

India - Myanmar Relations

India shares a long land border of over 1600 Km with Myanmar as well as a maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. Four north-eastern states viz. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram share boundary with Myanmar. These geo-strategic realities encompass our broader interests in the Indian Ocean region. Both countries share a heritage of religious, linguistic and ethnic ties. Further, 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 India's 'Look East' and now 'Act East' Policy. Business opportunities that emerge from a surging economy in Myanmar also provide new vistas for engagement.

Building on our civilizational relationship, since the 1990s India adopted a policy of working on improved Government-to-Government relations. The landslide victory by Aung San Suu Kyi-led National League for Democracy (**NLD**) in November 2015 general elections and the formation of NLD government has provided opportunities to strengthen the engagement building on our previous efforts.

Various institutional mechanisms have infused dynamism to the bilateral ties. The first meeting of the India-Myanmar Joint Consultative Commission (**JCC**) co-chaired by EAM and Myanmar FM U Wunna Maung Lwin was held (July 16, 2015, N. Delhi). Development cooperation, security, trade & commerce, consular, defence and cultural matters were among issues discussed. Secretary-level meetings include Foreign Office Consultations at the level of Foreign Secretary/Dy Foreign Minister.

The 16th Foreign Office Consultations were held (May 25, 2017) between Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar and Myanmar MOS for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin when issues pertaining to boundary, security & border management, connectivity, trade & investment, Indian Line of Credit, among other issues were reviewed. The 21th National Level Meeting (NLM) at Home Secretary/ Dy. Home Minister-level was held on 5-6 July 2017, Nay Pyi Taw. Joint Secretary-level meetings include Sectoral Level Meetings (SLM) led by MHA (22nd SLM; 19-20 Dec 2016, Mandalay) and Regional Border Committee Meetings (RBCs) (10th RBC; 9-11 May 2017, Kalay). The first Joint Boundary Working Group led by Joint Secretary, MEA met on January 6-7, 2016 in Nay Pyi Taw. Commercial issues are discussed in Joint Trade Committee (JTC) held at Commerce Minister-level (on 27 June 2017, N. Delhi). JWG on Border Trade and Border Haats, Railways and Shipping are held to discuss connectivity-related issues.

High-level Visits

Regular high-level visits have further strengthened bilateral relationship. After the visit of PM Rajiv Gandhi in 1987, high-level visits resumed, including by Sr. Gen. Than Shwe (2004, 2010), President Abdul Kalam (2006), Vice Sr. Gen. Maung Aye (2008), Vice President Ansari (2009) and President U Thein Sein (Oct 2011, Dec 2012). Then PM Dr. Manmohan Singh's State Visit to Myanmar took place (May 2012) after 25 years, apart from Agreements and MOUs, a USD 500 million Line of

Credit was signed with then President U Thein Sein. Currently, India's commitment to Myanmar's development stands at over US\$ 1.726 billion, which is more than the assistance offered by other countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the 12th ASEAN-India Summit and 9th East Asia Summit (Nov 11-13, 2014, Nay Pyi Taw). During the visit, PM called on then President U Thein Sein, met Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (**DASSK**) and interacted with over 300 members of the PIO community. EAM Sushma Swaraj attended 4th East Asia Summit FMM and 21st ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting (August 08-10, 2014, NPT) and visited on August 11, 2014. In a demonstration of India's support to the peace process NSA (October 15, 2015) attended the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement ceremony as signatory witness.

DASSK-led NLD Government was sworn-in on 30 March 2016 giving India an opportunity to step up the engagement. MOS (I/C) for Commerce & Industry Nirmala Sitharaman visited Yangon leading the first high-level foreign business delegation on May 18-20, 2016 and addressed the Business Conclave. NSA visited Myanmar as Special Envoy of Prime Minister on 16 June 2016 and met President U Htin Kyaw (**PHK**) and DASSK. MOS Shri V.K. Singh met State Counsellor DASSK on the sidelines of 14th India-ASEAN FMM (26 July 2016, Vientiane, Laos). EAM visited Nay Pyi Taw on 22 August 2016 and had warm interactions with State Counsellor and PHK, underlining India's support for Myanmar. PM Narendra Modi met State Counsellor DASSK on the sidelines of 14th India-ASEAN Summit and 11th East Asia Summit (8 Sept 2016, Vientiane).

Myanmar President U Htin Kyaw undertook a State Visit to India from August 27-30, 2016. During the visit President U Htin Kyaw held wide-ranging discussions with Rashtrapatiji and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Four documents were signed: MOU on Cooperation in Traditional Medicine, Renewable Energy, Construction of 69 bridges in the Tamu-Kyigone-Kalewa section and Cooperation in the Construction of Kalewa-Yagyi road section of the same Trilateral Highway. PHK was accompanied by spouse and also visited Bodh Gaya and Agra.

State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi undertook a State Visit to India on 17- 19 October 2016 after participating in the BRICS-BIMSTEC Outreach Summit 16 October, Goa, when she met Rashtrapatiji, PM and EAM. 3 MOUs on Power, Insurance and Banking supervision were signed. India assured support for creation of livelihoods, upgradation of skills, reconstruction of roads, power, education facilities and health infrastructure for Myanmar people.

Defence & Security Cooperation has strengthened over the years. Exchange of high-level visits, signing of MoU on Border Cooperation, training, Army, Air Force and Naval Staff Talks are important indicators in this direction. CNS Admiral Sunil Lamba (1-4 Nov 2016) and COAS Gen. Bipin Rawat (27-31 May 2017) visited Myanmar and held wide-ranging discussions on enhancing the scope and depth of defence relations. In July 2017, Sr Gen Min Aung Hliang, C-in-C

Myanmar Defense Services visited India, in what was his second visit in as many years, giving an opportunity to further cement defence ties. Myanmar side has provided assurances at the highest levels that it will cooperate with India in taking necessary action in preventing the use of Myanmar territory for anti-India activity.

Commercial Cooperation: A bilateral Trade Agreement was signed in 1970. Bilateral trade has been growing steadily to reach US\$2178.44 million (2016-17), of which Indian exports amounted to US\$1111.19 million and Indian's imports to US\$1067.25 million. India is the fifth largest trading partner of Myanmar but trade remains below potential. Agriculture sector dominates trade, particularly supply of beans & pulses to India (\$ 809million, 2016-17) and timber (\$ 156 million). India's exports to Myanmar include sugar (\$ 424 million), pharmaceuticals (\$ 184 million), etc. Border trade via Moreh and Zawkhatar reached to \$ 87.89 million; Indian exports being \$ 24.44 million and Indian imports being \$ 63.46 million.

India is presently the tenth largest investor with an approved investment of US\$ 740.64 million by 25 Indian companies (as of 30Jun 2017). Most India's investments have been in oil & gas sector. 100% FDI is allowed in select sectors. Indian companies have evinced interest in investing in Myanmar and major contracts have been won by Indian companies.

Besides normal trade, both sides have also taken steps to bolster trade across the land border. Cooperation in the banking sector is crucial for investment and trade. United Bank of India signed banking agreements with banks of Myanmar (MFTB, MICB, MEB, and 9 private banks) to facilitate bilateral trade. United Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, EXIM bank and State Bank of India have representative offices in Yangon. In March 2016, State Bank of India was awarded a Commercial Banking License and commenced operations from 3 October 2016.

Myanmar is an important partner in our energy relations with other countries. MOS for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan visited Myanmar from 20-24 Feb 2017 during which both sides discussed opportunities for cooperation in varied areas.

Development Cooperation: We have extended development assistance on generous terms. We are committed to provide grant-in-aid assistance amounting to almost Rs 4000 crore (of total commitment of approx. US\$ 1726 million). These include support for 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; supply of Bailey bridges; assistance for border area development in 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, Advance Centre for Agricultural Research and Education, Myanmar-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre, Myanmar-India Centre for English Language Training, India-Myanmar Industrial Training Centres, assistance in public health by supporting upgradation of Yangon Children's Hospital, Sittwe General Hospital etc.

Disaster Relief: India has responded promptly and effectively to assist Myanmar in humanitarian relief operations following natural calamities like Cyclone Mora (2017), Komen (2015), Cyclone Nargis in 2008, and earthquake in Shan State in 2010. We provided immediate relief material through INS Gharial: clothing, tents, rehabilitation supplies medical assistance, among others. During Cyclone Komen, biomass gasifiers, solar torches & lanterns, replaced 16 damaged transformers and a grant of USD 200,000 to repair the Shwedagon Pagoda complex in Yangon were provided. We gave assistance of USD 1 million for relief, reconstruction work in the quake affected Shan State, of which 250,000 was cash grant and the remainder for reconstruction of 1 high school and 6 primary schools. US\$200,000 cash was donated for Rakhine State rehabilitation. India provided US\$ 1 million to Myanmar in Rakhine State which was used to construct 10 schools. 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: 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: Restoration of the Ananda Temple in Bagan and GOI donation of a 16 foot replica of the Sarnath Buddha Statue which has been installed at the premises of Shwedagon pagoda in Yangon. The 'Samvad-II' Interfaith dialogue was held on 6-7 August 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 Rejju. ICCR and Sitagu International Buddhist Academy organised an International Conference on Buddhist Cultural Heritage from 15-17 December 2012. Performances by cultural troupes have been organized on a regular basis. Myanmar troupes and artistes have participated in South Asian and ASEAN cultural events in India. We have responded to Myanmar's interest in restoring and renovating two historic temples in Bodh Gaya built by Myanmar rulers King Mindon and King Baygyidaw. These temples and inscriptions will now be restored with the assistance of the Archaeological Survey of India as a bilateral friendship project.

Indian Diaspora: The origin of the Indian community in Myanmar is traced to the mid-19th century with the advent of the British rule in Lower Burma in 1852. The two cities Yangon and Mandalay had a dominating presence of Indians in civil services, education, trade and commerce during the British rule. There are varying estt. of 1.5-2.5 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 7000 strong NRI community in Myanmar mainly lives in Yangon and Mandalay, engaged in export-import business or employees of MNCs based in India, Singapore and Thailand.

Bilateral Cooperation in Regional/ Sub-regional context: 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 to various international organisations. For our part, we have supported Myanmar's association with SAARC as an observer; Myanmar formally acquired such status in 2008.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Yangon

Webpage: <http://www.indiaembassyyangon.net/>

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

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

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMqs19NkUis>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYUhjikhek>

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