

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.

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 'Look 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.

Exchange of High Level Visits Dignitary

Dignitary visiting Thailand	Period
Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi	10 Nov, 2016
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
PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha	16-18 June, 2016
HRH Princess Chulabhorn.	February 2013, Feb 2015
PM Yingluck Shinawatra	24-26 Jan 2012, 20-21 Dec 2012
HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha	November 2011, June 2015
PM Abhisit Vejjajiva	April 2011
HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn	December 1998, Nov 2010
PM Somchai Wongsawat	Nov 2008
PM Surayud Chulanont	June 2007
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
PM Thaksin Shinawatra	Nov 2001, Feb 2002, June 2005
PM Gen Chatichai Choonhavan	March 1989

High level visits and meetings have taken place on a regular basis from both sides. On November 10, 2016, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Bangkok to pay his tributes to the departed King of Thailand, HRH 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 on 16 June. 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.

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.

Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn visited India from November 20 – 26, 2016. She was awarded the first World Sanskrit Award by the Vice President of India on 21 November, 2016. She also called on President of India.

A delegation led by Gen. Thanasak 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.

During 2015, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs (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. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State (I/C) for Commerce and Industry 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. The Minister 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 PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha, DPM & Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, DPM & FM Gen Tanasak Patimapragorn and met Mr. Anusit Kunakorn, Secretary General of the National Security Council of Thailand.

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.

During 2014, PM Narendra Modi discussed bilateral issues of mutual interest with PM General 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 & 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 Thanasak 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 Thanasak called on Arun Jaitley, Defence and FM and met General Bikram Singh, Chief of Army Staff in New Delhi.

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 the 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 Shinawatrapaid 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, 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 ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi in December 2012. She visited Mahabodhi temple in Bodhgaya en route to New Delhi.

Bilateral Institutional Mechanisms

Joint Commission Meeting (JCM): India-Thailand JCM is at Foreign Ministers level. EAM and DPM & FM Gen Tanasak co-chaired the 7th session of India-Thailand JCM on 29 June 2015. 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): India-Thailand FOC was held in New Delhi on 8 September 2014. Sihasak Phuangketkeow, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Secretary (East) exchanged views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. Earlier FOC was held in Bangkok on 10 August 2012.

Defence Dialogue: Raksha Mantri Manohar Parrikar met DPM & Defence Minister of Thailand on the sidelines of ADMM+ in Kuala Lumpur on 3 November 2015. Admiral R. K. Dhowan, Chief of Naval Staff paid an official visit to Thailand from 23-26 July 2015. ACM Arup Raha, Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee visited Thailand on 6-9 Sept 2015. The fourth meeting of India-Thailand Defence Dialogue was held in Bangkok on 21-22 December 2015. A bilateral MOU on Defence cooperation was signed in January 2012. The current Defence cooperation comprises regular joint exercises/joint maritime patrols near the international maritime boundary to counter terrorism, piracy and smuggling; training of officers at each other's institutions and participation as observers in military exercises.

Economic & Commercial Partnership

Bilateral Trade: The last few years have seen a rapid growth in bilateral trade, which crossed US\$9 billion mark in year 2012-13. The Framework Agreement on India-Thailand FTA was signed in Bangkok in October 2003 and the second protocol to amend it was signed during the visit of Thai PM to New Delhi in January 2012.

(Amount in billion US\$) Description	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-2016
Thai Exports	2.70	2.93	4.27	4.89	4.91	4.50	4.48	3.81
Thai Imports	1.94	1.74	2.27	3.06	3.00	3.14	3.10	2.62
Total Trade	4.64	4.67	6.54	8.24	9.08	9.04	9.33	8.52

FDI in India and Indian Investments in Thailand: Indian FDI into Thailand is around US\$ 2 billion since 1970s. Major investments from India to Thailand are in sectors such as agricultural products, minerals & ceramics, metal products and machinery, electrical and electronic products, chemicals and textiles. Actual inflow of FDI from Thailand into India in 2015 was US\$23.12 million. Thai investments are mainly in infrastructure, real estate, food processing, chemicals, and hotel and hospitality sector.

Major Indian groups namely Tata group (automobiles, steel, software), Aditya Birla group (chemicals, textiles), Indo Rama group (chemicals), Lupin (pharmaceuticals), Ranbaxy, Dabur, Bharti Airtel, NIIT, Punj-Lloyd, Kirloskar and public sector enterprises Indian Overseas Bank, Bank of Baroda, Air India, New India Assurance are present in Thailand. Leading Thai companies in the fields of Agro-

processing, infrastructure, banking, automotive, engineering, housing and hospitality have active and growing business presence in India.

Major Thai companies active in India are - C P Aquaculture (India) Ltd., Krung Thai Bank Pcl., Ital Thai Development Pcl., Charoen Pokphand (India) Private Limited, Stanley Electric Engineering India Pvt. Ltd., Thai Summit Neel Auto Pvt. Ltd., Thai Airways, and Precious Shipping (PSL) of Thailand, Preuksa Real Estate, Dusit and Amari group of hotels.

Connectivity: Air connectivity between India and Thailand is growing with around 150 flights per week, reflecting rapidly growing passenger traffic between the two countries. Bangkok is connected by air to 9 Indian destinations. 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. The 2nd bilateral JWG on Infrastructure and Connectivity and 7th Task Force Meeting on the Trilateral Transport Linkage Project were held in Bangkok on 29 & 30 September 2014. Secretaries of Transport of India, Myanmar and Thailand met in Chennai (April 2015); Bengaluru (June 2015) and Bangkok (July 2015) to finalize the Trilateral Motor Vehicles Agreement. In 2015, over 1 million Indian tourists visited Thailand and around 120,000 Thai tourists visited India (mainly to Buddhist pilgrimage sites).

Culture: 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 has been signed during the visit of Thai PM 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 and the 2nd edition was organized from February-May 2015. Over 6000 people participated in the 2nd International Yoga Day celebrations at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok on 26 June 2016.

Education: An MoU on Cooperation in the field of Education was signed in 2005. During 2014-15 Government of India offered 130 scholarships to Thai students under its ITEC and ICCR sponsored schemes. 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.

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 2008, the Mahidol University of Bangkok started a Masters of Arts course on Indian 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.

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. Majority of them hold Thai nationality. The Indian community mainly comprises Sikhs, Punjabis, Gorakhpuris, Tamils and Sindhis. Two persons of Indian origin from Thailand have been awarded the Pravasi Samman in 2006 and 2010.

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:

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