



INDIA - SINGAPORE RELATIONS - GS II MAINS

Q. Singapore's strategic location at the heart of Southeast Asia makes it a crucial gateway for India to access the ASEAN region and beyond. Examine (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *India, Russia have always had positive ties, says Jaishankar*

What's in the news?

- India's External Affairs Minister recently had an important meeting with the Foreign Minister of Singapore, Vivian Balakrishnan, to discuss trade issues.

Key takeaways:

The following issues were discussed in meeting:

- Indo-Pacific and West Asia regions
- Trade
- Green energy
- Supply chains
- Defence issues.

India Singapore Relations:

1. Trade and Economic cooperation:

- Bilateral trade between India and Singapore grew by 18% in 2022-23, reaching US\$ 35.58 billion.

2. Defence and Security Cooperation:

- Regular joint military exercises such as Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) is held together

3. Cultural and People-to-People Ties:

- Around 9.1% of Singapore's population, approximately 350,000 people, are of Indian origin.

4. Part of Various Forums:

- Both countries agree on many global issues and are part of several forums such as the East Asia Summit, G20, Commonwealth etc.

5. Strategic Location:

- Singapore's strategic location at the heart of Southeast Asia makes it a crucial gateway for India to access the ASEAN region and beyond.



- It offers India opportunities for enhanced connectivity, trade, and investment in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific.
- India's "Act East" policy aligns well with Singapore's "Global-Asia" strategy, fostering synergies and deeper engagement between the two countries.

Significance of Discussion on Bilateral Ties with Singapore on Indian Economy:

1. Trade Enhancement:

- Strengthening economic ties can boost investments and exports for both nations.

2. Green Energy Collaboration:

- Joint efforts in clean energy production can lead to environmental benefits and technological advancements.

3. Supply Chain Resilience:

- Collaboration with Singapore can enhance India's supply chain diversification and risk management strategies.

4. Defence and Security:

- Closer cooperation ensures mutual defence interests and regional stability.

5. Regional Impact:

- Consideration of broader regional dynamics can positively influence the economic growth and stability of both nations.

Challenges in India-Singapore Trade Relations:

1. Trade Challenges:

- Both countries face economic hurdles such as global supply chain disruptions and market volatility, requiring sustained efforts to overcome.

2. Defence Priorities:

- While defence cooperation is vital, aligning resources and priorities can be intricate, necessitating a balance with other national imperatives.

3. Limited Tangible Outcomes:

- Despite discussions on trade and green energy, no specific agreements or steps were announced.

4. Complex Regional Dynamics:

- Addressing issues in the Indo-Pacific and West Asia regions involves navigating complex geopolitical challenges that can strain relations.



WAY FORWARD:

1. Trade Balance:

- Both countries can explore measures to promote balanced trade.
- This can include diversifying the range of goods and services traded, identifying new export sectors for India, and facilitating market access for Indian businesses in Singapore.

2. Regulatory Reforms:

- India can continue its efforts to improve the ease of doing business by streamlining regulations, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and enhancing transparency.
- Establishing dedicated channels for addressing regulatory concerns and engaging in regular dialogues between regulatory bodies of both countries can help address regulatory barriers and improve the business environment.

3. Infrastructure and Connectivity:

- Both countries can collaborate on infrastructure development, focusing on improving connectivity through transportation networks, ports and digital infrastructure.
- This can be achieved through joint projects, public-private partnerships and leveraging Singapore's expertise in infrastructure planning and execution.

4. Geopolitical Engagement:

- Regular high-level dialogues, strategic consultations and joint initiatives can help align India's and Singapore's interests in the evolving geopolitical landscape.
- Strengthening multilateral frameworks, such as ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, can provide platforms for deeper engagement and coordination on regional issues.

5. Defence Cooperation:

- Both countries can enhance defence cooperation by expanding joint military exercises, sharing best practices, and collaborating on defence technology development.
- Regular dialogues, information sharing, and joint capacity-building initiatives can strengthen defence ties and ensure effective maritime security cooperation.

6. Cultural Exchanges:

- Encouraging greater people-to-people exchanges, cultural events, and educational collaborations can promote mutual understanding and bridge cultural differences.

7. Regional Engagement:

- India and Singapore can explore avenues for cooperation in the ASEAN region, such as joint infrastructure projects, investment initiatives, and capacity-building programs.
- By aligning their regional strategies and seeking areas of complementarity, both countries can avoid unnecessary competition and work together to promote regional development and stability.