

India at the East Asia Summit

The East Asia Summit is a unique Leaders-led forum of 18 countries of the Asia-Pacific region formed to further the objectives of regional peace, security and prosperity. It has evolved as a forum for strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues of common regional concern and plays an important role in the regional architecture.

Established in 2005, EAS allows the principal players in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss issues of common interest and concern, in an open and transparent manner, at the highest level. The membership of EAS consists of ten ASEAN Member States (i.e. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam), Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and the USA. EAS is an initiative of ASEAN and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.

The concept of an East Asia Grouping was first promoted in 1991 by the then Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir bin Mohamad. The final report of the East Asian Study Group in 2002, established by the ASEAN+3 countries (i.e. China, Japan and ROK), recommended EAS as an ASEAN led development limited to the ASEAN +3 countries. However, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (AMM) held in Vientiane on July 26, 2005 welcomed the participation of ASEAN, China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, India and New Zealand, in the first EAS. USA and the Russian Federation were formally included as members of the EAS at the 6th EAS held in Bali, Indonesia on 19 November 2011.

Twelve East Asia Summits have been held so far. India has been a part of this process since its inception in 2005 in Kuala Lumpur and the fact that Indian Prime Ministers have participated in all the Summits, stands testimony to the importance India attaches to this process.

There are six priority areas of regional cooperation within the framework of the EAS. These are – Environment and Energy, Education, Finance, Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Natural Disaster Management, and ASEAN Connectivity. India endorses regional collaboration in all six priority areas.

Following the 12th EAS in November 2017 in Manila, Philippines and following the adoption of the Manila Plan of Action, Maritime Cooperation has been identified as an important area of cooperation under the EAS.

In the area of Education, at the 4th East Asia Summit (EAS), held in Thailand on 24-25 October 2009, the EAS Leaders endorsed the proposal for the revival of Nalanda University, to bring together the brightest minds from all the countries of Asia. The idea was first mooted by former President APJ Abdul Kalam in 2006. The University held its first convocation ceremony on 27th August 2016 and the President of India conferred the degrees on the graduating students. The President also laid the foundation stone for the construction of permanent campus of the University and the construction work is in progress. The University has, at present, a total number of about 127 students in three Schools of studies- School of Historical Studies, School of Ecology and Environment Studies and School of Buddhist Studies, Philosophy and Comparative Religion. The University proposes to launch new schools of studies - School of Linguistic Studies and School of Public health - in the coming years.

The archaeological site of Nalanda Mahavihara, that is, Nalanda University, was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage site in July 2016. With a view to attracting students from East Asia, the government has announced a certain number of Scholarships to deserving students from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV countries) as also Bhutan.

In addition to Nalanda University, India has taken lead in three projects on harmonization of national qualification frameworks to assure their interoperability and facilitate student and people mobility in the region, the EAS regional leadership development program and facilitating technical and vocational training (TVET) teacher-student mobility.

In the area of Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Australia and India are co-chairs of the Task Force for Access to Quality Medicines and other Technologies Task Force (AQMTF). India has also hosted a Round table on Trauma Care and Nursing on 15-16 October 2015, in New Delhi.

A Flagship ASEAN-India Programme for combating Malaria towards elimination was taken note of in the Chair's statement of the 11th East Asia Summit.

India has also contributed in the area of Natural Disaster Management. At the 6th EAS held on 19 November 2011 in Bali, Indonesia, Prime Minister announced India's intention of hosting an EAS Workshop in 2012 on Disaster Management and Relief in the case of an earthquake. In fulfilment of Prime Minister's announcement, India hosted an 'EAS-India Workshop 2012: Building Regional Framework for Earthquake Risk Management' in New Delhi on 8-9 November 2012. India also hosted the first Meeting of the 24x7 Points of Contact among the National Disaster Response Agencies of East Asia Summit (EAS) countries on 4-5 December 2014 in New Delhi during which a Virtual Knowledge Portal (VKP) was launched. The Virtual Knowledge Portal (VKP), a web based tool to share knowledge and best practices related to natural disaster risk assessment, mitigation and response among EAS countries. It is hosted by Natural Institute of Disaster Management, New Delhi.

An EAS Conference on Disaster Management and Emergency Response was organised on 2 November 2016, in the margins of the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi from 3-5 November 2016.

On ASEAN connectivity, at the 6th EAS, Leaders had shared the view that the effective implementation of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) will not only bring benefit to ASEAN, but also the East Asia region as a whole and ASEAN Connectivity was included as an additional area of cooperation within EAS. At the 10th ASEAN-India Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 19 November 2012, PM reiterated that connectivity with ASEAN in all its dimensions – physical, institutional and people-to-people – is a strategic priority for India. Regional cooperation through public-private partnership (PPP) is envisaged to take the agenda forward and India is actively taking part in the deliberations with the regional partners. At the 11th East Asia Summit, a new MPAC 2025 was adopted, succeeding MPAC 2010, that focuses on the five strategic areas of sustainable infrastructure, digital innovation, seamless logistics, regulatory excellence and people mobility.

At the 13th ASEAN India Summit held in November 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, PM announced a Line of Credit of US\$1 billion for undertaking projects promoting physical and digital connectivity between ASEAN and India.

At the 7th EAS in November 2012, the Leaders of 16 EAS participating countries launched the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). ASEAN and the 6 FTA Partners of ASEAN, which includes India, are the RCEP participating countries. The objective of RCEP is to achieve a modern, comprehensive, high-quality and mutually beneficial economic partnership agreement and will cover trade in goods, trade in services, investment, economic and technical cooperation, intellectual property, competition, dispute settlement and other issues. India is participating in the working group level discussions and negotiations for RCEP. Minister for

Commerce and Industry, Shri. Suresh Prabhu, led the Indian delegation to the fifth EAS Economic Ministers' Meeting held from 9-11 September 2017 in Manila, Philippines. At the 12th East Asia Summit in November 2017, the Leaders met at the 1st RCEP Leaders' Summit and called for further intensification of negotiations in a collaborative manner for the swift conclusion of the RCEP negotiations.

Maritime Cooperation has emerged as a significant priority area of cooperation in recent times. As a follow up to PM's announcement at the 12th EAS held in November 2017 in Manila, Philippines, the 3rd EAS Conference on Maritime Security and Cooperation was held on 7-8 June 2018 in the coastal city of Bhubaneswar, Odisha. The Conference focused discussions on topics such as Maritime Safety and Security, Good Order at Sea, Blue Economy, amongst others.

At the 12th EAS held in November 2017, the Leaders adopted the following Statements/Declarations, in addition to the Chairman's Statement : (i) East Asia Summit Leaders' Statement on Chemical Weapons ; (ii) East Asia Summit Leaders' Statement on Cooperation in Poverty Alleviation ; (iii) East Asia Summit Leaders' Statement on Countering Ideological Challenges of Terrorism and Terrorist Narratives and Propaganda ; and (iv) East Asia Summit Leaders' Statement on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering The Financing of Terrorism.

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