

4. India-Thailand Defence Dialogue

Why in News?

- The 8th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue was recently held in Bangkok, Thailand, during which both sides expressed satisfaction at the ongoing bilateral defense cooperation.

Highlights

- The progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives was reviewed.
- The co-chairs identified means to enhance existing areas of collaboration, especially in the field of defence industry, maritime security and multinational cooperation.
- Thailand expressed confidence in the capability of the Indian defence industry.
- The two chairs also articulated steps in the direction of emerging areas of cooperation and issues pertaining to global commons.
- Thailand and India have a longstanding diplomatic relationship that dates back to 1947.
- The relationship is built on a foundation of economic and cultural ties that have existed for more than 2000 years. India's 'Look East' policy (since 1993) and Thailand's 'Look West' policy (since 1996) which has now metamorphosed into India's 'Act East' and Thailand's 'Act West' are strongly contributing to consolidating bilateral relations including economic & commercial linkages. Bilateral trade was USD 12.12 billion in 2019 and it reached USD 9.76 billion in 2020 despite the pandemic situation.
- Thailand exports to India amounted to USD 7.60 billion, while Indian exports to Thailand were worth USD 4.86 billion in 2018.
- Bilateral trade between India and Thailand reached an all-time high of around USD 15 billion in 2021-22. In the ASEAN region, Thailand ranks as India's 5th largest trading partner after Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.
- Currently, Thai goods have benefited from tax reduction under ASEAN-India FTA in Goods, which came into effect in January 2010.
- Both should address issues regarding trade barriers and reducing import duty charges through bilateral engagements to expand trade and investments. Collaboration opportunities between India's start-up ecosystem and Thailand should also be explored.
- The two countries can work together to bridge supply chain gaps by investing in each other's markets. It is also essential to continue to strengthen strategic and security cooperation through defense engagements, military-to-military exchanges, and joint exercises.