International Relations · GS - II

India's engagement with ASEAN is central to its Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific strategy. Analyse the significance of ASEAN-led regional institutions in advancing India's maritime security, economic integration and strategic interests.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

ASEAN centrality, Act East Policy, Indo-Pacific, East Asia Summit, maritime cooperation, freedom of navigation, supply chain resilience, trade integration, strategic autonomy, regional connectivity.

Model Answer

Introduction

ASEAN occupies a central position in India's engagement with Southeast Asia. The forthcoming ASEAN-India and East Asia Summits in Manila provide an opportunity to strengthen regional cooperation.

Strategic Significance

- **Maritime security:** Cooperation with ASEAN members strengthens maritime domain awareness, naval coordination and freedom of navigation.
- **Economic integration:** Trade, investment and connectivity initiatives diversify India's economic partnerships and supply chains.
- **Regional stability:** ASEAN-led forums provide platforms for dialogue on geopolitical tensions and peaceful dispute resolution.
- **Strategic balance:** Engagement supports an inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific order while preserving India's strategic autonomy.

- **Act East Policy:** Institutional engagement strengthens India's political, cultural, economic and defence relations with Southeast Asia.

Challenges and Way Forward

Divergent strategic interests, maritime disputes, connectivity gaps and geopolitical competition can constrain cooperation. India should deepen defence partnerships, improve regional connectivity, expand trade facilitation and support ASEAN centrality.

Conclusion

Stronger ASEAN engagement can advance India's economic and strategic interests while contributing to a stable, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

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