

## **India-Myanmar Relations**

India-Myanmar relations are rooted in shared historical, ethnic, cultural and religious ties. As the land of Lord Buddha, India is a country of pilgrimage for the people of Myanmar. India and Myanmar relations have stood the test of time. The geographical proximity of the two countries has also helped develop and sustain cordial relations and facilitated people-to-people contact. India and Myanmar share a long land border of over 1600 km and a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. A large population of Indian origin (according to some estimates about 2.5 million) lives in Myanmar. India and Myanmar signed a Treaty of Friendship in 1951. The visit of the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1987 laid the foundations for a stronger relationship between India and Myanmar.

A number of agreements for enhancing bilateral cooperation have been signed between the two countries. Institutional mechanisms for facilitating regular dialogue on a range of issues of bilateral interest have also been established. Indian Consulate General in Mandalay was re-opened in 2002 and the Consulate General of Myanmar was set up in Kolkata. India has been responsive to the needs of friendly people of Myanmar and has been providing relief materials and assistance. India also provided assistance of US \$1 million for humanitarian relief and rehabilitation in the areas affected by the severe earthquake in Shan State in March 2011. India also provided assistance of US\$ 200,000 to the communal riot affected people of Rakhine State in August 2012.

### **Exchange of High Level Visits**

High level visits have been a regular feature of India-Myanmar relations for several years. President U Thein Sein paid a State visit to India on October 12-15, 2011. The visit represented the first State visit from Myanmar to India following the swearing in of a new Government in Myanmar in March 2011. President Thein Sein had a meeting with the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, which was followed by delegation level talks. President Thein Sein was accompanied by Chief of General Staff Lt Gen. Hla Htay Win and 11 Union Ministers and 1 Union Deputy Minister and senior officials. During the visit, two documents were signed, namely, MoU for the Upgradation of the Yangon Children's Hospital and Sittwe General Hospital; and the Programme of Cooperation in Science & Technology for the period of 2012-2015. President Thein Sein again visited Delhi to attend the India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in December 2012 when he had also visited Mumbai and Ratnagiri.

Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann led a high level parliamentary delegation to India from December 11-17, 2011. During the visit, Speaker Mann met our Parliamentary Speakers and wide spectrum of Indian leadership when it was shared India's experience in parliamentary practices and procedures with the visiting Myanmar delegation.

Myanmar Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin paid an official visit to India from January 22-26, 2012. During the visit, he called on Prime Minister and held bilateral discussions with EAM. During his visit, he delivered a lecture at the Indian Council for World Affairs on the topic "Myanmar: A Country in Transition to Democracy".

Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh paid a state visit to Myanmar from May 27-29 2012. During the visit, several new initiatives were announced and signed 12 MoUs and agreements including extension of a new line of credit (LOC) for US\$500 million to Myanmar, support for setting up an Advance Centre for Agriculture Research and Education in Yezin, a Rice Bio-park in the integrated Demonstration Park in Nay Pyi Taw, and an Information Technology Institute in Mandalay. In addition, important agreements such as Air Service Agreement, Establishment of Joint Trade and Investment Forum, MoU on Border Areas Development, and Establishment of Border Haats and Cultural Exchange Programme were signed.

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Shri Salman Khurshid paid an official visit to Myanmar from 14-16 December 2012. During the visit, he called on the President and had detailed discussions with Foreign Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin. EAM and Vice President Dr. Sai Mauk Kham jointly inaugurated the "International Conference on Buddhist Cultural Heritage" organized by ICCR and Sitagu International Buddhist Academy. EAM along with Minister of Religious Affairs of Myanmar unveiled the Sarnath Style Buddha Statue donated by GOI to people of Myanmar and installed at the Shwedagon Pagoda. He also inaugurated the Photo Exhibition on Buddhist Cultural Heritage organized by Embassy of India at Shwedagon Pagoda premises.

Raksha Mantri led a high level delegation to Myanmar comprising of Defence Secretary, Vice Chief of Naval Staff and GOC Eastern Command from 21-22 January 2013. During the visit, RM called on President U Thein Sein and had detailed discussions for bilateral cooperation in defence with C-in-C Vice Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Defence Minister Lt. Gen. Wai Lwin.

Speaker of Lok Sabha Smt. Meira Kumar paid an official visit with Indian Parliamentary delegation to Myanmar from 12 to 15 February 2013. During the visit, she met both the Speakers of Myanmar Parliament and had a detailed discussion with Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw Thura U Shwe Mann. The Indian delegation also met with a representative group of MPs drawn from different regions and states of Myanmar.

The Union Minister of Commerce, Industry & Textiles Shri Anand Sharma visited Myanmar from 05 to 09 June 2013 to participate in World Economic Forum on East Asia 2013. During the visit, he called on President and met Minister of Energy U Than Htay and Minister of Communications & IT Gen. Myat Hein. He also met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Chairperson, National League for Democracy. CITM along with Minister of Commerce U Win Myint jointly addressed the 1<sup>st</sup> Joint Trade and Investment Forum in Yangon.

### **Major Indian Projects in Myanmar**

Development cooperation is a key of our relationship and we have offered technical and financial assistance for projects in Myanmar, both in infrastructural and non- infrastructural areas. These include a national centre of excellence- the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology (MIIT) being set up at Mandalay; an Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE) along with a Rice Bio Park at Yezin Agriculture University Nay Pyi Taw. Recognising the importance of connectivity, India in coordination with Myanmar is implementing the various connectivity projects: Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, building/upgrading 71 bridges on the Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo road; pledged to construct/upgrade the Kalewa-Yargyi section

of the trilateral highway which envisages seamless connectivity between India, Myanmar and Thailand by 2016.

Government of India is also closely working with Government of Myanmar to implement the MOU on Border Area Development where India has granted an assistance of USD 5 Million each year for next five years. The first year project is under implementation and under which 21 schools, 17 health centres and 8 bridges are being built in Chin State and Naga self Administered Zone of Myanmar. An India-Myanmar Industrial Training Centre has been set up by HMT(I) in Pakokku with the assistance of GOI, a second centre is being set up in Myingyan. Myanmar-India Centre for English Language (MICELT), a Myanmar-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre (MIEDC) and an India-Myanmar Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills (IMCEITS) have been set up under GOI assistance and are running successfully. GOI has again decided to upgrade the IMCEITS with state of the art equipment. GOI has also agreed to extend assistance in setting up a Language Laboratories and E-Resource Centre at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw. Other projects include restoration of the Ananda Temple in Bagan, upgradation of the Yangon Children's Hospital, Sittwe General Hospital along with proposed upgradation of Monywa General Hospital.

### Commercial and Economic Relations

There has been steady expansion of bilateral trade from US\$ 12.4 million in 1980-81 to US\$ 1.92 billion in 2012-13. India's imports from Myanmar are dominated by agricultural items (beans, pulses and forest based products from 90% of our imports). India's main exports to Myanmar are primary & semi-finished steel and pharmaceuticals. Following are the export-import figures as per the Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Yangon:

#### India-Myanmar Bilateral Trade (in Million US \$)

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
India's exports to Myanmar	<b>207.97</b> (6.17%)	<b>320.62</b> (54.17%)	<b>545.38</b> (70.1%)	<b>544.53</b> (-0.16)
India's imports from Myanmar	<b>1,289.80</b> (38.84%)	<b>1,017.67</b> (-21.1%)	<b>1,324.82</b> (30.18%)	<b>1,404.76</b> (6.03%)
TOTAL TRADE	<b>1,497.77</b> (30.17%)	<b>1,338.29</b> (-10.65%)	<b>1,870.20</b> (39.75%)	<b>1,949.28</b> (4.23%)

(Source: CSO, Government of Myanmar)

At the institutional level, an Agreement for setting up of a Joint Task Force between UMFCCI and CII was signed in 2004. A Bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement (BIPA) and a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) were also signed in 2008. India and Myanmar are both signatories to the India-ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement, which was signed in August 2009. Myanmar is also a beneficiary country under India's Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme for LDCs. There has been regular interaction between CII, FICCI and other important chambers of commerce from India and the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI). The Joint Trade Committee (JTC) chaired by the respective Commerce Ministers was set up in 2003 and has been effective in reviewing and setting policy

objectives for bilateral trade between the two countries. During the visit of Prime Minister to Myanmar, Joint Trade and Investment Forum (JTIF) chaired by prominent businessmen from both sides was set up. The 1<sup>st</sup> JTIF was held in Yangon in June 2013. Minister of Commerce, Industry and Textiles and Myanmar Minister of Commerce also attended and addressed the 1<sup>st</sup> JTIF.

## **Border Trade**

India and Myanmar signed a border trade agreement in 1994 and have two operational border trade points: Moreh-Tamu and Zowkhatar –Rhi on the 1643 km long border. A third border trade point is proposed to be opened at Avakhung-Pansat/Somrai. The border trade between India and Myanmar had a quantum jump during the year 2012-13 touching US\$ 36.2 million from US\$ 15.4 million. First meeting of the India-Myanmar Border Trade Committee was held in Moreh (Manipur) on November 8, 2012. The meeting reviewed the current status of border trade and discussed border trade points/LCSs along with the proposed expansion of items under border trade.

## **Trade Fair & Market Promotion**

Recent trade promotion events include visit of the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) delegation to Myanmar (26-31 August 2012), Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) (3-7 September 2012) for 'India Show', EEPCC delegation (13-19 January 2013), Bengal Chambers of Commerce (18-22 February 2013), Indian Chamber of Commerce and FICCI (4-9 March 2013) and Calcutta Chamber of Commerce (4-7 April 2013). India-Myanmar Business and Investment Conclave in Monywa in May 2013. Marker events including Business seminar and b-2-b meetings were organized in Yangon and Sittwe during the visit of Indian Naval Training Ship - Sudharshini from March 6-9, 2013.

## **Training programmes**

Myanmar is a beneficiary of training programmes under different schemes such as Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, Technical Cooperation Scheme (TCS) of Colombo Plan and also various scholarships offered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) like the General Cultural Scholarship Scheme (GCSS), Mekong Ganga Cultural Scholarship Scheme (MGCSS), Ayush Scholarship to BIMSTEC member countries.

A large number of participants from different Ministries of Myanmar Government attended various courses offered under the ITEC/TCS scholarships. In 2012-13 the slots under ITEC/TCS were doubled to 500 from 250, which has again been enhanced to **525** for this year because of the enthusiastic response from Myanmar.

The specialized training programme for Parliamentarians and Parliamentary secretariat were also organized where 42 MPs and 30 staff attended the training course. Myanmar diplomats have also been attending training courses at the Foreign Service Institute of India along with other foreign diplomats.

## **Cultural Exchange**

The cultural wing of the Mission has been organizing regular cultural activities besides having active Yoga & Bharatnatyam classes with dedicated instructors from India. An International Conference on Buddhist Cultural Heritage was organized on the sidelines of which, Buddhist Cultural Heritage Photo Exhibition and Book on Buddhism was organized in Shwedagon Pagoda. The Sarnath Style Buddha Statue donated by GOI to people of Myanmar and installed at the Shwedagon Pagoda premises was also unveiled in Yangon in December 2012. Other cultural events include a Carnatic Music Nite by Padmashri Sudha Ragunathan, book reading function by famous author, Dr. Amitav Ghosh, an Odissi dance performance by a leading troupe from India and local dances by Myanmar troupes in connection with the ASEAN-India Car Rally. A night of India & Myanmar Dance was organized at National Theatre in collaboration with students of the Art and Culture University of Yangon.

India is also working on the restoration/preservation of Ananda Temple in Bagan.

### **Indian Diaspora**

The origin of the Indian community in Myanmar is traced back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of the British rule in Lower Burma in 1852. The two cities of the Myanmar namely Yangon and Mandalay had a dominating presence of Indians in various fields such as civil services, education, trade and commerce during the British rule. According to 1983 official census of Myanmar the number of Person of Indian origin (PIOs) in Myanmar is 428428. A large number of the Indian community (nearly 150,000) live in Bago (Zeyawaddy and Kuayktaga) and Tanintharyi Region and Mon State and are primarily engaged in farming. The NRI families in Myanmar mainly live in urban/cities and are engaged in export import business or are employees of MNCs based in India, Singapore and Thailand.

### **Air links with India / Convenient Travel Routes**

1. Thai Airways flies daily to various cities in India via Bangkok;
2. Indian Airlines flies Kolkata-Yangon (to-and-fro) twice a week on Mondays and Fridays.

### **Cooperation between India and Myanmar in the regional/sub-regional context**

**ASEAN:** Myanmar became a member of ASEAN in July 1997. As the only ASEAN country which shares a land border with India, Myanmar is a bridge between India and ASEAN. A few proposals for cooperation have been implemented and some are under discussions with Myanmar within the framework of ASEAN's IAI programme.

**BIMSTEC:** Myanmar became a member of BIMSTEC in December 1997. Myanmar is a signatory to the BIMSTEC Free Trade Agreement. Myanmar is the lead country for the energy sector. Myanmar trades mostly with Thailand and India in the BIMSTEC region. Myanmar's major exports to India are agricultural products like beans, pulses and maize and forest products such as teak and hardwoods. Its imports from India include chemical products, pharmaceuticals, electrical appliances and transport equipment. The 13<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting was held in Myanmar in January 2011. The 3<sup>rd</sup> BIMSTEC Summit meeting is expected to be held in Myanmar during the year.

**Mekong Ganga Cooperation:** Myanmar is a member of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) since its inception in November 2000. MGC is an initiative by six countries – India and five ASEAN countries namely, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam – for cooperation in the fields of tourism, education, culture, transport and communication. The chairmanship of MGC is assumed by member countries in alphabetical order.

**SAARC:** Myanmar was given the status of observer in SAARC in August 2008.

\*\*\*\*\*

**July 2013**