India and Australia have several commonalities, which serve as a foundation for closer cooperation and multi-faceted interaction, on lines similar to what India has developed with other Western countries. Both are strong, vibrant, secular and multicultural democracies. They both have a free press and an independent judicial system; the English language is an important link, Cricket, and now the large numbers of Indian students coming to Australia for education, are significant elements in awareness at the popular level.

The relationship has grown in strength and importance since India’s economic reforms in the nineties and has made rapid strides in all areas - trade, energy and mining, science & technology, information technology, education and defence.

Australia is in India’s extended neighbourhood, a point made by then Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith when he made a key note address in September 2008 at the University of Western Australia: “It is under-appreciated that Perth and Chennai are closer to each other than Sydney is to Seoul, to Shanghai, or to Tokyo.” ……As the world sees the potential of an Asian/Pacific century unfolds, Australia sees India at the heart of this historic shift in political and economic influence.”

Political

While there has been a regular exchange of visits at Ministerial level, bilateral visits at Head of Government/Head of State level have been limited. PM John Howard visited India in July 2000 and again in March 2006. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd visited India in November 2009, when it was agreed to take the relationship to the level of a strategic partnership. A Joint Declaration on
Security Co-operation was signed. Vice President Shri M. Hamid Ansari represented India at the CHOGM 2011 held in Perth from 28-30 October 2011.

The then Prime Minister Julia Gillard paid a state visit to India from 15-17 October, 2012 at the invitation of our Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh. Our PM welcomed the decision of the Australian Government on uranium sales to India. Negotiations in this respect have commenced in March 2013. During this visit, she inaugurated the Oz Fest, Australia’s biggest cultural event in India, which was held at various Indian cities between October 2012 and January 2013. Four MOUs, namely, cooperation in Wool and Woollen Products; Student Mobility and Welfare; Civil Space Science, Technology and Education; and cooperation between Skills Australia and the National Skill Development Corporation of India were signed during her visit.

At the level of EAM, there have been visits by Mr.Jaswant Singh in June 2001 and for the CHOGM Summit in March 2002. Mr.Yashwant Sinha visited in August 2003; Mr. Pranab Mukherjee visited in June 2008. Former EAM, Mr. S.M. Krishna visited in August 2009; in January 2011 for the Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue and in October 2011 for pre-CHOGM Foreign Ministers' meetings at Perth. He also inaugurated the Consulate General of India (3rd Indian Consulate) at that time. From the Australian side, both Mr. Gareth Evans and Mr. Alexander Downer visited India several times in the period 1989-1995 and 1996-2005 respectively. Former Foreign Minister Stephen Smith visited India in September 2008, in October 2009 and in March 2010. Kevin Rudd, the then Foreign Minister and currently the Prime Minister, visited Bengaluru in November 2011 to attend the IOR-ARC Council of Ministers' meeting.

Mr. Richard Marles, the then Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and currently Trade Minister, represented Australia at the IOR-ARC Council of Ministers' meeting held in Gurgaon, India on 2nd November 2012. Australia took on the two year position of Vice Chair in 2011 and will assume the role of Chair in November 2013 for a period of 2 years till 2015. In Gurgaon Communique, Union of Comoros has been admitted as 20th member of the IOR-ARC and USA as the 6th Dialogue Partner. Current FM Bob Carr visited India for the 11th meeting of Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue in January 2013.

Mr Simon Crean, former Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and Culture visited Mumbai, India from 3-11 November 2012 to confer an honorary member of the Order of Australia to India's cricketer Sachin Tendulkar for his service to Australia-India relations by promoting goodwill, friendship and sportsmanship through the medium of cricket. Ms Gillard announced this honorary award on Tendular when she visited India in October 2012.

Mr Martin Ferguson, Minister for Resources, Energy and Tourism (RET) visited India from 1-5 December 2012 and met his counterparts in RET sectors and attended the Ozfest in Mundra. He called on Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission to discuss the Energy and Resources Dialogue.

Dr. M. Pallam Raju, Minister for HRD visited Australia from 9-12 July 2013 for holding the 2nd Annual Education Ministers’ Dialogue with Australian Minister for Higher Education Senator Kim Carr. During the occasion, the 2nd Australia India Vice-Chancellors’ Conference was also held which reviewed Australia-India university partnerships and Australia-India industry/sector skill council partnerships.

Mr Wayne Swan, former Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister visited on 11 December 2012. During the visit, Mr Swan held meetings with Finance Minister P.Chidambaran, senior Indian government officials and leading economists to discuss the opportunities for the two countries in
the Asian Century and building on the goodwill Ms Julia Gillard generated during her October 2012 visit to India. The Gillard Government launched an Asian Century White Paper, where Australian Government wants to increase overall relations with India in every sphere. Both the countries have set a goal of A$ 40 billion bilateral trade by 2015 (from the current level of A$ 18.35 bn).

India and Australia co-operate in various multilateral fora. Australia supports India’s candidature in an expanded UN Security Council. Both India and Australia are members of the G-20, Commonwealth, IOR-ARC, ASEAN Regional Forum, Asia Pacific Partnership on Climate and Clean Development, and have participated in the East Asia Summits. Both countries have also been cooperating as members of the Five Interested Parties (FIP) in the WTO context. Australia is an important player in APEC and supports India's membership of the organisation. In 2008, Australia became an Observer in SAARC.

Defence Cooperation between India and Australia has expanded significantly in recent years. An MoU on Defence Cooperation has been signed as well as a Joint Declaration on Security Co-operation. There are frequent exchanges of visits including at the level of Service Chiefs, regular Naval, Air Force and Army Talks; joint naval exercises; regular exchanges at each other’s training institutes and seminars. Defence Minister Stephen Smith visited India in December 2011 for Defence Ministers' Dialogue. Hon’ble Raksha Mantri Shri A K Antony paid the first ever official visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Australia from June 4-5, 2013. A Track 1.5 Defence Strategic Dialogue between India and Australia was held in Perth on 19-20 July 2012 at the Western Australia Maritime Museum. The Indian Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) and the Future Directions International (FDI) of Australia led the dialogue. Another Australia India Dialogue at 1.5 Track level was conducted in India by our PD Division in cooperation with Lowy Institute of Sydney. The main areas of discussions were Energy Security & Cooperation; Strategic assessment of Indo-Pacific Region, Economic Relations, Maritime security and new framework of governance and diplomacy.

Commercial

Australia is India’s eighth largest trading partner and India is Australia’s fifth largest. India’s ranking among Australia’s export destinations has risen from twelfth to fourth in the period 2003-04 to 2009-10.

Trade is growing exponentially. From A$ 6.54 bn in 2003-04, trade in goods and services between India and Australia reached A$ 18.35 billion (US$ 19.16 billion) in 2011-12. India’s exports to Australia were A$ 3.30 billion (US$ 3.45 billion), while India’s imports from Australia were A$ 15.04 billion (US$ 15.73 billion).

India’s export of goods to Australia in 2011-12 was A$ 2.49 bn (US$ 2.60 bn) and India’s import of goods was A$ 13.11 bn (US$ 13.71 bn). India’s export of services was A$ 0.80 bn (US$ 0.84 bn) and import of services was A$ 1.9 bn. (A$ 2.0 bn). India’s main service exports to Australia are computer and information services and tourism. Main Australian service exports to India are education, education-related travel and tourism.

India is Australia’s largest export market for gold and chickpeas, second largest market for coal and copper ores and third largest market for lead and wool.

Four products – coal, non-monetary gold, copper ores & concentrates and petroleum – accounted for over 80 percent of India’s imports from Australia, with coal and gold being the dominant imports in 2011-12.
India’s major exports to Australia in 2011-12 are pearls and gems, jewellery, medicaments and passenger motor vehicles.

The India-Australia Joint Ministerial Commission was established in 1989 and has held fourteen meetings to date, the last one was in New Delhi on 30 January 2013 which was co-chaired by Australian Trade Minister Dr Craig Emerson and Shri Anand Sharma, Minister for Commerce & Industry. Negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) has already begun. India and Australia also announced launching of the CEO Forum with Mr. Navin Jindal, MP as co-chair on the Indian side and Mr. Lindsay Fox as co-chair on the Australian side. Three meetings of the CEO Forum have taken place, the last being 30 January 2013 during India-Australia JMC in New Delhi.

The signing of five Action Plans in 2008, in the areas of coal, mining, power, petroleum & natural gas and new & renewable energy is significant, underlining the importance of the natural resources sector in the bilateral engagement.

Indian investment in Australia is growing. Major Indian investments in Australia include Sterlite Industries (copper mines; Aditya Birla Group (copper mines); Gujarat NRE Co. (coal mines); Asian Paints; Reliance has entered into a partnership agreement with Uranium Exploration; IFFCO and Legend Holdings of Australia have entered into an agreement involving investment of over A$ 100 mn by IFFCO in Legend’s phosphate projects with buyback arrangements; NMDC and Rio Tinto have entered into an agreement for joint exploration in India, Australia and other countries. TATA’s have enhanced their investment in a mining joint venture (led by Vale of Brazil) in Queensland. Tata Power and Australian company Geodynamics have entered into an agreement involving Tata Power taking an 11.4 per cent stake in Geodynamics for A$ 44.1 million. Petronet LNG, New Delhi has signed an agreement with Exxon Mobile in August 2009 to source 1.5 mmtpa of LNG from the Gorgon Project, for 20 years starting from 2014. The Adani Group of India, owners of the country’s largest private port have acquired a coal mining prospect from Linc Resources in the Galilee Basin in Queensland. The deal is valued at $1 billion. $500 million in cash paid to Linc Resources and a royalty of $2 per tonne over 20 years. Adani has also acquired rights to manage the Abbot Point Coal loading terminal for a period of 99 years at a cost of A$ 1.83 billion. Lanco Infratech made an investment in Australia, spending almost A$ 850 million to buy Griffin coal assets. GVK Power and Infrastructure has finalised purchase of two thermal coal mines from Australia’s Hancock Prospecting for about US$ 2.4 billion and is also investing in development of rail network from the mine to the nearest port, which entails a total investment of US$10 bn. NMDC has concluded the purchase of half stake in Perth based Legacy Iron Ore in September 2012 and is conducting due diligence for the purchase of the Ridley magnetite project of Atlas Iron Ore. Infosys has acquired Portland Group, a sourcing and category management services firm in Australia for A$ 37 million. ICICI Bank has obtained necessary RBI approval to open its branch office in Australia.

All the major Indian IT companies have a presence in Australia and are rapidly growing. These include Infosys; Satyam Mahindra; TCS; HCL; Polaris Software Lab Ltd; Birlasoft; NIIT; ICICI Infotech; Wipro; Mahindra-British Telecom Ltd; i-Flex; igate; among others. Satyam Mahindra has the largest product development centre outside India in Melbourne.

At present, there are no direct flights from Australia to India. Tourism is growing rapidly; 1,65,500 Australian tourists visited India in 2010 and 1,38,700 Indian tourists visited Australia in 2010.

The Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Food Processing Shri Sharad Pawar led a 5-member delegation to Australia on 25-28 February 2012
A delegation led by Shri Sachin Pilot, Hon'ble MoS(IC) for Corporate Affairs visited Australia between 3-8 June 2013 to interact with counterparts and Australian regulators to share experiences on corporate regulation, corporate governance and competition policy issues.

Cultural

There are many Indian Associations in Australia and they play key role for promoting Indian culture by organising cultural functions occasionally. High Commission of India & ICCR sponsor the Dance troupes from India to Australia to perform Traditional Indian cultural Programmes during Diwali celebrations with the help of Indian Associations in various cities in Australia.

ICCR deputed a 9-member Siddi Goma cultural troupe which performed in Canberra and other cities of Australia during 1-20 November 2012.

Know India programme is also is a great learning Experience for Diaspora children about the rich Heritage and cultural of India, the Economic progress and Social Development taking place in India.

We also have visiting Chairs for Indian Studies in Australian Universities.

Indian Community

There is a rapidly growing Indian community of nearly 295,000 in Australia. In addition, there are a sizeable number of people of Indian origin from countries such as Fiji, Malaysia, Kenya and South Africa. They are contributing significantly to the Australian economy as teachers, doctors, accountants, engineers and I.T. professionals. India is now the third largest source of immigrants to Australia, after UK and New Zealand and the second largest source of skilled professionals. Currently there are nearly 35,000 Indian students in Australia. A Regional Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas is scheduled to be held in Sydney over three days from November 10-12, 2013.

Indian Mission and Posts in Australia

Besides the High Commission in Canberra, India has Consulates in Sydney, Melbourne & Perth and an Honorary Consul in Brisbane.

Government of India offices and PSUs in Australia include the Tourist Office; State Bank of India branch office (since April 2004) received license for full trade finance activities in 2007; New India Assurance Co Ltd (in Australia since 1955); and Air India (offline station). Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India and Punjab National Bank have their representative offices in Sydney.

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July 2013