India Friendship year in this regard.

- At the summit, [ASEAN](#) and India adopted a joint statement announcing the elevation of the existing Strategic Partnership to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
 - A decade ago, the 2012 Commemorative Summit endorsed the Strategic Partnership (SP) between India and Asean.
- Asean and India are bound together by their shared history and culture, and therefore, relations with the Asean continue to be the cornerstone in India's foreign policy.
- The Joint Statement also reiterated the commitment to enhance India-ASEAN cooperation in various areas such as maritime activities, counter-terrorism, transnational crimes, cyber security, digital economy, regional connectivity, smart agriculture, environment, science & technology, tourism, among other areas.
- The Joint Statement also proposes expediting the review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) to make it more user-friendly, simple, and trade-facilitative.

East Asia Summit and ASEAN-India relationship:

- The East Asia Summit is the premier Leaders-led forum in the Indo-Pacific. Since its inception in 2005, it has played a significant role in the strategic and geopolitical evolution of East Asia.
- Apart from the 10 ASEAN Member states, East Asia Summit includes India, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, United States and Russia.
- India, being a founding member of the East Asia Summit, is committed to strengthening the East Asia Summit and making it more effective for dealing with contemporary challenges.
- It is also an important platform for furthering practical cooperation in the Indo-Pacific by building upon the convergence between ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and Indo-Pacific Ocean's Initiative (IPOI).
 - ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific involves the further strengthening and optimization of ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the [East Asia Summit \(EAS\)](#), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus), the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) and others such as the relevant ASEAN Plus One mechanisms.

Approach towards Maritime Security:

- Maritime security is an important aspect of national security for India and ASEAN countries.
- With advancement in technology, physical threats in the maritime region have now been overshadowed by technological threats.
- India's exports and imports have remained mostly across the shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean.

- The scope of maritime security in ASEAN appears to be broad and encompasses a wide range of issues: environmental protection, maritime safety, fisheries management, counterterrorism, law enforcement, and naval operations.
- Therefore, the 19th ASEAN-India Summit recognised the importance of “unimpeded lawful maritime commerce” and the disputes should be resolved by following “universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#), and the relevant standards and recommended practices by the International Aviation Organisation (ICAO), and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).
- Both sides also agreed to intensify maritime cooperation including anti-piracy operations, armed robbery against ships, maritime safety, search and rescue (SAR) operations, humanitarian assistance, and emergency response and relief.
- Issued at 19th summit, the joint statement noted that both the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and the [Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative \(IPOI\)](#) share relevant fundamental principles in promoting peace and cooperation as outlined in the ASEAN-India Joint Statement on Cooperation on the AOIP for Peace, Stability and Prosperity in the Region adopted at the 18th ASEAN-India Summit in 2021.