

## **INDIA-BRUNEI BILATERAL RELATIONS**

### **Political Relations**

Diplomatic relations between India and Brunei were established in May 1984. Prior to the establishment of Resident Mission in Brunei, India's Mission in Kuala Lumpur was concurrently accredited to Brunei. India set up its High Commission in Brunei on 18 May 1993. Brunei set up its resident High Commission in India on 12 August 1992 headed by an Acting High Commissioner. Prior to that, Brunei's High Commissioner in Malaysia, was concurrently accredited to India. The main elements binding the two countries are: (i) Export of crude oil by Brunei to India and its contribution to India's energy security; (ii) Brunei's role as an important ASEAN Member Country; and (iii) Brunei has an 11,000-strong Indian community.

Common membership of UN, NAM, Commonwealth, ASEAN etc. and as countries with strong traditional and cultural ties, Brunei and India have close relations. Among the component parts of the Brunei Government and the royal family, the Sultan has been the strongest votary of close relations with India and has supported and ensured the welfare of the Indian community in Brunei. Brunei and India enjoy a high degree of commonality in their perceptions of major international issues. Brunei has been supportive of India's earlier 'Look East Policy' and also the present 'Act East Policy' and in expansion and deepening of cooperation with ASEAN. Brunei took over as Country Coordinator for India in ASEAN from July 2012 for three years till June 2015 and played an important role in bringing India closer to ASEAN during its tenure. Brunei has been supportive of the candidature of India and its nominees to elections to various International Organisations.

### **Exchange of visits by Head of State/Government:**

#### **From Brunei:**

1. The Sultan of Brunei Haji Hassanal Bolkiah made his first State Visit to India on 15-18 September 1992.
2. The second State Visit of the Sultan was on 20-23 May 2008. During the visit, the following five important MoUs/Agreements were signed: (i) Agreement on Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments; (ii) MoU on Cooperation in Information and Communication Technology; (iii) MoU on Cooperation in the fields of Culture, Arts and Sports; (iv) MoU on the Establishment of Joint Trade Committee; (v) Renewal of MoU on Cooperation in the Operation of the Telemetry Tracking and Command (TTC) Station for Satellite and Launch Vehicles and for Cooperation in the field of Space Research Science and Applications.
3. The Sultan visited India to participate in the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to mark 20 years of India-ASEAN Partnership Dialogue in New Delhi on 20-21 December 2012.
4. On 24-26 January 2018, the Sultan made his fourth visit to India to participate in the Commemorate Summit to mark 25 years of India-ASEAN Partnership Dialogue. The Sultan also witnessed the Republic Day Parade on 26 January along with the Heads of State and Governments of all the other ASEAN Member States.

#### **Members of the Royal Family:**

1. HRH Princess Masna, Sultan's sister and Ambassador-at-Large in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, visited India in April 2000.
2. HRH Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, visited India to attend the ASEAN-European Ministerial Meeting (ASEM) held in New Delhi on 11-12 November 2013.

#### **From India:**

1. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visited Brunei to participate in the 11<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit and 8<sup>th</sup> EAS Summit held in Brunei on 9-10 October 2013. This was the first-ever visit of Prime Minister of India to Brunei. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh had previously met the Sultan of Brunei on the side-lines of 10th India-ASEAN Summit held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 18-20 November 2012.
2. Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, and the Sultan first met on the sidelines of 25<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit at Nay Pyi Taw on 12 November 2014. The two leaders also met and held bilateral discussions on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit on 14 November 2017 in Manila.
3. Hon'ble Vice President Shri M. Hamid Ansari visited Brunei on Feb 1-3, 2016, the first high level bilateral visit from India to Brunei. Three MOUs on Cooperation in Defence; Health; and Youth Affairs and Sports were signed during the visit.

#### **Exchange of Ministerial and Senior Official level visits, 2016 onwards:**

##### **From India:**

1. Minister of State, Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma, Minister of Environment and Forests, Government of Assam, visited Brunei on 13 to 15 December 2017 to invite Dato Ali Apong, Minister for Primary Resources and Tourism to attend the Global Investors' Summit - 'Advantage Assam' from 3 to 4 February 2018, in Guwahati.
2. Minister of State, Shri Kailash Choudhary, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India, visited Brunei from 14-17 October 2019 to attend the 5<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (AIMMAF).

##### **Visits by Senior Officials from India:**

1. A 12 member delegation led by Shri Arvind Mehta, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce attended the 11<sup>th</sup> round of RCEP Negotiations in Brunei from Feb 15-19, 2016.
2. Smt. Meenakshi Sharma (Joint Secretary (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism and Smt Kanchan Kukreja, Director, Regional Tourism Office, Singapore visited Brunei on 5 July 2018 to attend the ASEAN-India JWG on Tourism.
3. Shri Rajneesh, JS (FT-ASEAN) and Smt. Indu Nair, Director (FT-ASEAN), Department of Commerce, visited Brunei to attend the 1<sup>st</sup> Joint Trade Committee Meeting on 05 September 2018.
4. Shri Gyan Bhusan, Economic Adviser, Ministry of Tourism visited Brunei to attend the 23<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN - India Tourism Working Group Meeting on 13 January 2020.

##### **Visits by Defence Officers / Delegations:**

1. A 16-member delegation, led by Major General Sunil Srivastava from the National Defence College (NDC) visited Brunei from 21 to 26 May 2017.
2. Indian Navy Cdr Prakash Ayyagari and Cdr Venkatesh Prabhu visited Brunei to attend the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) 2019 held in Brunei from 30 April to 02 May 2019.

#### **From Brunei:**

1. Pehin Haji Awang Abu Bakar, Minister of Home Affairs accompanied by an official delegation attended the First Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in New Delhi from 3 to 5 November 2016.
2. Pehin Lim Jock Seng, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade II, Pehin Yasmin, Minister of Energy & Industry and Amin Liew, Deputy Minister of Finance visited India from 9 to 12 November 2016.
3. Dato Erywan, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade attended the Delhi Dialogue IX in New Delhi on 4-5 July 2017.
4. Pehin Lim Jock Seng, Bruneian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade II visited India as part of the official delegation headed by the Sultan for the Commemorative Summit on 21-26 January 2018.
5. Dato Paduka Haji Matsatejo bin Sowkiaw, Deputy Minister for Energy and Industry visited New Delhi from 10-12 April 2018 to attend the 16<sup>th</sup> International Energy Summit.
6. Dato Paduka Abdul Mutalib, Minister for Communications visited India on 18-24 July 2018 to participate in the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Delhi Dialogue. During the visit, the Minister signed an MoU on Cooperation in the field of Telemetry Tracking and Training with EAM Smt Sushma Swaraj.

#### **Visits by Senior Officials from Brunei:**

1. Mr Zakaria Serudin, Permanent Secretary; Ms Siti Ajar Haji Yusop, Acting Assistant Director; and Ms Rosmah Hj Mohamad Shah, Senior Medicinal Chemist in the Ministry of Health, from 27 to 29 April 2017.
2. Mrs. Siti Norishan, Permanent Secretary (Bilateral) in MoFA led a delegation to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) Meeting in New Delhi on 24 June 2019.
3. Mrs. Emaleen binti Abdul Rehman Teo, Permanent Secretary (ASEAN) in MoFA visited India on 13-14 December 2019 to attend the 11<sup>th</sup> Delhi Dialogue.

#### **Visits by Senior Defence Officers:**

1. Deputy Minister of Defence, First Admiral (Rtd) Dato Abdul Aziz attended the Defexpo India 2016 in Goa March 28 to March 31, 2016.
2. Major General Pehin Dato Paduka Seri Aminan, Commander of Royal Brunei Armed Forces visited India on 4-8 August 2019 and held meetings with Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Air Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, Chief of Army Staff, General Bipin Rawat and Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Karambir Singh.

**Joint Committee Meeting:** A MoU to establish a Joint Committee Meeting for Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) to exchange views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern was signed in February 1995 during the visit to India by Pehin Lim Jock Seng, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Seven meetings of the India-Brunei Joint Committee for Foreign Office Consultations have been

held; four in New Delhi in February 1995, February 1998, May 2005 and June 2019; and three in Brunei in May 1996, March 2002 and December 2011.

**MOUs/Agreements:** The two countries have signed various MOUs and Agreements. These include i) Air Services Agreement; ii) Cooperation in Culture, Arts & Sports; iii) Cooperation in Defence; iv) Cooperation in the operation of Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TTC) Station for satellite and launch vehicles and for Cooperation in the field of Space Research, Science and Applications; v) MoU on establishment of Joint Trade Committee Meetings; vi) MoU on establishment of Joint Committee Meetings on Foreign Office Consultations; vii) MoU on Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with Respect to Taxes.

**Defence:** Over the past several years, the relations and cooperation between the two countries in the area of defence has been expanding. This includes regular official level defence exchanges, visit of naval and coast guard ships, training and joint exercises and participation in each other's defence exhibitions/expositions etc.

**Visit of Indian Navy Ships:** INS Rana and INS Kulish on 1-4 June 2006; INS Gharial and INS Kulish on 18-20 October 2008; INS Airavat and INS Khukri 2009; INS Ranvir and INS Jyoti in May 2011; Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS Sagar on 27-30 June 2011; INS Airavat on 4-9 July 2011; INS Gharial on 10-22 June 2013; Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS "SAGAR" on 9-12 March 2014; INS Shakti on 8-11 August 2014; INS-Airavat on 01-05 May 2016; INS Satpura on 25 to 28 November 2017; Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS 'Shaunak' on 09-12 January 2019.

**Visit of Royal Brunei Navy Ships to India:** A Bruneian ship, 'KDB Darulaman', participated in MILAN 2012 (Andaman); and Royal Brunei Navy's Ship 'KP 80 DARU TTAQWA' visited India (Mumbai) in August 2014.

**Defence Exhibitions in India:** Brunei delegations participated in DEFEXPO 2010, 2012 and 2018 and in AERO INDIA in 2015 and 2017.

**Participation in Defence Courses:** The officers from Indian armed forces have regularly attended the Royal Brunei Armed Forces Command Staff Course at Staff College, Brunei. So far, seven officers from the Indian Armed Forces have participated in these courses; Two officers of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces attended the senior officers' course at the National Defence College (NDC) of India in 2001 and 2014.

**Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TTC) Station:** A bilateral agreement was signed in August 1997 for the setting up of ISRO's TTC Station in Brunei which was established in the year 2000 and has been functioning actively since then. From time to time, scientists from ISRO visit Brunei to track the path of the satellites launched by ISRO. Over the years, over 20 launches have been successfully tracked and data monitored from the TTC Station. The MoU has since been renewed in 2018.

**Events held to mark Silver Jubilee of India-ASEAN Partnership:** A number of events were organised in Brunei, in other ASEAN capitals and in India to mark 25 years of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership. Notable events featuring Brunei were ASEAN-India Youth Summit in Bhopal; ASEAN-India Artists' Camp in Udaipur; ASEAN-India Music Festival in New Delhi; Visit of INS Satpura to Brunei; ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks in Jakarta; ASEAN-India Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Singapore; ASEAN-

India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry in New Delhi; Visit of ICCR sponsored 14 member pop group 'Sugar n Spice' to Brunei; ASEAN-India Students' Exchange Programme in Mumbai and New Delhi; ASEAN-India Business and Investment Meet by CII in New Delhi; ASEAN-India business Council Meeting by FICCI in New Delhi; ASEAN-India Textile Meet in New Delhi; and ASEAN-India Ramayana Festival in New Delhi and Kolkata.

### Commercial Relations

#### India-Brunei Bilateral Trade (as per Brunei Department of Economic Planning and Development)

(US\$ million)

	Jan to Sep 2018			Jan to Sep 2019			<u>Growth % of Export</u>	<u>Growth % of Import</u>
	<u>Export</u>	<u>Import</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Export</u>	<u>Import</u>	<u>Total</u>		
Brunei's trade with India	372.1	54.2	426.4	391.3	63.6	454.6	5.2%	17.3%
Brunei's total global trade	4,166.0	2,606.4	6,772.1	4,356.5	2,680.6	7,037.0	4.6%	2.8%

Year	Export	Import	Total Trade
2015	624.0	40.6	664.7
2016	464.93	58.5	523.4
2017	558	51.5	609.5
2018	490.4	70.1	560.5
2019 (Jan-Sep)	391.3	63.6	454.6

India's main exports to Brunei consist of transport equipment, meat and meat products and gems & jewellery. India is one of the largest importers of crude oil from Brunei and has been importing crude oil worth US \$ 500 million to US 1 billion approximately every year (depending on the global price of crude).

A few Bruneian businessmen have participated in trade fairs in India in the health and IT services sectors. The most recent Bruneian participation was by the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Bruneian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry who visited New Delhi on 21-23 February 2019 to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Expo and Summit 2019. Indian participation in Bruneian trade fairs has been sporadic. The latest was the participation of Indian businessmen from the Textile and Handicrafts sector in the Brunei International Trade Expo on 26-29 December 2019.

ITEC slots are allotted to Brunei each year, including two in the current financial year 2019-20. Information on the courses offered under the Programme are regularly circulated amongst all important stakeholders and entities. Approximately 40 candidates from Brunei have attended various ITEC courses over the years.

In 2019, India's capacity-building assistance to Brunei saw the participation of two candidates each in a course on Design of Nano Satellite in ISRO and in the 13<sup>th</sup> Special Course for Diplomats from ASEAN Countries.



## **Cultural Relations**

There have been frequent visits by cultural troupes from India to Brunei, sponsored by ICCR. Visits by cultural troupes for our National Day celebrations each year are a regular feature. In 2019, an ICCR-sponsored 8-member “Punjabi Sabhyachar Kender” troupe visited Brunei and gave five performances on the occasion of Independence Day of India.

### **Indian Community in Brunei Darussalam:**

The discovery of oil in Brunei in 1929 brought a number of Indians to Brunei to work in the hydrocarbon sector and allied services. Currently, there are approximately 11,000 Indian nationals living and working in Brunei. Late Shri Mohinder Singh, a Bruneian citizen of India origin, was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) 2010 in recognition of his outstanding contribution in community service. Mr. Nazir Ahmed Zakaria, President, Indian Chamber of Commerce, was also awarded the Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award 2017. Indian socio-cultural associations, namely, Bandar Seri Begawan Indian Association (BSBIA), Indian Association Belait (IAB), Malayali Association (MA) and Indian Tamil Association organise cultural events to celebrate Indian festivals and National Days. They also undertake welfare activities such as blood donation camps, health camps and beach cleaning drives. There is also the Brunei-India Friendship Association (BIFA) which was launched in 2009. Many of the doctors in Brunei are from India. Other professionals from India include teachers, engineers, IT professionals, bankers etc.

An Indian Chamber of Commerce was established in Brunei in July 1972 which currently has over 100 Indian business establishments as its members. Indian businesses in Brunei are mainly in the retail sector such as in groceries and food product stores, textiles, automotive, sports goods, footwear, hardware, restaurants, drapers, hair dressers, etc. One of the biggest investments in Brunei is by M/s Polygel Industries, Mumbai which has set-up a joint venture with the Bruneian Ministry of Finance and Economy to produce industrial use adhesives

The Indian community in Brunei comprise of a majority from the States of Tamil Nadu (over 40%), Uttar Pradesh (over 15%) and Kerala (over 10%).

### **Useful Links:**

Mission’s Website - <http://www.hcindiabrunei.gov.in/>

Facebook Page – @IndiainBrunei

Twitter Handle – @ hicomindBrunei

Instagram Page - @ IndiaBrunei

Youtube Channel – @ High Commission of India Brunei Darussalam

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