

India - Myanmar Relations

Myanmar shares a long land border of over 1600 Km with India as well as a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. Four North-Eastern States viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram share international boundary with Myanmar. Both countries share a heritage of religious, linguistic and ethnic ties. Myanmar has a substantial population of Indian origin (est. 1.5- 2 million). Further, Myanmar is our gateway to South East Asia and ASEAN with which we are seeking greater economic integration through India's 'Look East' and 'Act East' Policy. Myanmar also offers us an alternative access route to the Northeast. Apart from supply of pulses, possibilities of energy supply from offshore blocks in Myanmar and business opportunities that emerging from an opening economy underpin bilateral relations

India has a policy of strengthening improved relations with Myanmar. The recent victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in the November 8, 2015 elections, in which the NLD won 255/323 seats (in the lower house) and 135/168 (upper house) apart from 475/630 (in regional/state Parliament) has further provided opportunities to strengthen the engagement. Various institutional mechanisms have infused dynamism to the growing and multi-faceted bilateral ties. The first meeting of the India-Myanmar Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) co-chaired by EAM and Myanmar FM was held on July 16, 2015 in New Delhi. The JCC has been established as an umbrella mechanism to facilitate interaction between various line ministries on the two sides. At the Secretary-level, these include Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) at the level of Foreign Secretary/Deputy Foreign Minister (last held at New Delhi in July 2014 and Nay Pyi Taw in July 2013) and National Level Meeting (NLM) at the level of Home Secretary/ Deputy Home Minister (19th NLM held in Nov 17-19, 2014, Yangon and 18th NLM on 28-29 Dec 2012, N. Delhi). Apart from them, technical level and operational level meetings are held.

High-level Visits

There have been several high level visits: PM Rajiv Gandhi (1987), Sr Gen Than Shwe (2004 and 2010), President Abdul Kalam (2006), Vice Senior Gen. Maung Aye (2008), Vice President Ansari (2009), President U Thein Sein (Oct 2011 & Dec 2012) and then PM Dr. Manmohan Singh (May 2012). During these visits, important agreements were signed (MoU on Cooperation in Non-traditional Security Issues, MoU on Intelligence Cooperation, DTAA, BIPPA, MLAT in Criminal Matters), and a number of development projects like the Kaladan project, restoration of Ananda Temple, hospital upgradation, OFL link. India has extended loans of US\$ 297.43 million and grants of US\$ 477.63 million for several infrastructure and public interest projects in health, education, agriculture etc.

PM Dr. Manmohan Singh paid a State Visit to Myanmar from May 27-29, 2012. PM and President U Thein Sein signed 12 Agreements and MOUs including on USD 500 million Line of Credit, on Air Services, Border Areas Development, on Establishment of the Advanced Centre for Agriculture Research & Education (ACARE) Rice Bio Park Myanmar and Institute of Information Technology with Indian assistance, Establishment of Border Haats, Joint Trade and Investment Forum, CEP for 2012-2015, MoUs for Cooperation amongst Think Tanks/ Institutes of the two countries and support for HRD through 500 training slots. With new road projects like the Trilateral Highway and Rhi-Tiddim road, India's commitment to Myanmar's development stands at US\$ 2 billion.

PM Narendra Modi visited Nay Pyi Taw from Nov 11-13, 2014 to attend the 12th ASEAN-India Summit and 9th East Asia Summit. PM called on President U Thein Sein and met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. PM also interacted with around 300

members of the PIO/OCI community of Myanmar. NSA Ajit Doval attended the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement ceremony on 15 October 2015 in which he was India's witness signatory, among others that included China, Thailand, EU, UN and Japan. India's presence was a demonstration of support to the peace process underway in Myanmar.

EAM paid an official visit to Myanmar from 14-16 December 2012 and had extensive discussions with the Myanmar Foreign Minister. EAM and Foreign Minister signed the MOU for construction of Rhi-Tiddim Road in Chin State of Myanmar. EAM and Myanmar Vice President jointly inaugurated the "International Conference on Buddhist Cultural Heritage" organized by ICCR and Sitagu International Buddhist Academy in Yangon. EAM and Minister of Religious Affairs jointly unveiled the Sarnath Style Buddha Statue gifted by the People of India to Myanmar and also inaugurated the photo and book exhibition on "Buddhist Cultural Heritage" at the premises of Shwe Dagon Pagoda. EAM Sushma Swaraj visited Nay Pyi Taw from August 08-11 to attend the 4th East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers Meeting and 21st ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting and paid an official bilateral visit on August 11, 2014.

RM led a high level delegation comprising of the Defence Secretary, Vice Chief of Naval staff, the GOC-in-C Eastern Command and other senior officials which visited Myanmar from 21 to 22 January 2013. During the visit, RM called on President U Thein Sein and had discussion with C-in-C Vice Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and Defence Minister Lt. Gen. Wai Lwin.

Speaker of Lok Sabha led a first ever Indian Parliamentary delegation to Myanmar from 12-15 February 2013. During the visit the Speaker called on the President U Thein Sein and held discussions with Pyithu Hluttaw Speaker Thura U Shwe Mann and Amyotha Hluttaw U Khin Aung Myint. The Speaker of Pyithu Hluttaw hosted a banquet in honour of visiting Speaker and interacted with the Indian Community.

Minister of Commerce, Industry and Textile visited Myanmar from 6-8 June 2013 to attend World Economic Forum on East Asia in Nay Pyi Taw. CIM and Myanmar Minister of Commerce U Win Myint inaugurated the 1st India-Myanmar Joint Trade and Investment Forum, Yangon. CIM Nirmala Sitharaman co-Chaired the 5th Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting with U Win Myint on 16-17 February, 2015 in Nay Pyi Taw. During the visit CIM interacted with the Myanmar captains of industries at UMFCCI in Yangon and addressed the community function organized by the Indian community, Yangon. Other visits include that of Chief Ministers of Sagaing and Mandalay regions of Myanmar, who visited the Sangai festival in November 2013 with a 110-member delegation that included businessmen, artistes, academics and media. The 3rd CMLV (Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Viet Nam) Business Conclave was held on 12-13 January 2016 at Mamallapuram, near Chennai. "Myanmar as an Investment Destination" was a major theme at the Conclave. Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Myanmar Dy. Commerce Minister Dr Pwint San co-chaired the Conclave along with Ministers from other CMLV countries. Being the first major promotion of Myanmar as an investment destination for the Indian industry in decades, the Conclave was attended by top business leaders of both these countries as also by other CMLV countries.

Commercial relations

Commercial cooperation is another area of focus. India and Myanmar signed a trade agreement in 1970. Bilateral trade has been growing steadily reaching USD

1571.95 million in 2014-15 (Exports to Myanmar USD 773.74 million and Imports from Myanmar USD 1016.86 million) and India is the fourth largest trade partner of Myanmar but trade remains below potential. Agriculture sector dominates bilateral trade. Myanmar is the second largest supplier of beans and pulses to India and Timber and wood products. India's exports to Myanmar include pharmaceuticals products, steel & iron products, electrical machinery, Mineral oil, Rubber and articles, plastics etc. Border trade via Moreh and Zawkhatar reached to US\$ 51.68 million in 2013-14.

India has moved to eleventh largest investor from tenth position with an approved investment of US\$ 299.5 million out of total estimated investments of US\$ 45.237 billion from 33 countries by 655 enterprises. Most of India's investments have been in the oil and gas sector. Following the New Foreign Investment Law (02 Nov 2012) and the by-laws and rules framed by the respective departments/ministries (31 January 2013) investments into the country is increasing. Now FDI is allowed 100 % in select sectors. Indian companies have evinced interest in investing in Myanmar and major contracts have been won by Indian companies include Jubilant Energy India- PSC-1 onshore bloc; Punj Lloyd; Jindal Saw; Welspun India; Vihaan Networks; Nipha Exports and Troika Exports; L&T. More facilitative environment that includes greater air, sea and road connectivity options would give a fillip to the cooperation. Cooperation in banking sector is crucial for investment and trade. United Bank of India signed number of banking agreements with banks of Myanmar (MFTB, MICB, MEB, and 9 private banks) in order to facilitate trade transactions between the two countries. United Bank of India (UBI) has opened its representative office in November 2012. In addition to UBI, Indian Overseas Bank, EXIM bank and State Bank of India have opened representative office in Yangon.

Mechanisms such as Joint Trade Committee, Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement and other technical level committee on trade have contributed significantly in strengthening trade and investment relations. The first Joint Trade and Investment Forum (JTIF) was held in Yangon on 7 June 2013 co-chaired by Shri Sunil Mittal and U Aung Win (President UMFCCI, Myanmar). Myanmar is an important partner in strengthening our energy security. Recognising this, an MOU on Co-operation in the Petroleum Sector between MOP&NG and Ministry of Energy of Myanmar was signed during President's visit to Myanmar in March 2006.

Development cooperation and humanitarian relief

Development cooperation is a key aspect of our relationship and we have offered technical and financial assistance to Myanmar for projects in infrastructure, capacity-building, emergency relief and others. The total development assistance to Myanmar stands at approx USD 2 billion.

Disaster Relief: India has responded promptly and effectively to assist Myanmar in humanitarian relief operations following natural calamities like Cyclone Nargis in 2008, the earthquake in Shan State in 2010 and cyclone Komen in 2015. We have provided immediate relief material, medical assistance, supplies for rehabilitation work, biomass gasifiers, solar torches & lanterns. We have also replaced 16 damaged transformers and given a grant of USD 200,000 to repair the Shwedagon Pagoda complex in Yangon. We also gave assistance of USD 1 million for relief and reconstruction work in the quake affected zone in Shan State, of which 250,000 was given as a cash grant and the remainder used to finance reconstruction of 1 high school and 6 primary schools. We have also donated US\$200,000 in cash to GOM for Rakhine State rehabilitation. India again provided a sum of US\$ 1 million to Government of Myanmar for promoting inter-communal harmony in Rakhine State

which the Myanmar Government has chosen to use to construct 10 schools to serve both communities and promoting communal harmony. The construction of 10 schools has hence been completed and classes commenced from the new building. Our emergency supply of food, medicines and relief supplies through four airforce flights to Kalay and Mandalay, soon after the Cyclone Komen has been widely appreciated.

Cultural relations

India and Myanmar share close cultural ties. There is a deep sense of kinship, particularly amongst the Buddhist community, given India's association with the Buddha's life. We are trying to make the most of this shared heritage by undertaking some key initiatives: GOI working for restoration of the Ananda Temple in Bagan; GOI donated a 16 foot replica of the Sarnath Buddha Statue which has been installed at the premises of Shwedagon pagoda in Yangon; MEA in coordination with ICCR and the Sitagu International Buddhist Academy and Myanmar Ministry of Religious Affairs organised an International Conference on Buddhist Cultural Heritage from 15-17 December 2012. Apart from this, performances by Indian and Myanmar cultural troupes have been organized on a regular basis. Myanmar troupes and artistes have regularly participated in South Asian and ASEAN cultural events in India.

Connectivity is increasingly being seen as the key to promoting bilateral commercial, cultural, touristic and other exchanges. India is undertaking some important development projects that will enhance connectivity: these include the Kaladan project, construction/upgradation of Rhi-Tiddim Road, MOU for which was signed during the visit of EAM to Myanmar in December 2012. We have agreed to Myanmar's request to undertake the task of building the 69 bridges along the Tamu-Kalamyo-Kalewa (TKK) Friendship Road and construct the 126 km Kalewa-Yargyi road segment for establishing seamless Trilateral Highway from Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar. We are also working on boosting air, rail and sea links. During the visit of Prime Minister to Myanmar in May 2012, Air Services Agreement was signed and agreed to set up Joint Working Groups to determine the technical and commercial feasibility of cross-border rail links as well as direct shipping links between the two countries. The bilateral Air Services Agreement enables third, fourth and fifth freedom rights to both Indian and Myanmar carriers. An MOU to establish a direct Imphal-Mandalay bus service and the broad framework for the operation of this service has been negotiated and initialized and awaiting the final formal signing. The Air India has launched a direct flight between Delhi-Gaya-Yangon once in a week during the peak season of 2014. The Shipping Corporation of India has launched a direct sea link between India and Myanmar in October, 2014.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Yangon website:

www.indiaembassyyangon.net/index.php?lang=en

Embassy of India, Yangon face book page:

www.facebook.com/IndiaInMyanmar?reg=ts&fref=ts

Embassy of India, Yangon Twitter page:

twitter.com/IndiaInMyanmar

Embassy of India, Yangon Flickr page:

www.flickr.com/photos/129492273@N02/

India Global: AIR FM Gold Program featuring India and Myanmar relations:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Any_IdE55gA
