

Brief on India - Thailand Relations

India and Thailand, located in each other's extended neighborhood, share a maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea. India's bilateral relations with Thailand are rooted in history, age-old social and cultural interactions and extensive people to people contacts. The shared link of Buddhism is reflected in regular pilgrimages to places of Buddhist interest in India by a large number of Thai people. Hindu elements can be found among those reflected in Thai architecture, arts, sculpture, dance, drama and literature. The Thai language incorporates Pali and Sanskrit influences. A large Indian Diaspora living and working in Thailand is another important bond.

2. In the past two decades, with regular political exchanges, growing trade and investment, India's ties with Thailand have now evolved into a comprehensive partnership. India's 'Act East' policy has been complemented by Thailand's 'Act West' policy in bringing the two countries closer. Both countries are important regional partners linking South and Southeast Asia. They cooperate closely in the ASEAN, East Asia Summit (EAS) and BIMSTEC groupings as also Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The India-ASEAN Agreement on Trade in Goods was implemented in January 2010 and the India-ASEAN FTA in Services and Investments was signed in September 2014 and came into force in July 2015.

High Level Exchanges

| Dignitary visiting Thailand | Period |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| PM Narendra Modi | 10 Nov 2016 (To pay homage to HM late King Bhumibol Adulyadej) |
| PM Dr. Manmohan Singh | July 2004, Oct 2009, 30-31 May 2013 |
| PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee | Nov 2002 (transit), Oct 2003 |
| PM P. V. Narasimha Rao | April 1993 |
| PM Rajiv Gandhi | Oct 1986 |
| President V. V. Giri | 1972 |
| Vice President Dr. Zakir Hussain | 1966 |
| Dignitary visiting India | Period |
| HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn | 1987, 1996, 2001, 2004, March 2005, Nov 2005, March 2007, Aug 2007, March 2008, Feb 2009, Aug 2009, March 2011, Oct 2011, Feb 2014, July 2014, Nov 2016; Mar 2017, July 2017 and Nov 2018; |
| PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha | 16-18 June 2016, 24-26 Jan 2018 |
| HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha | November 2011, June 2015 |
| HRH Princess Chulabhorn | February 2013, Feb 2015 |
| PM Yingluck Shinawatra | 24-26 Jan 2012, 20-21 Dec 2012 |
| PM Abhisit Vejjajiva | April 2011 |
| HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn | December 1998, Nov 2010 |
| PM Somchai Wongsawat | Nov 2008 |
| PM Surayud Chulanont | June 2007 |

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| PM Thaksin Shinawatra | Nov 2001, Feb 2002, June 2005 |
| PM Gen Chatichai Choonhavan | March 1989 |

3. High level visits and meetings have taken place on a regular basis from both sides. PM Shri Narendra Modi met PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on 14 November 2018 on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Singapore. The two Prime Ministers also had a meeting on the margins of the 4th BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu on 31 August 2018. PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha visited Delhi from 24-26 January 2018 for the India-ASEAN Special Commemorative Summit and as a Guest of Honour for the Republic Day Parade 2018 along with other ASEAN leaders. PM Shri Narendra Modi and PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha held discussions on the sidelines of the 8th BRICS Summit in Xiamen in September 2017. On 10 November 2016, PM Shri Narendra Modi visited Bangkok to pay tribute to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. In 2016, Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Industry Minister and Culture Minister paid a state visit to India from 16-18 June 2016. He called on Vice president and had a restricted meeting and delegation level talks with PM on 17 June in New Delhi. EAM called on General Prayut. Thai PM met Indian businessmen from the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of Indian Industry, and Associated Chambers of Commerce of India and gave a keynote address on 17 June at a joint business event. He also offered prayers at the Mahabodhi Temple and the Thai Buddhist Temple in Bodhgaya, on 18 June.

4. Vice President, Shri M. Hamid Ansari, accompanied by a high level delegation, paid an official visit to Thailand from 3-5 February 2016. The Vice President had an audience with Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and held extensive bilateral discussions with PM General Prayut Chan-o-cha. The Vice President delivered an address at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, interacted with academicians/ Indologists and addressed the Indian community in Thailand.

5. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has visited India 19 times. HRH Maha Chakri Sirindhorn visited India from 26 to 29 November 2018. She had visited India earlier in July 2017 and on March 30, 2017 to receive Padma Bhushan from the President of India. She was awarded the first World Sanskrit Award by the Vice President of India on 21 November, 2016.

6. External Affairs Minister(EAM) Smt. Sushma Swaraj met Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Foreign Minister of Thailand in New Delhi during his visit to India on 30 November 2018. Both the leaders discussed range of bilateral issues. Both sides agreed to work closely to further strengthen India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. EAM visited Bangkok on 04-05 January 2018 for having discussions with Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Foreign Minister of Thailand.

7. Shri. M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs, visited Bangkok from 26-27 October 2017 for the royal cremation ceremonies for the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

8. A delegation led by Gen. Tanasak Pratimapragorn, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand in charge of culture and tourism visited Mumbai from 6-8 March 2016. DPM Thanasak and the delegation met with Chief Minister of Maharashtra on 8 March. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Thailand Gen. Prawit Wongsuwan visited India from 16-18 March 2016. Gen. Prawit met the Vice President, Defence Minister and the National Security Advisor.

9. In 2015, EAM visited Thailand to co-chair the 7th Meeting of India-Thailand Joint Commission and to attend the 16th World Sanskrit Conference in Bangkok from 27-29 June 2015. EAM called on

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Gen Prem Tinsulanonda, President of the Privy Council of Thailand. EAM and the then DPM & Minister of Foreign Affairs Gen Tanasak Patimapragorn held delegation level talks.

10. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Raksha Mantri visited Bangkok from 26-29 August 2018. She held delegation level talks with Gen. Prawit Wongsuwan, Deputy PM and Defence Minister of Thailand. She also called on Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, then Commerce and Industry Minister(CIM), visited Bangkok from 3-5 August 2017 to participate in India-ASEAN Expo & Forum. CIM also visited Thailand to attend the 71st Commission Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) on 28-29 May 2015. CIM called on M. R. Pridiyathorn Devakula, former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand and General Chatchai Sarikulya, former Minister of Commerce of Thailand and addressed the business event organized by the Embassy. Shri Ajit Doval, National Security Advisor visited Thailand on 1-2 April 2015. He called on Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand, DPM & Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, DPM& FM Gen Tanasak Patimapragorn and met Mr. Anusit Kunakorn, Secretary General of the National Security Council of Thailand.

11. Former DPM and Minister of Foreign Affairs General Tanasak Patimapragorn visited India on 10-11 March 2015. He attended Delhi Dialogue VII, called on Defence Minister Shri Manohar Parrikar and held delegation level talks with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj. Commerce Minister Chatchai Sarikalya visited India from 24-26 Feb 2015.

12. In 2014, PM Shri Narendra Modi discussed bilateral issues of mutual interest with PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on the sidelines of ASEAN Summit in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 November 2014. Shri Kiren Rijiju, MoS for Home Affairs participated in the first Ministerial Conference on Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific on 27 and 28 November 2014 in Bangkok. Mrs. Maneka Gandhi, Minister of Women and Child Development visited Bangkok to attend Asian and Pacific Conference on "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Beijing + 20 Review" on 19-20 November 2014. Earlier, Kiren Rijiju, Minister of State for Home Affairs participated in the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Bangkok from 23- 26 June 2014. General Tanasak Patimaprakorn, Chief of Defence Forces, Royal Thai Armed Forces led a Thai delegation on an official visit to India from 28-30 June 2014. General Tanasak called on Arun Jaitley, Defence and Finance Minister and met General Bikram Singh, Chief of Army Staff in New Delhi.

13. PM Dr. Manmohan Singh accompanied by EAM Salman Khurshid and senior officials paid an official visit to Thailand at the invitation of PM Yingluck Shinawatra on 30-31 May 2013. He presented a sapling of Bodhi Tree in Bodh Gaya as a special gift to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej as a symbol of India and Thailand's shared cultural heritage. PM held wide-ranging talks with PM Yingluck Shinawatra on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. During the visit, six agreements/MoUs were signed and a joint statement was released. PM Yingluck Shinawatra paid a State visit to India from 24-26 January 2012 as the Chief Guest for India's Republic Day celebrations. Six agreements/ MoUs were signed during the visit - the 2nd Protocol to amend bilateral Framework Agreement for FTA, MoU on Defence Cooperation, Programme of Cooperation in Science & Technology, Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Cultural Exchange Programme 2012-14 and an MoU for ICCR to establish a Chair at India Studies Centre in Chulalongkorn University. Thai PM met PM on sidelines of the 10th India-ASEAN Summit in Phnom Penh in November 2012. PM Yingluck Shinawatra visited India again to participate in the India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in New Delhi in December 2012. She visited Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya en route to New Delhi.

14. **Bilateral Institutional Mechanisms**

Joint Commission Meeting (JCM): India-Thailand JCM is at Foreign Ministers level. EAM and DPM and FM Gen Tanasak Pratimapragorn co-chaired the 7th Round of India-Thailand JCM on 29 June 2015 in Bangkok. Wide-ranging discussions were held in the areas of economic and commercial cooperation, culture, S & T, ICT, education, agriculture, legal and consular matters. The 6th JCM was held in New Delhi in December 2011.

Foreign Office Consultations (FOC): The 4th India-Thailand Foreign Office Consultations were held in New Delhi, on 4 August 2016. The meeting was co-chaired by Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. Earlier FOCs were held in New Delhi on 8 September 2014 and in Bangkok on 10 August 2012.

Defence Cooperation

15. The MoU on Defence Cooperation between India and Thailand was signed on 25 Jan 2012. The 6th Annual Defence Dialogue was held at Bangkok from 15 - 16 Feb 2018. Gen Natt Intracharoen, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Defence was the Co-chair from the Thai side along with Mr. Barun Mitra, Additional Secretary, Indian MoD. Since 2015, India is participating in Ex-Cobra Gold, the largest Asia Pacific Military exercise as 'Observer Plus' category. India fields its Engineers, Observers and Medical Delegations in the exercises in Thailand. Bilateral exercises are held annually between the armies and air forces of both countries. The other ongoing defence cooperation initiatives comprises of bi-annual joint maritime patrolling by the navies of both countries, annual staff talks, subject matter expert exchange visits and training of officers at each other's institutions.

Economic & Commercial Partnership

Bilateral Trade

16. Thailand views India as the gateway to South Asia and beyond. As a result of the reduced tariff rates and new initiatives adopted by both the countries, trade between two countries increased manifold in recent years.

(amount in billion USD)

| Year | Total trade | Thai Export to India | Thai Import from India |
|------|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 2010 | 6.64 | 4.39 | 2.25 |
| 2011 | 8.19 | 5.18 | 3.01 |
| 2012 | 8.87 | 5.47 | 3.40 |
| 2013 | 8.69 | 5.19 | 3.50 |
| 2014 | 8.66 | 5.62 | 3.04 |
| 2015 | 7.92 | 5.30 | 2.62 |
| 2016 | 7.72 | 5.15 | 2.57 |
| 2017 | 10.39 | 6.49 | 3.90 |

17. Major Indian companies in Thailand include Tata group – Tata Motors (Thailand), Tata Steel Thailand and Tata Consultancy Services, The Aditya Birla Group, Mahindra Satyam, Ranbaxy, Dabur, Lupin, NIIT, Kirloskar Borthers Ltd, Punj Lloyd Group, Polyplex (Thailand) Public Co. Ltd, Precious Shipping PCL and Usha Siam Steel Industries PCL.

18. Leading Thai companies in the fields of Agro-processing, construction, automotive, engineering and banking have active and growing business presence in India. Major Thai companies active in India are –

Connectivity

19. Air connectivity between India and Thailand is growing with more than 330 flights per week reflecting a rapidly growing traffic of tourist and businesspersons between the two countries. About 1.4 million Indian tourists visited Thailand in 2017. The number of Thai tourists to India was close to 120,000 (mainly to Buddhist pilgrimage sites). All major airlines of India operate between the two countries : Air India, Jet Airways, Thai Airways, Bangkok Airways, Air Asia, IndiGo and Spicejet. India and Thailand are cooperating closely on improving regional connectivity through initiatives such as India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Asian Highway Network (under UNESCAP), BTILS under BIMSTEC framework.

Cultural Cooperation

20. Cultural exchanges take place under the framework of a Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between the two governments. An Indian Cultural Centre was opened in Bangkok in September 2009. Cultural Agreement Programme for 2016-19 had been signed during the visit of Prime Minister of Thailand to India in June 2016. A number of India Studies Centers are operational in prestigious Thai Universities. Regular visits of Indian cultural troupes are organized, in addition to Indian film and food festivals etc. Embassy in collaboration with Ministry of Culture and several local partners organized Festival of India in Thailand in March 2014, the 2nd edition in February-May 2015 and recently from July 2017 to March 2018 to mark 70 years of India-Thailand relations. This Festival included Indian classical dances, food festivals, art and painting exhibitions, literary festival & seminars, etc.

21. International Day of Yoga is a very successful event in Thailand. Over 7800 people participated in the 4th International Yoga Day celebrations at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok on 17 June 2018. Yoga Day was also celebrated in various parts of Thailand.

22. Sawasdee India Quiz Contest (SIQC) on Facebook: Embassy of India conducted the Contest (twice) – First quiz from 9 January–5 March 2017 & Second quiz from 15 May-15 June 2017. Questions, with images, on various aspects of India were posed with the contestants offering a lot of prizes including Air tickets to India. This Contest generated significant interest on India among youth in Thailand. A Quiz on Mahatma Gandhi is being held from 2 October 2018 to 9 January 2019 as part of Gandhi@150 celebrations. The winner of the contest will be awarded air ticket to India and hospitality.

23. Incredible India Photo Contest: The Embassy of India organised the first Incredible India Photo Contest where contestants were asked to post their pictures taken in India. The contest attracted a huge response. Winner of the contest was awarded air ticket to India. The second edition of the Incredible India Photo Contest is ongoing from 15 November 2018 to 15 February 2019. The winner of the contest and companion will be given air tickets to India along with full hospitality.

24. Chitrakarma India Drawing Contest (CIDC): The Embassy of India held this Contest from 15 March, 2017 till 31 May, 2017 targeting school children in the age range of 10-15 years. The theme of drawing was India and India-Thailand Friendship. The enthusiasm shown by young participants from different provinces of the Kingdom of Thailand was very heart-warming, and drew a lot of

artworks altogether. 100 shortlisted drawings/paintings (out of 1170 paintings received) were displayed in the form of an Exhibition for one in Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Winner was awarded three air tickets to India and others were also financially rewarded. Another drawing contest on the theme of Mahatma Gandhi is scheduled to be held from January-March 2019.

Education Cooperation

25. MoU on Cooperation in the field of Education was signed in 2005. During 2017-18, Government of India offered 75 scholarships to Thai students under its various schemes (ITEC – 40, TCS of Colombo Plan – 6, ICCR sponsored schemes – 20 and Hindi Scholarship – 9). A large number of Thai students are also studying on self-financing basis. Ministry of Human Resource Development provides for secondment of 8 professors every semester for the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok for the duration of 16 weeks.

26. Government of India contributed Rupees 1.25 crores (Thai Baht 10 million) in 2008 towards construction of a new building for the Sanskrit Studies Centre at Silpakorn University, Bangkok and has deputed a Sanskrit professor. An India Studies Centre is functioning at the Thammasat University of Bangkok since April 1993. In 2013 during the VVIP Visit, ICCR and Pridi Banomyong International College of Thammasat University signed the MOU for establishment of Hindi Chair for BA Programme in Indian Studies which has been launched by the College. In 2008, Mahidol University of Bangkok started a Masters of Arts course on Indian studies. Subsequently, in 2010, the University established Centre for Bharat Studies. A Chair in Chulalongkorn University's India Study Centre was inaugurated by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on March 6, 2012. Ministry of AYUSH and Rangsit University signed an MOU on establishing a Chair on Ayurveda at Rangsit University on 29 June 2015. Since 2012, the Government of India has provided funds for Thai students for short term Hindi Course at Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha, Maharashtra. In 2018, ICCR and Chiang Mai University signed MOU on Establishment of ICCR Chair of Indian Studies.

Indian Diaspora in Thailand

27. Indian Diaspora in Thailand: It is estimated that there are around 250,000 people of Indian origin in Thailand. Many of them have lived here for several generations over the past century and hold Thai nationality. The Indian community mainly comprises Sikhs and Hindus from Punjab, Sindhis, Gujaratis, people from eastern Uttar Pradesh & Bihar and Tamils. Three persons of Indian origin from Thailand have been bestowed with the prestigious 'PravasiBhartiyaSamman in 2006, 2010 and 2017.

28. Embassies/Consulates: Besides the Embassy in Bangkok, India has a Consulate in the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai. Thailand has consulates in Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai besides its Embassy in New Delhi.

Useful Resources

29. Embassy of India, Bangkok Website: <https://embassyofindiabangkok.gov.in>
Facebook: IndianEmbassyThailand; Twitter: @IndiainThailand

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