International Relations · GS - II

Examine the significance of ASEAN for India's maritime security and economic interests in the Indo-Pacific region. How can India deepen its engagement with Southeast Asian countries amid intensifying major-power competition?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
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MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Act East Policy, ASEAN centrality, Indo-Pacific, maritime security, freedom of navigation, Malacca Strait, trade integration, supply-chain resilience, ASEAN-led forums, strategic autonomy.

Model Answer

Introduction

ASEAN occupies a strategically important position in the Indo-Pacific, connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Its importance to India extends to maritime security, trade, connectivity and regional stability.

Significance for India

1. **Maritime security:** Cooperation with ASEAN strengthens freedom of navigation and security of vital sea lanes.
2. **Economic integration:** Southeast Asia provides opportunities for trade, investment and resilient supply chains.
3. **Strategic balance:** ASEAN-led platforms provide avenues for dialogue amid major-power competition.
4. **Connectivity:** Infrastructure and digital links can deepen India's integration with regional markets.

Way Forward

India should strengthen the Act East Policy through trade facilitation, maritime exercises, infrastructure connectivity and cooperation against piracy and illegal fishing. Engagement with ASEAN must remain inclusive and respect ASEAN centrality.

Conclusion

A stronger India-ASEAN partnership can contribute to an open, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific while advancing India's economic and strategic interests.

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