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News: East Asia Summit (EAS)

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India attended the 19th East Asia Summit (EAS) in Vientiane, Lao PDR.

East Asia Summit (EAS)

- East Asia Summit (EAS) is a leader's led forum of **18 countries of Asia – Pacific region**.
- The EAS is the only leader-led forum in the Indo-Pacific that brings together all key partners to discuss political, security and economic issues of strategic importance.
- EAS was founded in 14th December 2005 with **Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, United States and Vietnam as its members**.
- The EAS membership represents around **54% of the world's population and accounts for approximately 60% of global GDP**.
- The EAS is an ASEAN-centered forum; it can **only be chaired by an ASEAN member**.

- **Priority areas:** Environment and Energy, Education, Finance, Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases, Natural Disaster Management and ASEAN Connectivity.

Significance for India

- For India, EAS acts as an **alternative to the APEC** in which India doesn't enjoy the membership.
- India's membership to the EAS is recognition **of its fast growing economic and political clout.**
- India is **ASEAN's seventh-largest trading partner, while ASEAN is India's fourth-largest partner.** In the last ten years **India-ASEAN trade had doubled to over USD 130 billion.**
- **Act East policy of India:** In order to build multi-faceted relations with ASEAN and other multilateral nations and strengthen bilateral relations India has emphasized upon its Act East Policies for which EAS will prove crucial.
- China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and the nature of its growing investments has led the ASEAN countries to view India as a potential power that **could balance a rising China.**
- **Strategically:** Connectivity projects in Southeast Asian countries, both infrastructure and digital, are key to **India's Act East Policy, with major**

initiatives like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway and Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport boosting regional links and connectivity with East Asian Nations.

- **India's strength lies in service sector and information-technology** and Japan has a sound capital base. Thus there are complementarities in trade and production structures of the EAS members.
- **India's deep cultural and civilizational links with the EAS countries** are widely known. India can play a major role in cultural and people to people cooperation with the region, which can reinforce the economic momentum for community building.
- **Culturally: Buddhism**, a major cultural and religious tradition that connects many Southeast Asian and East Asian nations, originated in India.
- EAS meetings are held after annual ASEAN leaders' meetings.