

## India and ASEAN Summit

### Why in news?

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India has participated in 31<sup>st</sup> ASEAN Summit in Manila, Philippines.

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### What are the significance of the summit?

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- India's participation was preceded by the first meeting of the India-U.S.-Japan-Australia quadrilateral.

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- It ended with statements on cooperation for a "free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region", a direct signal that it will counter China's actions in the South China Sea if necessary.

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- Indian P.M meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump saw a similar emphasis on cooperating in the Indo-Pacific, a term now widely adopted by the U.S.

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- Finally, Indian P.M speech to ASEAN vowed to bring India's economic and business ties with the region up to the level of their "exceptionally good political and people-to-people relations".

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### What India had gained from the summit?

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- India's participation in ASEAN, the East Asia Summit and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership summit has put India centre-stage in the Asian region now referred to as "Indo-Pacific".

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- Equally, it puts the "Indo-Pacific" and ties with the U.S. centre-stage in

India's Act East policy, in all three spheres: political, strategic and economic.

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### **What are the challenges before India?**

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- The clarity in India's purpose in East Asia at this juncture is important, but the next steps are equally vital.

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- It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Quad, also called a "coalition of democracies" of the Indo-Pacific, is a front aimed at countering China's influence.

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- As the only member of the proposed coalition that is also part of another security arrangement involving China and Russia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, India's ability to balance its interests will be tested.

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- There will be much to navigate on the political front, India would be keen to keep a sharp focus on the economic tailwinds during his engagements in Manila.

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- Thus India must balance diverse alliances as it strengthens its East Asia pivot.

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**Source: The Hindu**

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