

## **India-Myanmar Bilateral Relations**

India shares a long land border of over 1600 kms with Myanmar as well as a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. Four north-eastern states, viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram, have a boundary with Myanmar. Both countries share a heritage of religious, linguistic and ethnic ties. Myanmar is the only ASEAN country adjoining India and, therefore, our gateway to South East Asia, with which we are seeking greater economic integration through the 'Act East' policy. Business opportunities that are latent in the potential of the last large and unexploited market in South East Asia also provide new vistas for engagement.

2. Several institutional mechanisms ensure regular consultations between the two governments. The Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) is co-chaired by EAM and the Myanmar Foreign Minister. Foreign Office Consultations are led at the level of Foreign Secretary/Permanent Secretary. The 17<sup>th</sup> Foreign Office Consultations were held on June 7, 2018 in New Delhi. The National Level Meeting (NLM) at Home Secretary/ Dy. Home Minister-level is the main forum to discuss security cooperation, consular issues, drug trafficking matters and liaison between agencies. The 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of this forum was held on October 25-26, 2018 in New Delhi. The NLM is supplemented by a Joint Secretary-level Sectoral Level Meeting (SLM), also led by led by MHA. The 23<sup>rd</sup> SLM was held in January 2018. The main forum for the representatives of the armed forces to discuss counter insurgency and border security issues is the Regional Border Committee Meeting (RBCs). The 13<sup>th</sup> RBC was held in Imphal on November 1-3, 2018. Boundary matters are discussed by Joint Boundary Working Group led by Joint Secretary (BM), MEA. The 3<sup>rd</sup> JBWG meeting was held on August 26-27, 2018 in Yangon. Commercial issues are discussed in the Joint Trade Committee (JTC) held at Commerce Minister-level. The last JTC was held on June 27, 2017 in New Delhi). Joint Working Groups are in existence to discuss cooperation on Border Trade and Border Haats, Railways and Shipping. JWGs have also recently been set up to discuss cooperation in energy and health sectors.

### **High-level Visits**

3. Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi attended the 12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Summit and 9<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit (November 11-13, 2014, Nay Pyi Taw). During the visit, PM called on then President U Thein Sein, met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and interacted with over 300 members of the PIO community. Prime Minister also paid a State Visit to Myanmar (September 5-7, 2017), when he visited Nay Pyi Taw, Yangon and Bagan. High level engagement with a Myanmar dignitary was a meeting with President U Win Myint on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC Summit (August 30-31, 2018). President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind and the First Lady Smt. Savita Kovind paid a State

Visit to Myanmar from 10 to 14 December 2018. During his visit he met with President U Win Myint and State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

4. Then President U Htin Kyaw of Myanmar undertook a State Visit to India from August 27-30, 2016. State Counsellor & Minister of Foreign Affairs, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi undertook a State Visit to India on October 17- 19, 2016 after participating in the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit on October 16, in Goa. She visited India again during the 25<sup>th</sup> India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in January 2018 and met with PM on the sidelines.

### **Defence Cooperation**

5. Defence cooperation between the two countries continues to strengthen. Exchanges of high-level visits, enhanced training cooperation, capacity building and support in provision of specific equipment and technologies have led to a more wholesome relationship and better understanding of mutual security concerns. COAS Gen. Bipin Rawat visited Myanmar from May 27-31, 2017 and held meetings with Commander-in-Chief General Min Aung Hlaing and State Counsellor & Minister of Foreign Affairs, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In July 2017, Sr Gen Min Aung Hlaing, C-in-C Myanmar Defense Services, visited India and called on PM, among others. CAS Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa visited Myanmar from September 2-5, 2018. In the same month, Vice-Senior General Soe Win, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, visited India from September 15-21 to attend the BIMSTEC Chiefs of Armies Conclave and for a bilateral visit. In addition, numerous contacts at functional levels continue. Myanmar Army has displayed enhanced understanding of India's security concerns and initiated measures to address them.

### **Commercial Cooperation**

6. A bilateral Trade Agreement was signed in 1970. Bilateral trade has been growing steadily and reached US \$2.18 billion (2016-17) but declined to \$1.6 billion in 2017-18, mainly due to imposition of quantitative restrictions by India on import of beans and pulses. India is the fifth largest trading partner of Myanmar - its fifth largest destination for exports and sixth largest source of imports. Agriculture sector dominates the trade, particularly supply of beans & pulses to India (\$809 million in 2016-17) and timber (\$156 million). India's exports to Myanmar include sugar (\$424 million in 2016-17 & \$67 million in 2017-18), pharmaceuticals (\$178 million in 2017-18), etc. The trade basket is narrow and subject to wide fluctuations.

7. India is presently the eleventh largest investor in Myanmar with an approved investment of US \$743.642 million by 26 Indian enterprises. Most of India's investments have been in the oil & gas sector.

8. Both sides have also taken steps to bolster trade across the land border. Cooperation in the banking sector, which is crucial for investment and trade, is moving ahead steadily. United Bank of India and EXIM Bank have representative offices in Yangon. In March 2016, State Bank of India was awarded a Commercial Banking License and it commenced operations from October 3, 2016. SBI is one of the 13 foreign banks operating in Myanmar.

9. Myanmar is potentially an important partner in the energy sector as future offshore gas finds can be piped to India. Then MOS for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, had visited Myanmar from Feb 20-24, 2017 and both sides discussed opportunities for cooperation in varied areas. A return bilateral visit by the Myanmar Minister for Electricity and Energy took place in December 2017. Cooperation in this sector has been institutionalized by the establishment of JWG on Oil and Gas and JSC & JWG on Power cooperation.

### **Development Cooperation**

10. India has extended development assistance to Myanmar on generous terms and our assistance portfolio is now over \$1.75 billion. The bulk of the assistance is grant-funded. The projects include the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project; the Trilateral Highway Project, which is an East-West corridor connecting our Northeast with Myanmar and Thailand; the Rhi-Tiddim road; assistance for border area development in Chin State and the Naga Self-Administered Zone by financing bridges, roads, schools and small health centres; assistance in setting up institutions for higher learning and research, namely Myanmar Institute of Information Technology, Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education, Myanmar-India Centre for Enhancement of IT Skills, India-Myanmar Industrial Training Centres; capacity assistance in public health by supporting upgradation of Yangon Children's Hospital and Sittwe General Hospital and the construction of a 200-bed women's hospital at Monywa; the Rakhine State Development Programme; restoration and conservation of Ananda Temple in Bagan and the repair and conservation of 92 earthquake damaged pagodas; reconstruction of Yamethin Women Police Training Centre, etc.

### **Disaster Relief**

11. India has responded promptly and effectively in rendering assistance following natural calamities in Myanmar like Cyclone Mora (2017), Komen (2015), earthquake in Shan State (2010), Cyclone Nargis in 2008 and the recent outbreak of influenza virus in Yangon in July-August 2017. We have offered to provide support in capacity building in disaster risk mitigation as well as in strengthening Myanmar's National Disaster Response Mechanism.

## **Culture**

12. India and Myanmar share close cultural ties and a sense of deep kinship, given India's Buddhist heritage. Building on this shared heritage, India is undertaking some key initiatives in the restoration of the Ananda Temple in Bagan and the repair and conservation of a large number of damaged pagodas. The 'Samvad-II' Interfaith dialogue was held on August 6-7, 2017, Yangon. The event was graced by Shri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and MOS Home Shri Kiren Rijju. Performances by cultural troupes are organized on a regular basis and are particularly popular in Mandalay and Mawlmyine, apart from Yangon. Myanmar troupes and artistes have participated in South Asian and ASEAN cultural events in India. Work on restoring and renovating two historic temples in Bodh Gaya built by Myanmar rulers King Mindon and King Baygyidaw have also been completed.

## **Indian Diaspora**

13. The origin of the Indian community in Myanmar is traced to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of British rule in Lower Burma in 1852. Yangon and Mandalay had a dominating presence of Indians in civil services, education, trade and commerce during British rule. There are varying estimates of 1.5-2.0 million people of Indian origin living and working in various parts of Myanmar. A large number of the Indian community (nearly 150,000) live in Bago (Zeyawaddy and Kuayktaga) and Tanintharyi Region and Mon State, primarily engaged in farming. The NRI community in Myanmar mainly lives in Yangon and Mandalay, engaged in export-import business or as employees of MNCs based in India, Singapore and Thailand. The expats number between 8-10,000.

## **Bilateral Cooperation in Regional/ Sub-regional context**

14. Myanmar's membership of ASEAN, BIMSTEC and Mekong Ganga Cooperation has introduced a regional/sub-regional dimension to bilateral relations and imparted added significance in the context of our "Act East" policy. Myanmar has generally been supportive of India's stand in various international organisations. For our part, we have supported Myanmar's association with SAARC as an observer, a status Myanmar formally acquired in 2008.

## **Useful resources**

Embassy of India, Yangon

Webpage: <https://embassyofindiayangon.gov.in/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/indianmyanmar>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInMyanmar/>

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