

# 3rd ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting

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**Context-** The 3rd ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting with India was held recently on a virtual platform.

## Key Highlights

- The adopted theme for the meeting was “***Synergy Towards a Sustainable Digital Future***”.
- The main focus of the meeting was on enhancing the relationship between India and ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) in the field of **Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)**.
- India stressed on its reforms to promote fair competition, and improve broadband and telecom connectivity.
- The importance of digital transformation was highlighted as a means of creating a Comprehensive and impartial society, promoting sustainable development, and empowering citizens through digital means.
- **India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2023** was approved recently, which includes certain initiatives for capacity building as well as knowledge sharing in fields such as Artificial Intelligence in Cybersecurity, IoT and AI in Next Generation Smart Cities, and the role of ICTs in implementing digital health and security.

## ASEAN Grouping

- ASEAN is a regional grouping that promotes economic, political, and security cooperation.
- It was set up in August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand by the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration).
- The founding fathers of ASEAN are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- The chairmanship of ASEAN rotates annually, in an alphabetical order of the English names of Member States.

## India's Relations with ASEAN

- India and ASEAN both have a long-standing and multi-faceted relationship which encompasses political, economic, cultural, and security dimensions.
- **Evolution of Bilateral Relations**
  - India-ASEAN bilateral relationship started evolving after India introduced '**Look East Policy**' in 1990s.
  - The policy was further transformed to '**Act East Policy**' in 2014 mainly to develop economic and strategic relations with the nations of Southeast Asian countries.
  - In 1992, India appeared as a Sectoral Partner of ASEAN followed by Dialogue Partner in 1996 and a Summit-level Partner in 2002.
  - In 2009, **The ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA)** was signed and it entered into force on 1 January 2010.
  - Further India has a **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)** with several countries of the ASEAN region including Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand which has resulted in concessional trade and a growth in investments.
  - In 2015, India made a separate Mission to ASEAN and the East Asia Summit in Jakarta in 2015 to strengthen engagement with ASEAN countries.
  - In 2022, the **ASEAN India Friendship Year** was celebrated in order to commemorate the 30-year milestone of the establishment of dialogue relations between ASEAN and India, leading to the rise of their **Strategic Partnership to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)**.

## Other Fields of Engagement

- **Financial Assistance**
  - India offers financial assistance to ASEAN countries through several channels such as the ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund, the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund, and the ASEAN-India Green Fund.
- **Connectivity:**
  - India has been implementing many connectivity initiatives, such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multimodal Project.
  - India is also working towards establishing a Maritime Transportation Agreement with ASEAN and has plans for a railway connection between New Delhi, India and Hanoi, Vietnam.