Ministry of External Affairs

17th ASEAN-India Summit

Annual Report | 2020-21

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The Covid-19 pandemic delivered a major shock to the international system in 2020-21. Society as a whole and governments across the world were forced to cope with unprecedented disruption. The spreading virus caused different parts of the world to lock down and impose restrictions on movement. This in turn led to major economic trauma including loss of livelihoods and the most severe contraction of output in decades. The human cost of the pandemic has been substantial. More than 2 million lives were lost. A whole way of life stood threatened.

The Ministry of External Affairs, during this very difficult period, has focused on coping with the outcome of the pandemic and in taking the lead in responding to it. The response was at multiple levels and along multiple directions of effort. A Covid-19 cell was immediately created and senior officers deployed on Covid related duties. A Control Room manned 24x7 was set up to deal with emergency requests from stranded Indians and to disseminate information. It has received more than 110,000 emails and 33,000 telephone calls. The Ministry played a key role in the procurement operations to strengthen the capacities of the medical system to respond to the pandemic. Testing kits, ventilators, PPEs and masks and also appropriate technologies were sourced on a worldwide basis.

The evacuation of more than 110,000 foreign nationals from different parts of India to 123 countries was facilitated. A large-scale coordinated effort, the Vande Bharat Mission, involving Indian Missions and Posts abroad and all concerned organisations in India was launched. More than 3 million Indians have returned to India under this mission. Returns took place by air, by sea and by land.

India also acted as a responsible international citizen during the crisis by providing Covid-related medical supplies to over 154 countries. These included medications such as Hydroxychloroquine and Paracetamol. These supplies were transported in spite of lockdowns and logistical challenges. Indian Rapid Response Teams were also deployed in Comoros, Kuwait, Maldives and Mauritius to assist in pandemic response. India provided vaccines to Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Mauritius, Mexico, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, the UAE, Brazil, Morocco, Bahrain, Oman, Egypt, Algeria, Kuwait and South Africa. The supplies have been made under grant assistance as well as on a commercial basis.

The Ministry adapted with speed and scale to the challenges imposed to diplomatic communication and interaction imposed by the disruptions to travel. Corona-era diplomacy using virtual tools was rapidly activated. Multilateral, plurilateral and bilateral meetings have taken place at all levels using virtual platforms and voice communications. The Prime Minister participated in several virtual multilateral and plurilateral summit level meetings including G20, SAARC, UN General Assembly, BRICS Summit, the Vaccine Summit, SCO Summit, and the ASEAN-India Summit.
Prime Minister conducted at least 70 tele-conversations and virtual meetings with leaders around the world. Virtual Summit meetings were also initiated and Prime Minister participated in summits with Australia, Bangladesh, Denmark, EUI, Italy, Luxembourg, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

External Affairs Minister (EAM) conducted at least 113 tele-conversations and meetings with his counterparts and leaders around the world. EAM conducted virtual Joint Commission meetings with 27 countries. He also participated in several multilateral/plurilateral Ministerial meetings. These included BRICS, SCO, RIC, G20, Afghanistan Peace Negotiations and Afghanistan Pledging Conference, IBISA, G4, SAARC, Alliance for Multilateralism, India-Central Asia Dialogue, CICA, India-GCC Dialogue, India-Nordic Baltic Conclave and East Asia Summit.

The first post-pandemic visit by EAM was to Russia, to attend the SCO Foreign Ministers Meeting. Subsequently, EAM visited Bahrain, Japan, Qatar, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and UAE.

Minister of State visited Oman and UAE. Minister of State also chaired a Joint Commission meeting with Suriname.

The first post-pandemic overseas diplomatic visit by Foreign Secretary was to Bangladesh in August 2020. This was followed by official visits to France, Germany, Myanmar, Maldives, Nepal and UK.

Incoming visits did not stop during this period. US Secretary of State and Defence Secretary visited India for a 2+2 Meeting on 26-27 October 2020. Other inbound visits included those of UK Secretary of State on 14-17 December 2020 and Nepal Foreign Minister on 14-16 January 2021.

As India began unlocking, air bubble agreements were negotiated with 24 countries that restored mobility between India and these destinations. The policy of putting Neighbourhood First remained one of the fundamental pillars of Indian diplomacy during this period. Our neighbours were prioritized in our overseas Covid assistance programmes. The SAARC Covid-19 Emergency Fund was created with India contributing USD 10 million.

A number of joint capacity building programmes such as India-Bhutan Friendship Scholarships, e-IITC programmes were launched. India sent consignments of Covid related essential medicines via sea to Maldives and airlifted another 6.2 tons of medicines under Operation Sanjeevani. India also sent Covid related medicines and medical equipment by air to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

The Prime Minister convened a meeting of SAARC leaders to identify cooperative measures for each country to mitigate the spread of the pandemic on 15 March 2020. Virtual Summits have taken place between India and Bangladesh and India and Sri Lanka. Prime Minister had telephonic conversations with Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on 1 January 2020, 10 April and 15 August 2020. EAM visited Sri Lanka and Foreign Secretary visited Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Maldives. Regular interaction using virtual platforms at the Ministerial and senior official level continued during this period.

Work on a large number of development partnership projects in multiple sectors, including connectivity projects, in the neighbourhood, went ahead. Among the major projects that were inaugurated were the Chilabath-Haldibari rail link with Bangladesh and the launch of Phase-II of RuPay Card with Bhutan. Work on connectivity projects including new Akhaura-Agartala cross-border railway link, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, hydropower projects with Bhutan, Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project continued.

Prime Minister convened a meeting of SAARC leaders on combating Covid-19 on 15 March 2020 in the broader Indian Ocean region, under PM’s broad vision of SAGAR - Security and Growth for all in the Region - relations have been augmented with partners in the region in defence and security, development partnership, training and capacity building. High level contact was sustained. Prime Minister and Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth jointly inaugurated the new Supreme Court Building in Mauritius during a video conference on 30 July 2020. The Indian Ocean region received priority in Covid assistance. HADR assistance and Covid relief was delivered through Mission Sagar in which Indian naval ships visited Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros and Madagascar. Vaccines were supplied to Seychelles and Mauritius.

India’s Act East policy focuses on its relations with the East and South-East Asian region. High-level contacts were sustained and enhanced. The Prime Minister held telephonic conversations and virtual meetings with 9 countries in the region. Summit level meetings were held with Vietnam and Australia. EAM held meetings with counterparts in Mongolia, Philippines, South Korea and Vietnam. He attended a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the United States, Japan, Australia and India in Tokyo on 04 October 2020.

India continued to intensify its engagement with various Indo-Pacific frameworks including ASEAN, East Asia Summit (EAS), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Melong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

Outreach to India’s partners in the Middle East and Gulf region was also maintained and sustained. Prime Minister held virtual meetings with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and UAE. EAM conducted virtual calls with counterparts from UAE and Oman and a Joint Commission Meeting with UAE. The first port of call in EAM’s first visit overseas during the pandemic was Tehran in September 2020. Subsequently, he visited UAE and Bahrain in November 2020 and Qatar in December 2020. Minister of State visited Oman and UAE in December 2020 and January 2021, respectively.

This region houses a large concentration of the Indian diaspora. It was a major focus of Vande Bharat missions and of community welfare activities by Missions and Posts in the region. Close contact was maintained with the governments of this region on the issue of the capacities of the Indian diaspora and their welfare. 4 Air Bubble arrangements with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and UAE were negotiated to facilitate movements during the region.

Contact was maintained with partners in Africa. The Prime Minister conducted virtual meetings with counterparts in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. EAM conducted a virtual call with Nigeria and a Joint Commission Meeting with Angola. India further expanded its diplomatic footprint in Africa and the opening of new resident missions in Sao Tome Principe, Sierra Leone and Togo has been approved.

Development partnership activities continued. 13 Lines of Credit (LoC) of about USD 1.36 billion were extended to various countries in 2020 and 6 LoC Projects were completed in 2020-21. India currently deploys USD 31.6 billion in 308 LoCs. Development Partnership Administration played a key role in managing India’s HADR and Covid relief operations during the pandemic. In-person ITEC courses remained largely suspended during this period. A number of ITEC programme were however continued by means of online e-ITEC courses on public health, health care delivery and Covid-19 management strategies.

India has been involved in cultural and heritage conservation projects in various partner countries. Restoration of the My Son Temple complex in Vietnam, Ta Prohm and Preah Vihear...
India's ties with the United States were strengthened during this period by regular contact at the highest levels. Former President Donald Trump visited India on 24 February 2020 and attended the Namaste Trump event in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Subsequently, Prime Minister spoke to the then President Donald Trump on several occasions and to incoming President Joe Biden. Former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defence Mark T. Esper visited India for the annual 2+2 meetings in October 2020. Defence and security ties were enhanced. Business ties were deepened by a number of major investments by US technology majors in India. People-to-people contact continued. An Air Bubble was established and operated.

India maintained its Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership with Russia. Political understanding, strong defence cooperation, space partnership and energy ties are major pillars of the relationship with Russia.

Europe and the European Union are major partners. New dimensions were added to the relationship by the Virtual Summit between India and the European Union, India and Denmark, India and Italy and India and Luxembourg. India and Denmark entered into a Green Strategic Partnership following their Summit on 28 September 2020.

India’s engagement with China is complex. The two sides have agreed to work towards disengagement and to allow differences on any issue to become disputes. Further, the two sides also agreed that pending final settlement of the boundary question, maintenance of peace and tranquility in the border areas is an essential basis for the overall development of the bilateral relationship. However, since April-May 2020 the Chinese side undertook several attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Western Sector, which seriously disturbed the peace and tranquility along the LAC in the Western Sector and impacted the development of the relationship. While Indian Armed Forces responded appropriately to such attempts, both sides also agreed to resolve the issues through peaceful dialogue. Consequently, discussions have continued with the Chinese side to achieve complete disengagement from all friction points and full restoration of peace and tranquility in the India-China Border Areas at an early date.

The year saw further strengthening of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Strategic Partnership. Japan is the only country with whom India has Annual Summits and 2+2 Ministerial Meeting. The two sides maintained the momentum of their ties through virtual meetings and phone calls despite Covid-19 related disruptions. EAM visited Tokyo for the 13th India-Japan Foreign Ministers’ Strategic Dialogue on 7 October 2020.

The following pages provide further details on the key developments in India’s foreign relations during 2020-21.

India engaged actively in pluri-lateral initiatives throughout this period. It chaired the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and hosted a SCO Virtual Summit on 10 November 2020. The Prime Minister attended a virtual BRICS Summit on 17 November 2020 and EAM attended the BRICS Virtual Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on 04 September 2020. EAM travelled to Moscow to attend the Russia-India-China (RIC) Foreign Ministers meeting on 10 September 2020.

India joined the United Nations Security Council for a non-permanent tenure on 1 January 2021. It will chair the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Taliban Sanctions Committee and the Libya Sanctions Committee. India is committed to Reformed Multilateralism which takes into account human-centric globalisation and the current global realities.

India has a substantial forthcoming multilateral calendar. India is currently an elected member of the Security Council and Chair of the UN 1612 Group. It will also chair the G20 in 2023. Logistical and substantive preparations to manage these responsibilities are underway.

The 3rd General Assembly of the International Solar Alliance, held in October 2020 in a customised virtual format, saw the participation of 53 member countries. The First Governing Council meeting and the first Executive Committee meeting of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure was held in March and June 2020, respectively.

Strategic outreach to foreign media and influencers and to larger global audiences using traditional channels of communication and outreach and social media continued. Engagement with think tanks and academic institutions in the public diplomacy space was intensified. The flagship conferences of the Ministry, the India-Russia Dialogue, the Global Technology Summit and the Asian Economic Dialogue have adapted to the new realities by switching to the virtual mode.

The Ministry has continued to improve the delivery of public and consular services through e-Sanad and Madad Platform. On 30 December 2020, the Ministry also launched the Global Pravasi Rishita Portal and app in order to connect with Indian Diaspora across the world.

The 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was held in virtual mode on 9 January, 2021.

Digital platforms are also being integrated into the Ministry’s functioning. The Ministry was able to adapt to the requirements of increasing volume of virtual diplomacy. The Economic and Financial Division of the Ministry set up a website www.indibiz.gov.in on 16 December 2020.

Bangladesh

In 2020-21 Bangladesh relations made further progress with both countries maintaining close contact, including at the highest political levels Prime Minister and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held a Bangladesh-India Virtual Summit on 17 December 2020.

During the Summit, the Chiladhat-Haldighati Rail link was inaugurated. Several agreements were signed in various sectors such as agriculture, hydrocarbons exploration, and development partnership. The Bangladesh-India Bajpip Energy Expo was held during the Summit.

India has committed financial support of Rs. 4500 crores for the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) of Bhutan. Around 600 big and small projects in the areas of infrastructure development, roads and bridges, industries, agriculture, e-governance, community development projects like rural health, education, basic health units, etc., have been identified by the two sides and are at various stages of implementation.

India’s NEIGHBOURS

Afghanistan

India-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership witnessed further strengthening in 2020-21 despite the challenge posed by the Covid pandemic. The momentum of high-level bilateral engagements was maintained, including in the areas of political, defence, security, trade and investment, connectivity, development partnership, social and cultural cooperation, education, and capacity building.

EAM attended the inaugural session of the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha, virtually, on 12 September 2020. EAM later attended the 2020 Afghanistan Conference held in Geneva on 24 November 2020 via virtual platform.

India and Afghanistan have reached an agreement to build the Shattotl Dam, which would provide safe drinking water to 2 million residents of Kabul city. India had earlier built the 202km Phol-e-Khumri high-voltage transmission line that provided electricity to Kabul city. India has also launched Phase IV of the High Impact Community Development Projects programme in Afghanistan, which includes more than 100 projects worth USD 80 million.

Bilateral trade between India and Afghanistan has crossed the USD 1.5 billion mark in 2020-21.

India extended Covid-19 related assistance to Afghanistan including more than 20 MT of life-saving medicines and humanitarian assistance of 75,000 MT of wheat through Chabahar Port to strengthen the food security situation. 500,000 doses of Covishield vaccine were sent to Afghanistan in February 2021 as grant assistance.

India conducted capacity-building programmes for the members of Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) in 2020.

Bangladesh

In 2020-21 India-Bangladesh relations made further progress with both countries maintaining close contact, including at the highest political levels Prime Minister and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held a Bangladesh-India Virtual Summit on 17 December 2020.

During the Summit, the Chiladhat-Haldighati Rail link was inaugurated. Several agreements were signed in various sectors such as agriculture, hydrocarbons exploration, and development partnership. The Bangladesh-India Bajpip Energy Expo was held during the Summit.

India has committed financial support of Rs. 4500 crores for the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) of Bangladesh. Around 600 big and small projects in the areas of infrastructure development, roads and bridges, industries, agriculture, e-governance, community development projects like rural health, education, basic health units, etc., have been identified by the two sides and are at various stages of implementation.

150,000 doses of Covishield vaccine were sent to Bangladesh in January 2021 as grant assistance.

Bhutan

The multi-dimensional relationship between India and Bhutan was further strengthened during 2020-21. Traditional as well as new areas of cooperation such as health, culture, agriculture, science, tertiary education, and digital and financial connectivity, demonstrated sustained growth.

On 16 April 2020, Prime Minister spoke with the Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering. Both leaders had earlier interacted virtually during the SAARC leaders conference on Covid-19 in March 2020. Prime Minister and Bhutan launched Phase-II of the RuPay Card during a virtual ceremony on 20 November 2020.

The Concession Agreement for the 600 MW Kholongchu (Joint Venture) Hydro Electric Project was signed on 29 June 2020. Both Governments continue to maintain close coordination to expedite the implementation of two other projects – 1200 MW Punatsangchhu-I and 1020 MW Punatsangchhu-II.

India has committed financial support of Rs. 4500 crores for the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) of Bhutan. Around 600 big and small projects in the areas of infrastructure development, roads and bridges, industries, agriculture, e-governance, community development projects like rural health, education, basic health units, etc., have been identified by the two sides and are at various stages of implementation.

The year 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the Bangladesh Liberation War and of the establishment of bilateral diplomatic ties between India and Bangladesh.

Bhutan is now India’s largest trade partner in South Asia and India is the second largest trade partner of Bangladesh. Close to 30% of India’s total development partnership outlays are committed to Bangladesh. India has extended concessional credits amounting to almost USD 10 billion to Bangladesh. These include three of its largest bilateral Lines of Credit.

India has provided three tranches of Covid related assistance to Bangladesh. Over 2 million doses of Covishield vaccine were sent to Bangladesh in January 2021 as grant assistance.

Maldives

Robust cooperation between India and Maldives was maintained
India’s multi-faceted and timely assistance to Maldives helped it to cope with Covid-19’s health and economic impact. Indian Air Force airlifted 6.2 tons of medicines from various Indian cities through Operation Sarva Shriram in April 2020. In May 2020, the Indian Navy’s INS Kesari supplied 580 tons of food aid under Mission Sagar. 150,000 doses of Covishield vaccines were sent to Maldives in January 2021 as grant assistance.

Both countries made significant progress on various ongoing bilateral projects under Lines of Credit and grants. Bilateral cooperation expanded to include new avenues. Work commenced on 9 High Impact Community Development Projects. President Solih inaugurated the Ekuveni synthetic track project funded by an MVR 8 million Indian grant in January 2021. India provided a Dornier aircraft to the Maldives in September 2020, which will be operated by the Maldives National Defence Forces.

India created South Asia’s first air travel bubble with Maldives in August 2020. India became the largest source for tourists in Maldives in a pandemic-hit 2020. A direct ferry service between both countries was launched in September 2020.

India’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy and Maldives’ India First policy operated in tandem for mutual benefit.

Myanmar

Myanmar is India’s land gateway to ASEAN and a vital component of India’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ and ‘Act East’ policies.

A series of high-level visits have helped in sustaining the momentum in bilateral ties. The President of Myanmar visited India from 26-29 February 2020. Foreign Secretary and Chief of Army Staff Soliwon and Sujat Rajpurohit visited New Delhi on 4-5 October 2020. Foreign Office Consultations between the two countries took place in October 2020 via virtual platform.

India’s development assistance to Myanmar exceeds USD 1.8 billion with grants-in-aid project constituting the largest component. More than 100 projects have been implemented, till date under the India-Army Development Programme. India is working tri laterally with Japan to provide soft infrastructure for schools, public buildings and road constructions by Japan. India has also invested in a series of skill development and capacity building initiatives in Myanmar.

India has extended Covid related assistance to Myanmar including medicines and equipment. 1.5 million doses of Covishield vaccine were sent to Myanmar in January 2021 as grant assistance.

In accordance with our vision of SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region - India handed over a Kilo-class submarine, INS Sindhuvir, to Myanmar Navy in October 2020. This is the Myanmar Navy’s first submarine. An Implementing Arrangement on Hydrography was signed between the two countries in December 2020.

Nepal

In consonance with India’s Neighbourhood First Policy, there has been continued momentum in bilateral ties with Nepal, with a focus on promoting greater connectivity, on infrastructure development and on capacity building.

Prime Ministers of India and Nepal exchanged views on jointly combating the Covid-19 pandemic at the video-conference of SAARC leaders held on 15 March 2020, and during their telephone conversation on 10 April 2020.

The engagement between India and Nepal was further strengthened with high-level visits and virtual meetings of various bilateral mechanisms. EAM and the Nepalese Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs held a telephone conversation on 20 March 2020. Foreign Secretary visited Nepal from 26 - 27 November 2020 and the Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane visited Nepal from 4 - 6 November 2020. India-Nepal Joint Working Groups on commerce, railways, power, oil and gas sector also met virtually to advance the cooperation in respective areas.

The 6th Meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Commission was co-chaired by EAM and Nepal Foreign Minister. Both sides welcomed the completion of the work on first passenger railway line between India and Nepal from Jaynagar to Kathra via Janakpur.

India remained the largest trade partner of Nepal with bilateral trade crossing USD 7 billion in 2019-20. India-assisted development projects in Nepal focussing on road and rail connectivity, infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, and capacity building achieved substantial progress during 2020-21. 18 projects were on the construction during the covid crisis. In response to a request for medical assistance from the Comoros side, a 14-member Indian Medical Assistance Team visited Comoros from 1-8 June 2020. A consignment of medicines which included Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) was also donated by India to Comoros.

Comoros

India-Comoros bilateral relationship gained further momentum. EAM had a telephone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Comoros on 25 April 2020 to express solidarity with the country during the Covid-19 crisis. In response to a request for medical assistance from the Comoros side, a 14-member Indian Medical Assistance Team visited Comoros from 1-8 June 2020. A consignment of medicines which included Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) was also donated by India to Comoros.

Madagascar

Madagascar relations further intensified in consonance with India’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) policies.

Indian Ocean Region

India’s engagement with countries in the Indian Ocean Region continued undeterred in 2020-21 despite the Covid pandemic.

Comoros

India-Comoros bilateral relationship gained further momentum. EAM had a telephone conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Comoros on 25 April 2020 to express solidarity with the country during the Covid-19 crisis. In response to a request for medical assistance from the Comoros side, a 14-member Indian Medical Assistance Team visited Comoros from 1-8 June 2020. A consignment of medicines which included Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) was also donated by India to Comoros.

Madagascar

India-Madagascar relations further intensified in 2020-21. Responding to the requests for assistance in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, India provided humanitarian and medical assistance to Madagascar including the supply of 100,000 tablets of HCQ and 44,000 tablets of Azithromycin.

Earlier, India had provided humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HAAD) to Madagascar following floods. INS Airavat visited the port of Antsiranana under ‘Operation Vanilla’ and delivered relief material on 1 February 2020 for the flood-affected northern region of Madagascar. INS Shardul also visited the port of Antsiranana from 10-14 March 2020 to deliver 600 tons of rice.

A virtual Bilateral Summit held between Prime Minister and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on 26 September 2020 reviewed progress on all major aspects of the bilateral relations. National Security Advisor visited Sri Lanka from 27-28 November for Maritime Security NSA Tri lateral Meeting in Colombo. EAM had a telephone conversation with his Sri Lankan counterpart from 5-January 2021 and met Prime Gotabaya Rajapaks, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, and Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena.

India’s relationship with Sri Lanka was strengthened in 2020-21. India was a first responder during the Covid crisis, providing around 14 tons of Covid related essential medicines, including 500,000 tablets of HCQ and a special consignment of Ayurvedic medicines. As part of Mission Sagar, medical assistance teams were deployed in Sri Lanka to help in dealing with the Covid emergency. Prime Minister had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Pravin Jugnauth on 23 May 2020 where Prime Minister Jugnauth conveyed his thanks for India’s assistance during the Covid pandemic.

Both Prime Ministers jointly launched the new Supreme Court building in Mauritius through a video-conference on 30 July 2020. The landmark project has been completed with Indian assistance under the ‘Special Economic Package’ of USD 453 million offered by India to Mauritius.

India responded promptly to the request of Mauritius for assistance in dealing with the environmental crisis due to an oil spill following a vessel MV Wakashio running aground near the Mauritius coast on 25 July 2020. India sent 30 tons of specialized technical equipment and a 10-member Coast Guard Technical Response Team to deal with the containment
The end of 2020 was marked by the 37th ASEAN, 15th East Asia Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), (ASEM), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Ayeyawady-Chao Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asia-Europe Meeting virtually addressed the inaugural session of the Bengaluru Australian Superannuation Funds. Prime Minister of Australia wide-ranging bilateral, regional and global interests.

Lao PDR, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Prime Minister the Philippines and Prime Ministers of Australia, Cambodia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia in 2020 while the Minister of State gave a keynote address to a Vietnamese think tank (VIISAS) in October 2020. Structured mechanism meetings at the EAM level were held in 2020 with Vietnam (Joint Commission Meeting: 25 August 2020 and Philippines (Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC); 6 November 2020).

2020-21 witnessed significant developments in bilateral ties with Australia with adoption of declarations and signing of 9 landmark documents including “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”. There will provide solid ground for further expansion of relations.

**South East Asia and Oceania**

India’s engagement with Southeast Asian countries and Oceania takes place under the framework of the Act East Policy. Key elements of Act East Policy continued to gain momentum in 2020-21 with growing economic cooperation, cultural ties and development of strategic relationships with countries in the region through continuous engagement at bilateral, regional, and multilateral levels.

India’s relationships with Australia, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam are grounded in shared democratic ethics, increasingly aligned geostategic views, shared aspirations for common good, strong people-to-people links and complementary economies.

The first-ever Virtual Summit at Prime Minister-level was held with Australia on 4 June 2020. In 2020, Prime Minister had tele-conversations with Presidents of Indonesia and the Philippines and Prime Ministers of Australia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Prime Minister exchanged views with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc on 21 Dec 2020 at a virtual bilateral summit on wide-ranging bilateral, regional and global interests.

Virtual Global Investor Round-table 2020, presided over by Prime Minister on 5 November 2020 saw participation of Australian Superannuation Funds. Prime Minister of Australia virtually addressed the inaugural session of the Bengaluru Tech Summit on 19 November 2020 which was inaugurated by Prime Minister. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was re-elected as the Prime Minister of New Zealand. Ms. Priyanka Radhakrishnan became New Zealand’s first Minister of Indian origin and was appointed as the Minister for the Community, Youth and Volunteer Sector.

Minister Radhakrishnan participated in the 5th Youth Pravasi Bhartiya Divas on 8 January 2021. Vice-President of Vietnam visited India in February 2020. Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn, both sisters of the King of Thailand visited India in February 2020. EAM had tele-conferences and dialogue with the Ministers of Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia in 2020 while the Minister of State gave a keynote address to a Vietnamese think tank (VIAS) in October 2020. Structured mechanism meetings at the EAM level were held in 2020 with Vietnam (Joint Commission Meeting: 25 August 2020 and Philippines (Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC); 6 November 2020).

2020-21 witnessed significant developments in bilateral ties with Australia with adoption of declarations and signing of 9 landmark documents including “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership”. There will provide solid ground for further expansion of relations.

**Indo-Pacific**

During 2020-21, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, India continued to intensify its engagement with various Indo-Pacific frameworks. These include Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), East Asia Summit (EAS), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), India-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

The end of 2020 was marked by the 37th ASEAN, 15th East Asia Summit (EAS), and the 17th India-ASEAN Summit from 11-15 November 2020 hosted by Vietnam. Prime Minister co-chaired the 17th ASEAN-India Summit, along with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc. The Summit reviewed the status of the ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership. EAM attended the 15th East Asia Summit virtually. He spoke of the importance of adhering to international law, respecting territorial integrity and sovereignty, and promoting a rules-based global order.

In August 2020, India hosted the 2nd IORA Expert’s Group Meeting on Academics, Science and Technology in August 2020. Strengthening ties with the Mekong region, India sanctioned a total of 23 projects under Quick Impact Project schemes in 2020, in Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR.

**East Asia**

**China**

Over the past three decades, peace and tranquility in the border areas formed the basis for development of relations in other domains. While the year 2020 marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China, this year also witnessed heightened tensions in the Western Sector of the India-China border areas.

From April-May 2020, there had been an enhanced deployment of troops and armaments by the Chinese side in the border areas and along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Western Sector. Since mid-May the Chinese side attempted to transgress the LAC in several areas of the Western Sector of the India-China border area. These attempts were invariably met with an appropriate response from Indian Armed Forces.

Given the growing friction along the LAC, the Senior Commanders of the two sides in a meeting on 6 June 2020 agreed on a process of disengagement that involved reciprocal actions. Both sides also agreed to respect and abide by the LAC and not undertake any activity to alter the status quo. However, in violation of this the Chinese side engaged in a violent face off on 15 June 2020 at Galwan. Our brave soldiers laid down their lives and also inflicted costs including casualties on the Chinese side. EAM had a telephone conversation with State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi on 17 June 2020 and strongly conveyed India’s concerns. EAM also stressed that the Chinese side needed to take appropriate action so as to restore peace and tranquility along the LAC.

The Special Representatives of India and China on the Boundary Question also had a telephone conversation on 5 July 2020. It was agreed that both sides should work towards complete disengagement at the earliest and de-escalation in the India-China border areas so as to restore full peace and tranquility in the border areas.

EAM met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 10 September 2020 in Moscow. Both Ministers had a frank and constructive discussion on the developments in the India-China border areas and reached a five point agreement to address the ongoing issues along the LAC, ensure disengagement from all friction areas and restore peace and tranquility. During the leadership level engagements, the two sides agreed to maintain close communication at the diplomatic and military level to achieve a peaceful resolution to the situation along the LAC.

The 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) were held through video conference on 24 June 2020, 10 July 2020, 24 July 2020, 20 August 2020, 30 September 2020 and 18 December 2020 respectively. Nine rounds of meetings between the Senior Commanders were also held.

As on date, the military and diplomatic engagements to resolve the situation and restore full peace and tranquility are continuing.

**Japan**

While the Covid pandemic has caused disruptions, the two sides still maintained the momentum of their ties through virtual meetings and phone calls in 2020-21. On 21 December 2020, the 6th edition of the SAMVID dialogue was held in Tokyo in the hybrid format. Prime Minister delivered a video message while Prime Minister Suga delivered remarks in person. EAM visited Tokyo for the 13th India-Japan Foreign Ministers’ Strategic Dialogue with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi on 7 October 2020.

The two countries concluded and signed an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement or ACSA on 9 September 2020. Joint operational engagements continued in 2020 with the completion of the 4th edition of the biennial bilateral exercise JIMEX. Japan and India also participated in Phase-1 Malabar-20 with the US and Australia held in the Bay of Bengal in November 2020.

13 Vande Bharat flights carried around 2665 Indians and 10 charter flights carried around 436 Indians from Japan to India. From India, 13 Vande Bharat flights carried 1286 Indians to Japan.

**Republic of Korea**

While the Covid pandemic has caused disruptions, regular bilateral engagements have continued to push forward cooperation. On 20 August 2020, the India-Republic of Korea Consultations on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation were held virtually. As part of Vande Bharat Mission, 242 Indians were repatriated to India and the travel of 234 Indians was facilitated. In addition, around 1350 Indians traveled between India and RoK by charter flights.

**Democratic People’s Republic of Korea**

The Government of India extended medical assistance worth about USD 1 million to DPR Korea in the form of anti-Tuberculosis medicines.
Mongolia

2020 marked the 65th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations between the two countries. Regular bilateral exchanges have continued to build on existing ties. On 30 August 2020, the Election Commission of Mongolia signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation in the field of Elections.

GULF AND WEST ASIA

Gulf

There was robust cooperation between Gulf countries and India during the Covid-19 pandemic in consonance with India’s “Think West” Policy. Prime Minister participated virtually in the 15th G-20 Summit under the Presidency of Saudi Arabia in November 2020. The Prime Minister also held telephonic communications with his counterparts in the region during 2020-21.

EAM visited UAE and Bahrain in November 2020 and Qatar in December 2020. The annual India-GCC Political Dialogue was convened virtually in November 2020, wherein the Indian delegation was led by EAM. Minister of State paid an official visit to Oman in December 2020 and to UAE in January 2021. India welcomed the decision of UAE and Bahrain to normalize relations with Israel.

The leadership of Gulf countries took exceptional care of Indians in their respective countries and facilitated an orderly return of Indian nationals. India ensured that the supply chains of essential items to these countries were not disrupted despite lockdowns in India. Similarly, India also ensured that Indian doctors and medical professionals were able to travel to the Gulf to help in fighting the pandemic.

Under the Vande Bharat Mission, over 230,000 Indian nationals were repatriated from Gulf countries to various states in India. Additionally, 4 Air Bubble arrangements were agreed with Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE and Qatar.

Iran

2020 marked the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Iran.

EAM visited Iran on 9 September 2020 and held comprehensive bilateral discussions with Foreign Minister Javad Zarif on issues including bilateral trade and connectivity projects. Earlier, EAM and Foreign Minister Zarif also held a tele-conversation on 13 April 2020 and exchanged views on regional developments.

Iran’s Majlis ratified the bilateral Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAIA) in September 2020 which will strengthen bilateral commercial and trade ties. With the first ever transshipment through Chabahar, the port saw a steady increase in bulk and general cargo traffic in 2020-21, and emerged as the “connecting point” for the region to deliver humanitarian assistance during the Covid pandemic.

Despite a ban on its export, India supplied surgical masks worth USD 3 million to Iran. More than 4000 Indian nationals were repatriated from Iran via air and sea routes as part of the Vande Bharat Mission and Operation Samudra Setu respectively. India also supplied 45 MT of Malathion (95 per cent ULV) to help Iran control locusts.

EUROPE

Netherlands

India sent Covid related medical aid to Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria among others and facilitated the export of medicines to Jordan, Israel, and Egypt, manufactured by Indian Pharmaceutical companies. India sent food aid and relief materials to Lebanon in the aftermath of the August 2020 Beirut explosions and to Sudan, following devastating floods in Sudan and South Sudan in September 2020.

AFRICA

Prime Minister and EAM continued to engage with their counterparts in the region in 2020-21. The 1st India-Angola Joint Commission Meeting was held in September 2020, co-chaired by EAM and his counterpart from Angola. 3 MoUs on Health, Training of Diplomats and Visa facilitation were signed during the meeting. Minister of State paid an official visit to Mozambique in January 2020 and Ghana in January 2021. The 15th CI-EXIM Bank Digital Conclave in September 2020 witnessed participation from various African leaders.

Our diplomatic presence in Africa further increased in 2020 with the opening of three new Missions in Sao Tome Principe, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Diplomatic Missions in Mauritania, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, and Cape Verde are likely to be opened shortly. Chad opened its resident embassy in New Delhi in early 2020 and India is likely to open one in 2021.

17 African countries have signed agreements under India’s flagship project in tele-education and telemedicine for Africa called e-Vidya Bharati and Arogya Bharati Network Project. India continued its development partnership association with Africa by announcing various LoCs worth approximately USD 3 billion. India has provided medical assistance to 35 African nations on a grant basis in their fight against the Covid-19 pandemic by providing Covid medicines worth approximately USD 1.1 million. At least 16 African countries were provided various training programmes in India under the ITEC programme. Over 4000 Indian nationals were repatriated to India under Vande Bharat Mission, India established Air Bubble arrangements with Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Tanzania.

Eurasia

India’s traditionally close relations with countries in the Eurasian region, part of India’s extended neighbourhood, in particular with Russia, were further strengthened during 2020-21. Relations acquired greater strategic significance through mechanisms such as the India-Central Asia Dialogue, India-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) negotiations on a possible Free Trade Agreement, International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), and cooperation under the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The significance of India’s relationship with Russia and the personal rapport between Prime Minister and President Putin was evident from the number of virtual contacts even during the Covid-19 pandemic. There were 3 telephonic conversations between the two leaders on various occasions. The only outstanding Ministerial level visits between March-September 2020 were to Russia, a special and privileged strategic partner, by Defence Minister and EAM. A tri-service Indian contingent participated for the first time in the military parade in Moscow, for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War. Exports to Russia stood at USD 1.8 billion and imports at USD 3.8 billion during the year.

The relationship with other countries in the Eurasia region also progressed notably despite the continuing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. High level exchanges continued during this period with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Prime Minister and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev co-chaired the India-Uzbekistan Virtual Summit on 11 December 2020. Both leaders held in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and reaffirmed the India-Uzbekistan Strategic Partnership.

India provided humanitarian medical assistance to Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in their fight against Covid-19. India and the Eurasian countries actively assisted one another in enabling the return of their stranded nationals to their respective home countries.

Prime Minister participated in the Virtual Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group themed on “United Against Covid-19 Pandemic” under the chairmanship of the President of Tajikistan, Shavkat Aliev.

EAM participated in the virtual meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Member States of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) on 24 September 2020, chaired by the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan.

Consultations were held with Kazakhstan and Tajik officials on enhancing cooperation space and on peaceful use of space technology respectively. This year also saw the first-ever joint meeting of the respective National Coordination Committees of India and Uzbekistan to follow up on implementation of bilateral projects, co-chaired by Minister of State and Uzbekistan Deputy Prime Minister Sardor Umurzakov in August 2020.

The 2nd meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue in October 2020, and the decision to hold it annually, provide an alternative

WEST ASIA AND NORTH AFRICA

Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, high level interactions continued to maintain the momentum of our bilateral relations with countries in West Asia and North Africa (WANA) in 2020-21. During the year, relations with all the WANA countries were carried forward through telephone calls and virtual meetings. EAM had a virtual meeting with Morocco’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates Nasser Bourita. Minister of State had a meeting with Syrian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Faisal Mekdad and chaired Foreign Office Consultations with Palestine in virtual format. EAM inaugurated the 15th CI-EXIM Bank Digital Conclave in India-Africa Project Partnership virtually on 22 September 2020 in New Delhi.

A delegation from AIIMS visited Erithrea in January 2020 to explore possibilities of forging a partnership in capacity building for Eritrean medical practitioners. A Cooperation Agreement between the Supreme Court of India and the Supreme Council of Judicial Power of Morocco was signed in July 2020.

Minister of State announced that India will contribute another USD 10 million over the coming two years in support of Palestinian refugees during the Extraordinary Virtual Ministerial Pledging Conference for United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) on 23 June 2020.
EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

European Union

The year 2020 has been a milestone for India-EU relations. Both sides committed to augmenting their ties in the context of the global pandemic and a continuously evolving geopolitical landscape. India continued to accord high diplomatic priority to the EU amidst the changing structural contours of a post-Brexit Europe. Over the years, multi-hierarchied institutional architecture has underpinned the basis for bilateral cooperation which has been established with the Summit at the apex level. The first India-EU Summit was held in Lisbon in 2000 which marked a watershed in the development of the relationship. Since then, 15 annual bilateral summits have taken place between India and the EU. The relationship was upgraded to a ‘Strategic Partnership’ during the 5th India-EU Summit held at The Hague in 2004.

On 15 July 2020, Prime Minister held the 15th India-EU Summit, virtually, along with European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen. The Summit provided a new strategic roadmap upto 2025 to comprehensively upgrade the relationship, including establishing new dialogue mechanisms on bilateral trade and investment and maritime security.

The EU remains one of the top trade and investment partners of India. The India-EU-27 total bilateral trade in goods from January to July 2020 was USD 40.09 billion and trade in services was USD 33.15 billion. At 17.31% of the total FDI flows to India (USD 470 billion), the EU is the largest source of FDI. FDI flows from the EU-27 from April 2000 to March 2020 totaled USD 81.35 billion.

Central Europe

Politically, India’s relations with Central European countries are free from any major bilateral irritants. Bilateral relations with several Central European countries are rooted in cultural ties. Many countries support India at international and multilateral fora including India’s permanent membership to the UNSC. Over the years, political stability in the region and a strongly growing economic profile have led to deepening of relations with India and opening of new vistas of cooperation. Within the EU, Central European countries have a strong voice and constitute groupings like the Visegrád Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) which is a robust force within the EU. During 2020-21, high-level bilateral engagements with Central European countries remained active. Prime Minister and Denmark Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen co-chaired the 1st India-Denmark Virtual Summit on 28 September 2020. India and Denmark agreed to form a Green Strategic Partnership, the first of its kind, to foster cooperation in addressing bilateral and global challenges on climate change.

During 2020-21, Prime Minister held virtual consultations and telephonic conversations with his counterparts from Austria, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia, Romania, Greece, Czech Republic, Estonia, and Lithuania and had in-depth discussions on issues of mutual interest. The 1st India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave was organized jointly by the Ministry and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on 5 November 2020. EAM was the keynote speaker at the inaugural session which also saw Ministerial level participation from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, and Latvia. India provided support to Central European countries during the Covid-19 pandemic with respect to the supply of medical assistance and evacuation of foreign nationals, which was appreciated by the leadership of these countries.

Western Europe

In 2020-21, India’s relations with West European countries and EU included sustained interactions at the highest levels despite limitations posed by Covid. In addition to the India-EU Virtual Summit, Prime Minister also participated in Virtual Summits during the Covid pandemic period with Italy and Luxembourg. Exchanges were also held at multiple political and official levels on cooperation on Covid and post-Covid recovery, strategies on vaccines, diversification of supply chains and cooperation in new emerging areas such as green technology, AI, the digital domain, and renewables. India has stressed the need to conclude Migration Mobility Partnerships (MMPAs) with several countries, including UK, Portugal, Italy, Germany, and the Benelux group to facilitate the legal movement of people. A MMPA with France is awaiting French ratification.

At the invitation of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Prime Minister participated in the Climate Ambition Summit co-hosted by the UK on 12 December 2020. Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the UK Dominic Raab visited India from 14-17 December 2020 and held discussions with EAM.

THE AMERICAS

The United States of America

The India-US relationship was elevated to a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership during the State visit of former President Donald Trump to India in February 2020. The 3rd Annual 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue held in New Delhi on 27 October 2020 enabled a comprehensive review of the bilateral ties from the strategic perspective and provided political direction to advancing these further. 5 MoUs, Agreements, including the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement, were signed during this occasion.

To respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, India and the US stepped up bilateral collaboration particularly in the field of health, medical research, therapeutics, and vaccine development. India and the US have witnessed a sustained increase in their bilateral trade over the last few years. The US is India’s largest trading partner (goods and services combined). In 2019, bilateral trade increased by 4.3% to reach USD 148.8 billion. In 2020, bilateral trade in goods reached USD 26.55 billion during April-August 2020.

Several important consultations were conducted during the year, including the India-US Strategic Energy Partnership Ministerial Meeting, India-US CEO Forum, India-US Counter Terrorism Joint Working Group, India-US Cyber Security Dialogue, India-US Information and Communication Technology Working Group meeting and consultations on the United Nations Security Council. The inaugural meeting between the India Defence Innovation Organization (DIO-IDEX) and US Defence Innovation Unit as well as the India-US Defence Trade Initiative were held in 2020.

Former President Trump conferred the highest US decoration, the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, to Prime Minister on 21 December 2020 in recognition of the exemplary contribution made by the Prime Minister for the advancement of the India-United States strategic partnership.

On 17 November 2020, Prime Minister and the then President-elect Joseph Biden agreed to work closely to further advance the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership. They discussed key priority areas, including containing the Covid-19 pandemic, promoting access to affordable vaccines, tackling climate change, and fostering cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Canada

The Prime Minister spoke to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau twice on the telephone in 2020.

On 8 October 2020, the Prime Minister delivered an inaugural address at the virtual Invest India 2020 Conference organised by Fairfax Financial Holdings Ltd.


India and Canada have been working to deepen their trade and commerce relations. Bilateral trade was worth USD 2.17 billion from 01 April to 31 August 2020. India’s exports to Canada during the year were USD 2.09 billion and imports from Canada were USD 2.10 billion. Canadian Pension Funds have pledged to invest over USD 50 billion in India. India and Canada are discussing the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA). A virtual meeting on CEPA, and BIPPA between India and Canada was held on 22 June 2020 and on 27 October 2020.

Commerce and Industry Minister spoke with Canadian Minister for Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade Mary Ng on several occasions and discussed issues pertaining to the enhancement of global supply chains and pharmaceuticals products availability, GI-20 cooperation and bilateral trade.

India is enhancing its engagement with Canada in the field of education. India has now become the top source of foreign students with 230,000 Indian students studying in Canada. Canada is one of the 28 countries covered under the Scheme for promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SOPAC), an initiative aiming to improve research ecosystems in India’s higher education institutions. So far, 19 projects under ‘Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration’ and 106 under ‘Global Initiative of Academic Networks’ have been awarded to Canadian faculties.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

India continued its engagement with all 33 countries of Latin America and Caribbean in 2020-21, despite the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The region remained an important area of focus for our foreign policy, especially with the steady growth in bilateral trade which increased five-fold in the last five years to reach approximately USD 38 billion. The global restrictions resulting from the pandemic were used as an opportunity to increase engagement,
and thereby demonstrate our continued commitment to the region.

Just two months after his highly successful visit as Chief Guest for India’s Republic Day, President Bolsonaro of Brazil and Prime Minister had a telephone conversation on the global situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020. EAM held telephonic conversations with 23 of his counterparts in the region. The First Joint Commission Meeting between India and Chile chaired by EAM and his counterpart was held on 16 October 2020.

Several key MoUs/Agreements were signed with LAC countries. These included cooperation in the field of lithium exploration and exploitation with Argentina and deepening trade and investment ties with Mexico.

As a mark of solidarity, and in line with our role as the “Pharmacy of the World”, India sent medical aid packages consisting of hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines, and medical equipment to 27 countries in the LAC region.

More than 3,000 Indian nationals stranded in the region were repatriated. Indian Missions worked with local authorities, other embassies, and aviation companies to find different ways to fly out Indians under stringent travel restrictions. Citizens from LAC countries were also helped in their journey back home and the Ministry facilitated the evacuation flights of LAC countries including those of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia.

**BIMSTEC, SAARC & NALANDA**

India played a pioneering role in combating the Covid-19 pandemic through active engagement in the SAARC context. At the initiative of the Prime Minister, a video conference of South Asian Leaders was held on 15 March 2020. India pledged a voluntary contribution of USD 10 million to the SAARC Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund. India hosted a video conference of health professionals from all SAARC countries on 26 March 2020. In April, India hosted a video conference of trade officials of SAARC countries to discuss the implications of Covid-19 on intra-regional trade. Additionally, India launched a Covid-19 Information Exchange Platform ‘COINEX’ in May 2020.

Nalanda University has made steady progress both in terms of physical infrastructure as well as academic programmes. The University was awarded the 5 Star Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment, Large Development (GRIHA LD-5 Star) by the GRIHA Council on 9 October 2020 for a Net Zero Energy Campus. The University also bagged CSR award in Excellence in Education for its innovative academic architecture.

In 2020 saw the finalisation of the draft BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity at the 3rd BIMSTEC Working Group Meeting on Transport Connectivity which was chaired by India in a virtual format on 8 December 2020.

**COUNTER-TERRORISM**

The issue of countering terrorism found prominent mention in various bilateral and multilateral meetings at all levels during the year. During all such interactions, India strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reiterated its commitment to combating the menace of terrorism at the regional and global level. During the year, despite limitations imposed by Covid-19 pandemic, India continued to hold structured consultations virtually through the mechanism of regular and structured interactions.

**POLICY PLANNING AND RESEARCH**

The Policy Planning and Research Division is the nodal division of the Ministry for policy planning and public diplomacy initiatives with the strategic and academic community. It also conducts bilateral and multilateral policy dialogues. Virtual dialogues were held with Australia, Denmark, Germany, Israel, Poland, Turkey, Vietnam, UK, the EU and BRICS. The division continued to provide policy analyses and reports on a number of issues. A number of Track 1.5 / 2 Dialogues with Canada, EU, Japan, South Korea and the US were facilitated. Regular and structured interactions were held with think tanks and academic institutions. Several joint activities were undertaken with universities and research bodies. Flagship conferences organized by the Ministry are adapting to the post-Covid realities by adopting virtual and hybrid platforms. The Global Technology Summit was held in December 2020 via virtual platform. The Raisina Dialogue, Asian Economic Dialogue and Indian Ocean Conference are scheduled to be held later in 2021.

**INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS (ICWA)**

The ICWA continued to accord high priority to research and study of political, economic and security developments in Asia, Africa, Europe, the United States, the Indo-Pacific Region, and the wider global geostrategic environment. The conclusions were disseminated in the form of Issue Briefs, Viewpoints, and Special Reports, which were published on the ICWA website. Further, ICWA continued the process of translating its academic output in Hindi which has been regularly posted on its website. In addition, since April 2020, the Council has published books and Sapru House Papers. In line with its mandate ICWA conducted a large number of events, lectures, conferences and outreach activities.

**RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SYSTEM FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (RIS)**

The Research and Information System for Developing Countries is an autonomous policy research institute that specializes in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. It fosters effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. The primary focus is on promoting South-South Cooperation and collaborating with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. Through its intensive network of think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas.

In 2020-21, RIS organized a number of policy dialogues focused on the Covid-19 pandemic. These included, among others, (a) Prospects and Perspectives on India-Vietnam S&T Cooperation; (b) BIMSTEC in the post-Covid Era; (c) Indonesia’s Covid-19 Exit plan and Potential for Bilateral and Regional Cooperation; (d) Expanding South-South Cooperation in the interdependent world; (e) Strengthening Cooperation Initiatives between India and Côte d’Ivoire; (f) STI for SDGs; (g) Multilateral Response to Covid-19 from South Asia – Need for South Asian Cooperation for Accelerating Recovery from Covid-19. The 5th Meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT), bringing together the think tanks of BIMSTEC countries, was also organised.

**NEW, EMERGING AND STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES**

Set up in January 2020, the New Emerging and Strategic Technologies (NEST) Division engages in new technology diplomacy and also deals with the foreign policy and international legal aspects of such discussions in global forums. NEST Division is the coordinating point for positions taken by India in negotiations regarding technology governance rules, standards, and architecture in the multilateral or plurilateral context, including at the UN and relevant international organizations. The Division is mandated to build interfaces with key partner countries and international organizations in this context. It is assessing demand-driven requirements of new emerging and strategic technologies in India in collaboration with line Ministries, and facilitating, like synergies, the interfaces’ partner interfaces for their acquisition, strengthening, in particular, the role of Indian Missions in this process.

**CYBER DIPLOMACY, E-GOVERNANCE & IT**

India signed a Framework with Australia on cyber and cyber-enabled critical technology cooperation along with a Five-Year Plan of Action to promote an open, free, and secure internet in adherence with international law and to provide an enabling environment to deliver increased prosperity to the two nations. The Five Year Plan of Action under the Framework is being implemented. This inter-alia includes the formation of Joint Working Groups (JWG) on ICT and Cyber Security, creation of “Australia India Strategic Research Fund” to prioritize research focused on innovation in the digital economy, promoting stronger cyber forensic and investigation capabilities, and collaboration on research into the practical applications of Quantum Computing, Artificial Intelligence, etc. India signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Defence for Cyber Security with Japan and conducted cyber dialogues with Germany, the EU, and the US.

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**CYBER DIPLOMACY, E-GOVERNANCE & IT**

India signed a Framework with Australia on cyber and cyber-enabled critical technology cooperation along with a Five-Year Plan of Action to promote an open, free, and secure internet in adherence with international law and to provide an enabling environment to deliver increased prosperity to the two nations. The Five Year Plan of Action under the Framework is being implemented. This inter-alia includes the formation of Joint Working Groups (JWG) on ICT and Cyber Security, creation of “Australia India Strategic Research Fund” to prioritize research focused on innovation in the digital economy, promoting stronger cyber forensic and investigation capabilities, and collaboration on research into the practical applications of Quantum Computing, Artificial Intelligence, etc. India signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Defence for Cyber Security with Japan and conducted cyber dialogues with Germany, the EU, and the US.
India has also been participating and deliberating on cyber-related issues in various regional and multilateral settings, including UNODC’s 6th session of the International Expert Group virtual meeting on cybercrime, ASEAN Regional Forum meeting on cyber issues, 5thAEO MINISTERIAL Conference on Cybersecurity, 6thmeeting of the BRICS Working Group on Security, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization Expert group meeting on International Information Security, among others.

UNUNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

India continued its high-level engagement with the United Nations in line with the central role that the institution plays in the world. India was persistent in its efforts to move the process of UN Security Council reforms forward.

On 21 September 2020, the Prime Minister addressed the High-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. Addressing the General Assembly virtually in the General Debate on 26 September 2020, Prime Minister called for urgent reform of the United Nations and for inclusion of India’s voice in its decision-making structures.

India participated in a Special Session of the UN General Assembly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic which was held on 3-4 December 2020.

In the election for the non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, India secured 184 votes out of the 192 votes cast. India took up its non-permanent seat at the Security Council from 1 January 2021. This is India’s eighth tenure in the Security Council. India will chair the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee, the Taliban Sanctions Committee and the Libya Sanctions Committee.

A Performance Monitoring Dashboard for the Ministry was developed. It focuses on target areas capturing all major schemes, programmes and initiatives of the Ministry across five clusters: Diaspora Engagement, Development partnership, International engagement, Trade & Commerce & Citizen services. Vande Bharat Mission Portal was launched in May 2020 to facilitate the travel of Indian nationals back home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Prime Minister participated in the virtual Climate Adaptation Summit on 25 January 2021 organised by the Government of Netherlands and Global Commission for Adaptation (GCA). India is one of the co-conveners of GCA.

The 206th Session of Governing Council of Inter-Parliamentary Union was held virtually from 1-4 November 2020. India was elected as a Member of the Commission on Status of Women in elections held in September. India, Afghanistan, and China contested for two seats in the Asia-Pacific Group with India and Afghanistan emerging as winners. India was also elected to the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and Commission on Population and Development.

India presented an Approach Paper on WHO reforms to the newly formed Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response in December 2020.

India continued to be the largest cumulative contributor of UN Peacekeeping troops, having provided around 2,53,000 since the 1950s. As of 31 October 2020, India is the fifth-largest contributor with 5,953 personnel deployed in 8 peacekeeping missions. India made deployments of medical personnel to Goma (DRC) and Juba (South Sudan).

MULTILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS

At multilateral forums, India reaffirmed its focus on ensuring that the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic is human-centered, inclusive, and sustainable. Prime Minister participated in the 15th G20 Summit virtually and in the Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders’ Summit. EAM represented India at the G20 Foreign Ministers’ Extraordinary Meeting, where he proposed the development of voluntary ‘G20 Principles on Coordinated Cross-Border Movement of People’ with standardization of testing and quarantine procedures and movement and transit protocols.

The Prime Minister also participated in the virtual 12th BRICS Summit convened by Russia. At the BRICS Virtual Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, EAM highlighted the various steps undertaken by India in the wake of the pandemic, such as the launching of the Aarogya Setu Citizen App, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package and India’s supply of drugs and healthcare products to nearly 85 nations.

EAM chaired the IBSA Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in September 2020, wherein the Ministers adopted and released the IBSA Joint Ministerial Statement on the Reform of UN Security Council as a common endeavour of Global South.

ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY

The Economic Diplomacy Division, as part of its efforts to give a focused direction to the economic diplomacy dimension of the country’s foreign policy, undertook a number of initiatives during 2020-21.

The Third General Assembly of the International Solar Alliance was held on 14 October 2020 on a customized virtual platform. The first Governing Council meeting of Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) was held on 20 March 2020 in New Delhi. At present, 22 members, consisting of 18 national governments and 4 multilateral organizations have joined CDRI.


India has signed and ratified social security agreements with a total of 19 countries till date.

India has Air bubbles operational so far with 24 countries viz., Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Canada, UAE, Bahrain, Nigeria, Japan, Kenya, Ukraine, Oman, Iraq, France, Germany, Tanzania, Rwanda, Netherlands, USA, UK, Ethiopia, Kuwait, Nepal and Qatar. Air bubbles to Sri Lanka, Australia, Singapore, Russia, Israel, New Zealand, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, and Thailand are being pursued.

India is in the process of concluding its old-generation investment treaties and actively engaged with over 30 countries in negotiating bilateral investment treaties based on the new model treaty of 2015. The Permanent Court of Arbitration has been conducting the PCA-India Conferences and workshops under the ambit of the Host Country agreement.

To enable our Missions and Posts abroad to effectively respond to the growing demands of Indian industry and business a website on Economic Diplomacy has been launched. A section of the website is dedicated to the Resources Platform which would provide detailed information on World Resource Endowments and Opportunities. A specific effort towards boosting Agri exports is being undertaken.

A number of Industrial Outreach and Investment Promotion and Publicity events were organised. These include the India-Canada Agri-Tech Virtual Summit; 15th CII Exim Bank Digital Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership over virtual platform; World Solar Technology Summit on a virtual platform; India Myanmar Virtual Business Meet 2020; India Thailand Digital Conference & Virtual Business Meet on Pharma and Healthcare Sectors, Auto and Auto Components; Digital Conference on Doing Business with Bangladesh; the 1st Indo ASEAN Oceanic Business Summit & Expo; Global Ayurveda Summit 2020; Agrafood Day 2020; a virtual summit on India-Philippines Bilateral Economic and Trade Relationship; Virtual Global Investor Roundtable. As part of the AastmaNirbhartaBharat initiative, the Ministry has been working in collaboration with Missions to chalk out a detailed strategy to increase exports of India’s goods and services in other countries.

STATES DIVISION

This Ministry facilitated external economic engagement of States through the network of Indian Missions and Posts abroad and Branch Secretariats/Regional Passport Offices in India. Several events were organized such as the 3rd edition of Deccan Dialogue on 16 November 2020 to facilitate diplomatic outreach of States and promote economic diplomacy dialogue at the state level, using State Facilitation and Knowledge Support Funds.

In a major initiative, a special programme was launched for the first time, to train senior officers from States on the modalities of international engagement. A policy decision was taken to launch a new North East Dialogue this year. Linking with state and UT governments through regular interactions with their Resident Commissioners continued. Several MoUs between state governments and cities with their foreign counterparts to establish sister-state and city partnerships were facilitated by the Division.

DISARMAMENT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

Amidst an evolving global landscape on disarmament, non-proliferation and international security affairs, India was engaged in and active in relevant multilateral forums and with partner countries based on its national security interests and traditionally valued role.

In 2020, India’s traditional resolution titled “Measures to Prevent Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons of Mass Destruction”, was
and organizations; ratified 15 agreements and processed full international levels to facilitate multilateral dialogue on current developments in Science and Technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts.

In 2020-21, India continued to contribute to deliberations in the international arena on disarmament and international security matters in pursuance of its commitment to the goals of universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament, general disarmament and global peace and security.

**SUMMITS & CONFERENCE DIVISION**

Conference Division provides all logistical arrangements to various Divisions of the Ministry in organizing meetings, events, seminars, conferences including international & multilateral involvement of Foreign Ministers, delegates in India and abroad. In view of the specific nature of organizing events involving protocol, the security of delegates and the highest degree of precision, Conference Division has empaneled 8 Event Management Companies (EMCs). Selection of EMC for the event is done as per requirements of the concerned division of the Ministry.

**DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

Inspired by the spirit of ‘VasudhaivaKutumbakam’, India’s international development cooperation continued to expand during the year in its geographical reach as well as in the areas of cooperation.

A key aspect of India’s development assistance in the past few years has been the extension of Lines of Credit to other developing countries. 13 new LoCs of about USD 1.9 billion were extended to various countries, and 6 LoC Projects were completed in 2020-21.

Major developmental projects identified by the host governments as priority areas are currently under implementation in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Maldive. These include projects in infrastructure, hydroelectricity, power transmission, agriculture, industry, education, health, archaeological conservation, etc. Beyond the neighborhood, bilateral projects have been undertaken in South East Asia, Oceania, Central Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

India responded to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic by reaching out to our developing partner countries with medical aid in the form of medicines, Covid protection gear, pharmaceutical products, and medical expertise. During the year, India provided Covid-related medical support such as drugs, testing kits, and Covid protection gear to 82 countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. It is noteworthy that the entire delivery of aid was conducted at the height of the global lockdown when supply and logistic chains were severely disrupted.

During 2020-21, in-person ITEC courses remained largely suspended due to the global outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown. The Ministry organised the successful repatriation of nearly 1200 ITEC trainees stranded at various training institutions in India at the time of the imposition of lockdown on 24 March 2020. Subsequently, the ITEC programme was continued through online e-ITEC courses which focused extensively on public health, healthcare delivery, and Covid-19 management strategies. A total of 20 such e-ITEC courses were organised during this period.

Cognisant of India’s identity as a civilisational and cultural powerhouse, the Ministry created a dedicated division for heritage conservation in January 2020 within the Development Partnership Administration (DPA). Restoration of the My Son Temple complex in Vietnam, Ta Prohm and Preah Vihear temples in Cambodia and Wat Phou Temple in Laos are some of the key ongoing projects being implemented by the Division.

**LEGAL AND TREATIES DIVISION**

The Legal and Treaties Division is responsible for handling all legal and treaty-related matters in respect of the Ministry. During 2020-21, India signed 120 agreements with 52 countries, and organizations; ratified 55 agreements and processed full powers for 10 undertakings. (See Annexure-I)

India participated at the Sixth Committee (Legal) of the United Nations General Assembly. Working Groups constituted under the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, EnricaLexie case (Italy and India), Seventh meeting of the Experts’ Group on the Parentage/Surrogacy Project and various treaty negotiations.

**CONSULAR, PASSPORT AND VISA SERVICES**

Over 373,732 documents have been successfully processed through e-Sanad since its launch in 2017. 5439 documents have been attested/apostilled online and 337,224 attestations and 330.70 apostille services have been rendered in offline mode till September 2020. On the MAAD Portal, as of October 2020, 69,000 grievances have been registered, out of which 61,000 grievances have been resolved. During this year, visa exemption agreements for holders of diplomatic and/or official passports were signed with Grenada and Marshall Islands.

**OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS**

Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) proved critical in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic in extending assistance to distressed and stranded Indians abroad. As of 31 December 2020, around Rs 33.5 crores were utilized to extend assistance to more than 156,000 Indians.

5 new Pre-Departure Orientation Training centres under Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKFY) for Migrant workers were set up in 2020 at Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Tirunamal, Amritsar, and Jalandhar, in addition to 23 existing centres.

In January 2021, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed with Japan to facilitate mobility of Indian skilled workers, under the scheme of the “Specialized Skilled Worker” visa category.

**EXTERNAL PUBLICITY**

External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division continued with its efforts to effectively articulate India’s position on key foreign policy issues in accordance with its mandate. Simultaneously, pro-active efforts to project the ‘India Story’ and other notable achievements of the country to an international audience continued apace. While the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic presented their own set of challenges, with the creative use of virtual platforms, the Ministry was able to maintain the momentum of its activities during the year. Due press coverage was given to over 13 virtual summits at the Prime Ministerial level, to over 34 ministerial meetings at the level of EAM, and 7 visits by EAM until January 2021. A training module on social media for all Heads of Missions and Posts in October 2020 was organized.

The Ministry’s web portal www.mea.gov.in, that regularly communicates India’s foreign policy positions, witnessed more than 4.8 million hits since its launch in 2012. The Ministry’s digital outreach on social media platforms saw robust growth. It has a total of 3.6 million followers on Twitter with @MEAIndia having 2.1 million followers and @IntlDiplomacy having 1.5 million followers, adding approximately 200,000 followers since last year. @MEAIndia is now the third most followed handle among all Foreign Offices across the world. The Ministry’s YouTube channels saw a combined view count of over 27 million across both channels - an increase of more than 27% over last year. With a growth of 31% over last year, the Ministry now has a followership of approximately 523,000 followers. Its popularity is increasing among the young, with content specially curated for that segment of the population.

Leveraging the power of digital diplomacy during the pandemic, the Ministry has ensured that Indian community outreach, outreach with our interlocutors, and promotion of India’s soft power continues uninterrupted even in challenging conditions.

During the year, the Ministry’s in-house think tank on migration research, India Centre for Migration prepared two special reports on the impact of Covid-19 on international migration from India and on the flow of returnee migrants. ICM has also developed two handbooks on law enforcement agencies and women workers from India.

The 16th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) convention was held virtually on 9 January 2021. The Prime Minister inaugurated the 16th PBD Convention 2021. The theme for this year’s Convention was “Contributing to Aatma Nirbhar Bharat”.

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PROTOCOL

The Ministry of External Affairs has adopted a comprehensive scheme for the promotion of Hindi abroad. This includes the implementation of the Official Language Policy of the Government of India.

ADMINISTRATION, ESTABLISHMENT, AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION

In April 2020, the Ministry published the 9th edition of ‘Financial Powers of Government of India’s representatives abroad’—also known as the Red Book. The Ministry has undertaken reorganisation of Divisions and their portfolios to account for new developments and functional priorities, such as - creation of the Oceania Division, setting up of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADRR) procurement cell under DPA-IV, bifurcation of Economic Diplomacy & States Division into two separate entities. In pursuance of the Cabinet approval in March 2018 for opening up of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) complexes.

Establishment Division

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Establishment Division worked on sanitisation of office buildings as well as residential complexes. Preventive measures to contain the spread of Covid were adopted in all workplaces. To maintain social distancing, there has been an increased demand for video conferencing for conducting meetings, and steps were taken to upgrade infrastructure to facilitate smooth video conferencing. In continuation of its activities under the Swachh Bharat Mission, the Ministry organised ‘Swachhta Pkhwada’ as well as Shramdan in all its various offices in India and in Missions/Posts abroad.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

From April to October 2020, a total of 1570 RTI applications and 183 First Appeals seeking information under the RTI Act 2005 have been received and have been disposed of satisfactorily. During the pandemic, in keeping with instructions of the Department of Personnel & Training (DOP&T) on Suo Moto disclosure, uploading of RTI applications/appeals/satisfactorily. During the period from April 2020-July 2021, 33 Virtual Summits at the level of Prime Minister were organized. In addition, 6 incoming visits at the level of Vice President and Foreign Minister/Deputy Foreign Minister were handled during the period. 533 requests for airport passes, lounges (ceremonial and reserved) and exemption from frisking were facilitated.

IMPLEMENTATION OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGE POLICY AND PROPAGATION OF HINDI ABROAD

The Ministry has a comprehensive scheme for the promotion and propagation of Hindi abroad for the implementation of the Official Language Policy of the Government of India. World Hindi Conference and Regional Hindi Conferences take place regularly. World Hindi Day on 10 January and Hindi Divas on 14 September are celebrated every year. Ministry has instituted Atal Bhashantar Yojana (ABY) for training language experts towards creating a pool of specialized interpreters.

SUSHMA SWARAJ INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN SERVICE

Foreign Service Institute (FSI) was renamed as Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) in honour of former External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj on 14 February 2020 on her birth anniversary. In 2020-21, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Institute has started a blended learning approach to conduct training programmes both online and on-campus sessions. The hybrid methodology of physical-cum-digital training has proved beneficial for the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Officer Trainees (OTS) of the 2019 batch and a new system of assessment as per the prescribed mandate was introduced by the SSIFS for the IFS OTs 2019 batch. For the first time in September 2020, a fully online training programme was organized for diplomats from Suriname. In October-November 2020, the 1st Sushma Swaraj lectures on ‘Introduction to India’ were conducted for newly arrived resident foreign diplomats. For the first time, two fully online training programmes were organized for diplomats from Suriname on Protocol in September and on Commercial & Economic Diplomacy in December 2020.

INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS

During the pandemic, ICCR facilitated online classes through Universities and Institutes to more than 900 newly admitted students to avoid loss of their academic year. During the period from 1 April to 31 October 2020, ICCR had 57 operational Chairs across the globe. It facilitated the celebration of the 6th International day of Yoga -2020 in 147 Countries through streaming recorded performances at festivals abroad such as in India Global Week –London, The Great India Festival (TGIF) – Ottawa, Sarang-2020 – The 6th Annual Festival of India in the Republic of Korea and sponsored sitar group for ‘India en Concierto festival – Spain.

PARLIAMENT AND COORDINATION DIVISION

The responsibility of the Parliament & Coordination Division broadly consists of Parliamentary work; coordination within and outside the Ministry; admission of foreign students in Indian educational institutions and monitoring as well as review of MoUs signed by the Union of India with foreign countries. During January-December 2020, in light of the Covid pandemic, the Coordination Division issued new guidelines to make clearances for virtual conferences easier.
India and Afghanistan are connected by centuries of historical, people to people and cultural relations. The guiding spirit of the India – Afghanistan relationship is the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), signed in October 2011. The SPA provides for India’s assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan’s infrastructure and institutions, education and technical assistance to rebuild indigenous Afghan capacity in different areas; encouraging investment in Afghanistan’s natural resources; providing duty-free access to the Indian market for Afghanistan’s exports; Political support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, Afghan-controlled and inclusive process of peace and reconciliation; and, advocating the need for a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire in Afghanistan. EAM highlighted India’s role as a major development partner of Afghanistan with over 400 projects completed in all the 34 provinces.

Development Cooperation

As an important stakeholder, India is working with the people of Afghanistan and the world community for a peaceful, prosperous, sovereign, democratic and united Afghanistan. India has a development cooperation portfolio of more than USD 3 billion for Afghanistan. It is centred around five pillars: (a) large infrastructure projects; (b) human resource development and capacity building; (c) humanitarian assistance; (d) High Impact Community Development Projects; and (e) enhancing trade and investment through air and land connectivity.

The on-going bilateral defence cooperation continued in 2020-21. India conducted capacity building programmes for members of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF). Various scholarship programmes including Special Scholarship scheme for Afghan Nationals and online short term capacity building courses continued during 2020-21.

Economic Cooperation and Connectivity

Bilateral trade between India and Afghanistan crossed the USD 1.5 billion mark in 2019-20. India’s exports to Afghanistan almost touched USD 1 billion (USD 997.58 million) and India’s imports from Afghanistan stood at USD 530 million. The growth in trade value has consistently improved over the last five years. Indian exports to Afghanistan have witnessed a growth of over 89% between 2015-16 and 2019-20. Similarly, India’s imports also grew by 72% during the same period. In 2019-20, the exports in value terms increased by 39% and imports over 21% compared to 2018-19.

In April 2020, world-wide spread of Covid-19 disrupted normal trade and merchandise transport. Overall Indian exports to Afghanistan lagged behind by 12% during April-September 2020 (as compared with April-September 2019). However, with the start of normalization of the economy and markets, trade figures have started to improve. Afghan exports to India in September 2020 registered over 27% growth (as compared with September 2019).

Since its inauguration in 2017, the Air Freight corridor has facilitated Afghan exports to India. During January-October 2020, the Air Freight corridor handled over 38,000 tons of cargo with 72% growth over 2019. The corridor is an important route for Afghan exports to India.

The portal, ‘India’s Neighbours’ is being prepared biennially. The 7th edition has been released in 2021.
Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the closest partners and important neighbours of India. Relations between the two countries are multi-faceted. Over the decades, relations have transcended the strategic partnership.

2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the Bangladesh Liberation War and also the establishment of bilateral diplomatic ties between India and Bangladesh. India’s close association with the Bangladesh Liberation War makes the bilateral relations unique.

Politcal Relations

Both countries maintain close contact, including at the highest levels. Prime Ministers of both countries have met 8 times in the past 5 years, which included 4 bilateral visits and 4 meetings on the sidelines of international summits. Since April 2020, both Prime Ministers have spoken to each other twice on phone (29 April and 25 May). Prime Minister, at the request of Prime Minister of Bangladesh, had delivered a video message on the occasion of “Mujib Barsho” on March 17, 2020.

2020, 157 cargo flights carried 3505 MT of dried fruits, fresh fruits, medicinal herbs, saffron, asafetida, and spices valued at over USD 85 million. Saffron and Hing are high value products and are mainly routed through Air-corridor. Similarly, Chabahar port witnessed shipping of 4500 MT of Afghan products including dry fruits and fresh fruits to India valued at around USD 11 million.

Connectivity

Both sides are making concerted efforts to enhance transport and connectivity with each other, with the North Eastern Region through Bangladesh. The focus has been on railway, road, coastal as well as riverine connectivity.

At present, five out of the six pre-1965 rail links have been restored, namely, Petrapole (West Bengal)-Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (West Bengal)-Darshana (Bangladesh), Radhikapur (West Bengal)-Biral (Bangladesh) and Singhbad (West Bengal)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh) and the latest one - the Chilahati (Bangladesh) – Haldibari (West Bengal) link. Work is underway on the Shushubar (Bangladesh) – Mahishashun (Assam) link. In addition, when trade via land came to a halt in the wake of Covid, parcel and container train services were introduced in July 2020 to ensure supply of essential commodities. The work on the new Akhaura (Bangladesh)–Agartala (Tripura) cross-border railway link has continued to progress.

Some of the recent initiatives between India and Bangladesh to increase connectivity are the following:

(I) The second addendum to the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade was signed in May 2020, which has increased the number of river routes to a total of 10, and connected Tripura to the Indian National Waterways. The trial run on the new route (Sonamura-Daulkandi) was successfully completed in September 2020, where it was received by the Tripura Chief Minister. This was the first ever export from Bangladesh to Tripura through inland waterways.

(II) EAM, the Minister of Railway & Minister of Commerce and Industry handed over 10 broad gauge locomotives to their Bangladesh counterparts in July 2020. These locomotive gauges will help in enhancing rail connectivity between India and Bangladesh. The locomotives will also augment Bangladesh’s capacity to receive cargo from India and movement of passenger and freight trains within Bangladesh.

There are regular interactions between the Foreign Ministers of both countries. As well, 6 rounds of Foreign Minister-level Joint Consultative Commission (JCC) meetings have taken place in 2020-21. The last round was held virtually on 29 September 2020. Foreign Secretary undertook two visits to Dhaka in March and August 2020. In addition, regular interactions and visits at the Senior Official-level have continued between different Ministries on both sides.

The most recent high-level interaction between both Prime Ministers was the India-Bangladesh Virtual Summit on 17 December 2020. Prime Minister is expected to visit Dhaka in March 2021 for the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of establishment of the diplomatic relations, the golden jubilee of Bangladesh Liberation War, and the Mujib Barsho celebrations of Bangladesh.

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The Government of India also provides grant assistance to Bangladesh for projects under ‘Aid to Bangladesh’. Major infrastructure and socio-economic projects include the 12 km Jalata-Akhauna rail link, dredging of inland waterways and the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline (for supply of high-speed diesel from Siliguri to Parbatipur). Several High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) in the areas of education, health, water, culture, urban development, disaster management and community welfare etc. are also being implemented. These include projects such as construction of school/college buildings, laboratories, dispensaries, deep tube wells, community centres, renovation of historical monuments/buildings etc. In total, 81 HICDPs have been undertaken, of which 63 have been completed. In December 2020 Virtual Summit, both sides decided to expand the scope and quantum of projects under HICDP.

Defence Cooperation

Defence cooperation between India and Bangladesh has progressively grown. Holding of the Annual Defence Dialogue, high-level exchanges at the level of Services Chiefs and conduct of annual service specific Staff Talks have contributed to significant improvement in bilateral defence cooperation. The 7th Navy Staff Talks (October 2020), 4th Coast Guard Staff Talks (October 2020) and 3rd Annual Defence Dialogue (November 2020) were conducted. India also gifted a regiment of 120 mm mortars to the Bangladesh Armed Forces in December 2020.

There has been a steady rise in the training cooperation with Bangladesh Armed Forces, though the training/courses for 2020-21 underwent some disruption due to Covid pandemic. Amidst travel restrictions arising out of Covid-19 pandemic, important courses like Higher Defence Management Courses and courses in the Defence Services Staff College in India were conducted with revised schedules. One additional vacancy in Higher Defence Management Course was allotted in lieu of the 3rd National Defence College vacancy and two additional vacancies in the Defence Services Staff College for 2020-21. Marking the 50th anniversary of 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, where both Indian forces and Muktibahini fought together, a marching contingent of Bangladesh Armed Forces participated in the 2021 Republic Day Parade of India.

Covid Cooperation

The Government of India has provided 3 tranches of medical aid to Bangladesh. 30,000 surgical masks and 15000 head covers were given as the 1st tranche, while 50,000 gloves and 100,000 HCQ tablets, and 30,000 RT-PCR test kits were given as 2nd and 3rd tranches respectively. 6 online courses have been conducted of which one was conducted exclusively in Bengali language. In total, 352 Bangladesh professionals have been trained in these courses.

Over 2 million doses of Covishield vaccine were sent to Bangladesh in January 2021 as grant assistance. Both countries are in active discussions regarding cooperation in the field of Covid-19 vaccine, including Phase-Ill testing, vaccine production and delivery in Bangladesh. The Government of India facilitated the repatriation of more than 5500 Bangladeshi nationals from India during the lockdown period.

Security and Border Management

The 51st round of Director General-Level Talks (DGLT) between Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BBG) was held in December 2020 in Guwahati, while the 50th round of DGLT took place in September 2020 in Dhaka. Both sides have intensified coordinated patrolling after the talks, given the temporary disruptions during the Covid pandemic.

Training and Capacity Building

Training and Capacity building is an active pillar of India’s development cooperation with Bangladesh. The Government of India sponsors training courses in India for Bangladesh officials under the ITEC, TCS, ICCR, SAARC and other schemes. Since 2014, approximately 1500 Bangladesh judicial officers and 5600 civil servants have been trained at Indian institutions covering areas like administration, police, customs, narcotics detection, nuclear science etc. 20 scholarships are also provided every year to wards of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel to study in India. Approximately Rs 52 crores worth of scholarships have been provided till date.

Cultural and People to People Relations

Indian art and cultural forms are promoted through Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre (IGCC) in Dhaka. Several training courses in yoga, Kathak, Manipuri, Hindi, Hindustani music etc. are offered. The total number of visas issued has increased from 500,000 to 1.6 million a year between 2014 and 2019, making Bangladesh India’s biggest visa operations globally. Cruise services have also been approved between both sides.

High-Level Exchanges and Dialogues

The special relationship is sustained by the tradition of regular high-level exchanges and interactions between the two countries. On 16 April 2020, Prime Minister spoke on the telephone with Prime Minister Lotay Tshering. The two Prime Ministers discussed the regional situation in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic and both the leaders expressed happiness at the progress made in implementing the special arrangements agreed between the leaders of the SAARC countries. Earlier, the two leaders had interacted virtually in March 2020 during the SAARC leaders conference on Covid-19.

On 17 September 2020, the Prime Minister held telephonic conversation with Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the King of Bhutan. They discussed all aspects of bilateral relations and also explored avenues for further strengthening and expanding the multifaceted India-Bhutan ties.

Prime Minister and Prime Minister of Bhutan Lotay Tshering launched phase-II of the RuPay Card during a virtual ceremony on 20 November 2020, that will complete the interoperability of the RuPay Cards in both the countries. During the event, both the Prime Ministers welcomed recent initiatives in other areas of technological cooperation, in particular, in the space sector, signing of a framework MoU for ‘Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space’. Both leaders also underlined that the unique relations between the two countries are not only invaluable but also unparalleled examples for the world. In pursuit to the cooperation in the space sector, four Bhutanese space engineers underwent training at ISRO from December 2020 to February 2021 to work on the joint development of a small satellite for Bhutan.

In the virtual presence of EAM and Tandi Dorji, Foreign Minister of Bhutan, the Concession Agreement for 600 MW Kholongchhu (Joint Venture) Hydro Electric Project was signed between the Royal Government of Bhutan and Kholongchhu Hydro Energy Limited on 29 June 2020. On the occasion, EAM and Foreign Minister of Bhutan emphasized the significance of hydropower development as an important pillar of mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

Developmental Cooperation

India’s extensive development partnership with Bhutan is people-centric and is based on priorities and needs set by the Government of Bhutan. Government of India has committed financial support of Rs. 4500 crores for the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) of Bhutan (2018-23), comprising Rs. 2800 crores for Project Tied Assistance, Rs. 850 crores for High Impact Community Development Projects and Rs. 850 towards Program Grant. Government of India has also committed a ‘Transitional Trade Support Facility’ of Rs. 400 crores, to be provided over the 12th FYP of Bhutan. India also provided an early release of Rs. 501 crores from the Government of India committed Financial Support of Rs. 4500 crores for the 12th
FYP of Bhutan, to support Bhutan’s efforts in mitigating the impact of Covid-19.

180 new High Impact Community Development Projects worth Rs. 298 crore in various sectors such as irrigation channels, farm roads, basic health units, etc. have been identified in April and October 2020 for implementation during the 12th FYP of Bhutan. These projects are under various stages of implementation.

India is also providing technical support for the planning of a Multi-Disciplinary Super Speciality Hospital (MDDS) in Bhutan. An expert team led by HSCC Ltd. visited Bhutan in March 2020 and continued discussion with the Royal Government of Bhutan for preparation of DPR of the project.

Hydropower Cooperation
The mutually beneficial hydropower cooperation reached another milestone with the signing of the Concession Agreement for 600 MW Khogchhu Hydroelectric Project on 29 June 2020. Both governments maintained close coordination to expedite implementation of two ongoing major projects – the 1200 MW Punatsangchhu-I Hydroelectric Project and the 1000MW Punatsangchhu-II Hydroelectric Project. Government of India has also released the committed amount of Rs. 100 crores as ‘Adjustment to Mangdechhu Tariff’ which is being utilised for supplementing revenue-generating activities in Bhutan. The jointly constructed 720 MW Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project was awarded the ‘Brunel Medal for Excellence in Civil Engineering’ by the London based Institute of Civil Engineers.

Education and Capacity Building
Government of India has instituted three new India-Bhutan Friendship Scholarships for Bhutanese students who are offered admission in IIT Kanpur. In addition to this, Government of India offers various scholarship schemes, such as the Ambassador’s Scholarship, Nehru Wangchuck Scholarship, Undergraduate Scholarship under Project Tied Assistance, Nalanda University Scholarship, IICR scholarship, SAARC scholarship to Bhutanese students. AUUSH scholarship can also be availed by students from Bhutan. India is Bhutan’s main partner in the capacity building of government officials of the Royal Government of Bhutan. Under ITEC training programme, approximately 325 training slots are assigned to Bhutan out of which 279 slots were utilized in 2019-2020. During the period from April-November 2020, 86 Bhutanese nationals have availed training opportunities through e-ITEC training programmes. Customized e-ITEC training programmes are also being designed for Bhutanese finance sector professionals in the areas of SEBI policies and security market regulations as well as for judicial officers of Bhutan. Besides, a number of government officers from Bhutan are also being trained in premier government training institutes including IBSNAA, SSSSI, NACEN, and SVP-NPIA.

Trade and Economic Cooperation
India continued to be Bhutan’s largest trading partner. In 2019, the bilateral trade reached around Rs. 9647 crores. Both governments continued to engage in taking measures to facilitate trade and mutual investments. A new trade route was opened via Thongsa Tea Garden (India) and Abhyat (Bhutan). New trade points at Nagarkata, Agartala, and Pandu & Jogighopa riverine ports will also be operational shortly.

In October 2020, formal market access was granted for export of Bhutanese agri-products (apple, areca nut, ginger, mandarin, potato) to India. Similarly, Indian agri-products (okra, onion, tomato) were granted formal market access to Bhutan. The 1st Plant Quarantine office on the India-Bhutan border was opened at the Land Customs Station in Jaigaon, India to facilitate exports of agricultural products from Bhutan to India.

Cooperation during Covid-19 pandemic
In line with India-Bhutan unique and special relations, Government of India ensured continuous supply of trade and essential items to Bhutan, despite Covid-19 related lockdowns. Government of India so far has provided essential medicines and medical supplies, including Paracetamol, Hydroxychloroquine, PPEs, N95 masks, x-ray machines and test kits, etc to the Royal Government of Bhutan. India has also entered into an ‘Air Travel Arrangement’ or ‘Transport Bubblé’ agreement with Bhutan for the resumption of flights in a gradual manner with Bhutan. The flights were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. India is also collaborating with Bhutan for conducting Phase-III clinical trials of the Covid-19 vaccine candidates.

150,000 doses of Covishield vaccine were sent to Bhutan in January 2021 as grant assistance.

Maldives
India upgraded its close engagement with the Government and the people of Maldives under a mutual desire to see a peaceful, stable and prosperous Maldives. High-level meetings moved to virtual platforms due to health and travel restrictions. Regardless, the period demonstrated India’s willingness and capability to assist Maldives in any crisis as the ‘First and Best Responder’, a status acknowledged on several occasions by the President, Foreign Minister and other leaders of the Maldives.

Foreign Secretary visited the Maldives from 8-10 November 2020. This was the first high-level visit to the Maldives since the onset of the pandemic. During his visit, an agreement on USD 100 million grant support for the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP), and an MoU on Cooperation in Youth Affairs was signed. 2 MoUs on High Impact Community Development projects (HICDPs) - agriculture laboratory in Hanimadhoo and a Drug Detox facility in Addu – were also signed. Foreign Secretary also handed over 67 children’s parks (funded by an Indian grant) to be set up across islands.

Covid-19 assistance
The pandemic exerted a severe cost on the Maldivian economy, among the worst-affected in South Asia due to dependence on tourism revenues and its health sector. The elements of India’s multi-faceted and timely assistance to the Maldives to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 included:

(a) Evacuation of all 9 Maldivians from Wuhan in February 2020 during the coronavirus outbreak.
(b) Donation of 5.5 tons of essential medicines in April 2020.
(c) Airlifting of 6.2 tons of medicines by the IAF from various India cities through Operation Sanjeevani in April 2020.
(d) USD 150 million under the currency swap arrangement between RBI and MMA.
(e) Deployment of Rapid Response Medical Team to assist in Covid-19 preventive methods.
(f) Supply of 580 tons of food aid under Mission Sagar by INS Kesari in May 2020.
(g) Financial Assistance of USD 250 million through SBI subscription of T-Bonds for budget support.
(h) Strengthening of clinical research capacity for Maldivian health professionals in Oct/Nov 2020.
(i) Permissions for Maldivian patients to travel to India for urgent treatment.

Upon the request of the Government of Maldives, India has extended financial assistance of USD 250 million to the Maldives in September 2020 through investment in Maldivian T-Bonds by SBI. The assistance will shore up government finances in the Maldives at a time when revenue has crumbled by 50% due to a collapse of the tourism industry. It is the single largest financial assistance extended to the Maldives during the pandemic by any nation or institution by far.

On the request of the Government of Maldives, an air travel bubble was initiated between the two countries in late August 2020 to boost tourism flows from India to the Maldives. This was the first air travel bubble in the South Asian region. India became the largest source market for tourists in the Maldives in a pandemic-hit 2020. With 62,905 tourists, India occupied the top slot followed by Russia and Italy, in a year which saw no Chinese tourists visit the Maldives, after March 2020.

India extended the agreement to maintain supplies of 11 essential commodities including foodgrains, onions and...
construction material to the Maldives. This year the quota for export of these items is higher than any previous year.

Maldivian Airlines provided the seaplane (and crew) for the maiden flight of the seaplane service between Sabarmati and Kevadda in Gujarat inaugurated by Prime Minister. A Buyer-Seller Meet organised by FICCI was held on 15 January 2021 to map the requirements and capabilities of both sides in the seafood sector. A new focus on the Maldivian tourism, fisheries, health and real estate sectors is expected in the first quarter of 2021, given expected recoveries in both economies.

### Development Partnership

People-centric grant projects being implemented by India in Maldives were completed and inaugurated through virtual ceremonies. These include the gifting of vehicles to Male City Council, installation of streetlights in Kolhufohsi, donation of gym equipment to 61 islands, upgradation of training facilities for Maldives Police Services, etc. Work commenced on 9 ongoing High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) – 3 fish processing plants, 5 eco-tourism zones and 1 water bottling plant.

Considerable progress was made in the implementation of 9 mega infrastructure projects financed by EXIM Bank of India. LoC worth USD 1.3 billion. Tenders for 6 large infrastructure projects – roads and reclamation in Addu, Guthhafu Port, Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP), Airport Expansion in Hanimaadhoo, Cricket Stadium in Hulhumale, Water and Sewerage Networks across 34 islands – will be launched in the first quarter of 2021. At least 4 of these projects are expected to be awarded by the end of this financial year.

President Solih inaugurated the Ekuveni synthetic track project funded by an MVR 8 million Indian grant in January 2021. Several Indian grant projects are likely to be inaugurated in the first quarter of 2021.

### Human Resource Development

Maldivian officials regularly participated in e-ITEC courses in the areas of elections, health, pandemic mitigation, gender, etc. Customised training programmes (5 modules) on teachers training were organised from October 2020 onwards for more than 125 Maldivian teachers.

Customised training programmes for audit officials, customs officials and healthcare administrators are likely to be held in the first quarter of 2021.

### Defence Cooperation

Work progressed on the National College for Policing and Law Enforcement (NCPLE) – India’s single largest grant project in the Maldives at USD 33 million – despite the pandemic. The project is likely to be inaugurated in March 2021.

Work also continued on remaining works at Composite Training Centre (CTC) for the Maldives National Defence Forces (MDF), the construction of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) building and the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS).

India provided a Dornier aircraft to the Maldives in September 2020, which will be operated by the MDF. The aircraft will help in conducting EEZ surveillance, humanitarian and Search and rescue operations, under the control and command of the MNDV.

Defence Minister Mariya Didi, Chief of Defence Forces and Deputy National Security Advisor visited Myanmar in October 2020. To date, 5 Air India flights have operated and repatriated more than 800 Indian nationals from Myanmar.

The current ruling party, the National League for Democracy led by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi emerged as the winner during the general elections held in Myanmar on 8 November 2020 by securing 396 seats in the 664 member Parliament.

### Covid Cooperation

In April 2020, Prime Minister had a telephone conversation with Myanmar State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss the evolving Covid-19 scenario in the domestic and regional contexts and updated each other on the steps being taken to control the spread of the pandemic. The Prime Minister also conveyed India’s readiness to provide all possible support to Myanmar for mitigating the health and economic impact of Covid-19.

In line with its “Neighbourhood First” policy, India has extended Covid related assistance to Myanmar in two tranches. In May 2020, the first tranche consisting of 502 vials of Remdesivir was provided during the visit of Foreign Secretary and Chief of Army Staff to Myanmar in October 2020. The Prime Minister also conveyed India’s readiness to provide all possible support to Myanmar for mitigating the health and economic impact of Covid-19.

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### Development Cooperation

India’s development assistance to Myanmar is over USD 1.8 billion, with the majority of the projects being implemented under grant-in-aid.

### Connectivity Initiatives

India is undertaking major connectivity and infrastructure projects such as the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project and the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway. These initiatives, once operationalised, will enhance bilateral connectivity and trade and will bring benefits to the local communities residing on the two sides.

### Border Area Development Programme (BADP)

Both sides signed an MoU in 2012 under which India has...
India is the 5th largest trading partner of Myanmar. India’s export to Myanmar during 2019-20 was USD 973.89 million and import from Myanmar was USD 547.25 million. The major import items from Myanmar are beans and pulses, woods, metal etc. India’s export to Myanmar are pharmaceutical items, agro commodities, chemicals, iron & steel, machinery etc. There exists enormous potential for bilateral trade enhancement and a number of initiatives such as upgrading the Integrated Check Post at Tamu-Moreh, and infrastructure at Rakhine-Walidaw, negotiations on signing a coastal shipping agreement, development of Sittwe Port etc., are in various stages of implementation with the aim of increasing trade with Myanmar. Efforts are also ongoing to establish Border Haats to benefit the local communities on two sides.

Rakhine State Development Programme (RSDP)
India and Myanmar have signed an MoU on RSDP, under which, India is committed to providing USD 25 million to Myanmar over a period of five years. Under the first phase, 250 prefabricated houses have been completed and handed over to Myanmar in July 2019. The second phase of 11 projects, which includes solar projects, construction of roads and provision of water supply are being undertaken in Rakhine State. Both sides are considering the proposal of establishing a skills training centre under its third phase. Under trilateral cooperation with Japan, India is providing soft infrastructure for the schools being built by Japan in the Rakhine State.

Defence & Security Cooperation
The signing of an MoU on Defence Cooperation in 2019 has further strengthened defence ties. There has been a significant increase in the high-level visits, training cooperation, capacity building and defence exports from India to Myanmar.

Myanmar is sensitive to India’s security concerns and in May 2020, handed over 22 cadres of Indian Insurgent Groups to Indian authorities.

Cooperation in the maritime domain is an important part of India’s enhanced engagement with Myanmar and both sides have an MoU on Exchange of White Shipping.

In accordance with our vision of SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region – India handed over a Kilo-class submarine, INS Sindhuvir, to Myanmar Navy in October 2020, which is the first submarine of Myanmar Navy.

India has continued to impart training to Myanmar defence personnel in key areas such as UN Peacekeeping, naval related fields & meteorology squadrons.

The meeting of the 5th Director-General level bilateral talks between Narcotics Control Bureau, India and the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control, Myanmar was held on 10 December 2020.

Trade
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The 6th India-CLMV (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam) Business Conclave on “Building Bridges for Constructive Development” was held from 3-4 December 2020.

Energy
In recent times, engagement with Myanmar in the energy sector has expanded with Indian investments in Myanmar energy sector being over USD 1.2 billion. Discussions are ongoing to establish a petrochemical refinery at Tharliyn in Yangon Region. The meetings of the 3rd Joint Working Group and the 3rd Joint Steering Committee on India-Myanmar cooperation in the Power Sector were held virtually on 03 September 2020.

Bilateral meetings held in 2020
The Joint Working Group (JWG) meetings on Oil & Gas, Power Sector Cooperation, Trade and Shipping were held virtually this year. Secretary-level consultations on Oil & Gas and Power Sector were also held. The last round of Foreign Office Consultations was held in October 2020. The 7th Ministerial Joint Level Joint Trade Committee (JTC) was held between the countries on 24 November 2020.

Training & Capacity Building
As a development partner, India has been investing in a series of skill development and capacity building initiatives in Myanmar in the fields of agriculture research, industrial training, e-learning technology, entrepreneurship development, English language training and IT skills training.

From 01 April to 30 October 2020, 12 e-ITEC online courses were conducted by the various institutes viz. AIIMS, PGI Chandigarh, National Centre for Good Governance, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD), Institute of Liver and Bilary Sciences etc. and witnessed participation of Myanmar Government officials and officers.

In order to assist Myanmar in its compliance with FATF obligations, Indian Financial Intelligence Unit concluded training for the Myanmar Financial Intelligence Unit in the fields of IT and Finance in October 2020.

Scholarships have been offered to Myanmar students to study in various IIFs in India under the 5 year Integrated PhD Fellowships awarded for ASEAN students. Scholarships have been offered by IICR and the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra, for a diploma course in the Hindi language for Myanmar students.

An Implementing Arrangement (IA) on Hydrography was signed between the two countries in December 2020.

Culture
Due to the ongoing Covid pandemic, several events such as the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, International Yoga Day, World Music Day, Hindi Diwas, Ayurveda Day, etc. were commemorated virtually. Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, Yangon also organised events such as the digital exhibition on the occasion of the centennial death anniversary of Lokmanya Tilak (who was imprisoned in Mandalay from 1908-1914) through the virtual platform. Other events such as World Culture Day, World Music Day and Teacher’s day etc. were also celebrated virtually.

In line with our civilizational links, India is undertaking the repair and conservation of pagodas/temples damaged by the 2016 earthquake under the India-Myanmar Friendship Project. Earlier in 2018, two historic temples in Both Gaya built by Myanmar rulers, King Mindon and King Bakyidaw, were restored and renovated by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Nepal
India’s traditionally close and friendly ties with Nepal are based on special people-centric partnership and multifaceted development cooperation. The bilateral relations are characterized by regular high-level exchanges, extensive trade and economic linkages, a forward-looking development agenda and people-to-people contacts.

High-Level Exchanges
The Prime Minister exchanged views with Prime Minister of Nepal, KP Sharma Oli on jointly combating Covid-19 global pandemic at the SAARC Leaders’ Video Conferencing held on 15 March 2020. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli thanked India for its assistance of essential medicines and supplies to Nepal during a telephone call with the Prime Minister on 10 April 2020. In a special telephone call to the Prime Minister on 15 August, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli greeted the Government and People of India on the occasion of 74th Independence Day and congratulated for India’s recent election as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

EAM and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nepal Pradeep Kumar Gyawali held a telephone conversation on 20 March 2020 and discussed bilateral cooperation in the context of Covid-19 pandemic. They also exchanged views during the SAARC Foreign Ministers informal virtual meeting chaired by Nepal on 24 September 2020. Foreign Secretary visited Nepal from
Defence and Security Cooperation

India and Nepal have long-standing and extensive mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of defence and security. In addition to the supply of defence equipment and regular exchange of visits by the military leaders of both sides, the joint training exercises have also been a regular feature of the bilateral defence cooperation.

Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane visited Nepal from 4-6 November 2020. He was conferred with the Honorary Rank of General of the Nepalese Army by President of Nepal Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, in continuation of a unique tradition which symbolizes strong ties between two countries. During the visit, General Naravane called on President, Prime Minister and his Nepali counterpart General Purna Chandra Thapa. India also gifted several medical equipments like ICU ventilators, ambulances and field hospital equipment for the Nepal Army.

India also has extensive cooperation with Nepal in capacity building and for training Nepal Army which includes courses at the National Defence College (NDC) and Defence Services Staff College (DSSC).

The border guarding forces of the two countries Sashastra Seema Bal and Armed Police Force of Nepal maintained close coordination and regular virtual and physical meetings were held between both sides at various levels.

Trade and economic cooperation

India remains Nepal’s largest trade partner and major investor. India also facilitates transit for the majority of Nepal’s third-country trade. Despite the economic slowdown due to Covid-19 pandemic, the bilateral trade stood high at USD 7.87 billion in 2019-2020. India also ensured the uninterrupted flow of bilateral trade and supplies to Nepal.

The 8th meeting of Joint Steering Committee (JSC) on Cooperation in Power sector co-chaired by Power/ Energy Secretaries of India and Nepal was held through video conferencing on 11 December 2020. The Joint Working Group meeting at the level of Joint Secretaries was held on 10 December 2020 in preparation of this meeting. Both sides discussed the development of suitable rules and guidelines for allowing cross border trade of electricity, energy banking, cross border high voltage transmission lines as well as reviewed the progress of 900MW Arun-III Hydro Electric Project.

The 2nd meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Working Group on Oil and Gas cooperation was held via video conferencing on 13 August 2020. During the meeting, both sides discussed issues of mutual interest in the petroleum and energy sector, including possibilities of new pipelines for the supply of petroleum products to Nepal.

Development Partnership

Government of India focused on the expeditious implementation of ongoing bilateral connectivity, physical and social infrastructure development projects. Despite Covid restrictions, work on the ongoing connectivity and developmental projects continued and showed considerable progress. The overall progress in various projects was reviewed during the 8th meeting of the India-Nepal Oversight Mechanism on 17 August 2020, co-chaired by Ambassador of India to Nepal and Foreign Secretary of Nepal.

The 4th Meeting of the India-Nepal Joint Working Group on Railway Cooperation was held on 19 November 2020 wherein both sides agreed to operationalise the first passenger railway line between the country from Kathmandu to Birgunj via Janakpur in Nepal. In this regard, two state-of-the-art 1600 HP DEMU train sets made in India were delivered to Nepal on the export basis for the operation of passenger train services on the section. The work on Raxaul-Kathmandu broad gauge electrified railway line also progressed as both sides agreed to conduct Final Location Survey of the line for the same.

There has been substantial progress in Government of India funded cross-border infrastructure projects. The Government of India funded Terai Roads project achieved progress with the completion of 2,388 km of roads. Two sides also discussed investment promotion, the constitution of Joint Business Forum, harmonization of standards as well as synchronized development of trade infrastructure. The Inter-Governmental Sub-Committee (IGSC) on Trade, Transit and Cooperation to Control Unauthorized Trade held through video-conferencing on 7 December 2020. The meeting reviewed bilateral trade and economic issues. The two sides also discussed investment promotion, the constitution of Joint Business Forum, harmonization of standards as well as synchronized development of trade infrastructure.

India had extended USD 1 billion Nepal as part of its long-term assistance for post-earthquake reconstruction in housing, education, health and culture heritage sectors. 46,000 houses out of total 50,000 houses were completed in Gorkha and Nuwakot districts of Nepal. India is also assisting in the construction of earthquake-resilient buildings for 70 schools, 02 libraries and 147 health facilities across different districts of Nepal. India is also assisting Nepal in the restoration of 28 culture heritage sites with modern conservation techniques.

Several other large and medium level development projects are under implementation. These include the Nepal-Bharat Maitri Polytechnic institute at Hetauda and the National Police Academy project in Patan. 11 High Impact Community Development Projects in priority areas such as education, health, connectivity, sanitation and drinking water, etc. were completed and inaugurated in 2020.

Cultural and People-to-People Ties

India and Nepal have robust cooperation in the area of capacity building and human resource development. India offers about 3000 scholarships to Nepalese students every year, providing opportunities to study in Nepal and India. Under ITEC programme, professional training is offered annually to about 250 officials from Nepal at various technical institutes in India. Due to Covid-19 situation, the ITEC online courses/training workshops were conducted in 2020 with the participation of more than 100 candidates from Nepal.

Pakistan

In 2020, 22 innocent civilians have been killed and 71 innocent civilians have been injured in more than 5000 unprovoked ceasefire violations carried out by Pakistan forces. This has been the highest number of uncompromised ceasefire violations from Pakistan since 2003. The Ceasefire Understanding, including Pakistan’s unprovoked attempts by Pakistan to support cross-border terrorist infiltration in J&K, Pakistan’s abetment to cross-border terrorism, smuggling of arms and narcotics has also been uncovered along the International Boundary (IB), beyond J&K as tunnels facilitating infiltration and usage of drones to deliver weapons were detected.

On 01 January 2021, India and Pakistan exchanged, through diplomatic channels, the list of nuclear installations and facilities covered under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities. This was the 30th consecutive exchange of such a list between the two countries.

Religious Pilgrimage


Sri Lanka

India’s relations with Sri Lanka, a major maritime partner and close neighbour, were further strengthened, in keeping with the “Neighbourhood First” policy and the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine. Restrictions imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on trade and economic cooperation. India’s exports to Sri Lanka (excluding the services and invisible) was USD 1.69 billion in 2020 while the import was USD 2.05 billion in 2020.

India’s relations with Sri Lanka in 2020

As a result of persistent efforts, India has been successful in securing release of 270 fishermen including fishermen, from Pakistan’s custody since 2014. This includes 364 Indians who returned in 2019 and 30 Indians who returned in 2020. India has sought early consular access and release and repatriation of the remaining Indian nationals in Pakistan’s custody.

Government also facilitated the return of Pakistanis and Indian nationals stranded on either side of the border due to Covid-19 induced border restrictions. Since March 2020, over 1400 Indian nationals and Long-Term Visa holders (NORI visa) from Pakistan have been repatriated to India and over 1250 Pakistani nationals stranded in India were repatriated to Pakistan.
to Covid19 were overcome with innovative solutions including virtual interactions. A Virtual Bilateral Summit held between Prime Minister and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on 26 September 2020 reviewed progress in all major aspects of the bilateral relations. India continued its assistance to Sri Lanka in various spheres including Covid19 response, trade and investment, defence, development cooperation and culture, as per the requirements of Sri Lanka.

Following the Parliamentary Elections of August 2020 in Sri Lanka, Prime Minister hosted Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa who was sworn in as Prime Minister for the 4th time, for a Virtual Bilateral Summit on 26 September 2020 amidst Covid19 pandemic. Both leaders reviewed the entire range of bilateral matters and exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern. A Joint Statement titled Mitravada Magga (Path of Friendship) outlining the two Prime Ministers’ shared vision for the relationship was a significant outcome. Prime Minister announced a USD 15 million grant to Sri Lanka for promotion of Buddhist ties between the two countries.

Other high-level interactions included Prime Minister’s telephone call to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa in May 2020, EAM’s telephone call to his Sri Lankan counterpart Dinesh Gunawardena in August 2020 and the telephone call of Sri Lankan President and Prime Minister to wish Prime Minister on his birthday on 17 September 2020.


In his first overseas visit of the year, EAM visited Colombo from 5-7 January 2021 upon the invitation of his Sri Lankan counterpart Dinesh Gunawardena. During the visit, EAM met President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa and various other dignitaries including Opposition Leader Sajith Premadasa and former PM Ranil Wickremesinghe among others. He also had a business interaction with industry captains from Sri Lanka during the visit.

EAM reiterated the message that India was a reliable and dependable partner who is also keen on strengthening bilateral ties on the basis of mutual trust, mutual interest, mutual respect and mutual sensitivity. He also highlighted the positive impact of Government of India’s development projects in Sri Lanka and India’s willingness to take this engagement forward. India’s well known and consistent position on the issue of reconciliation was underlined by stressing that fulfilling expectations of the Tamil people in a united Sri Lanka was in their own interest. In this context, the need to take forward the process of broader dialogue with all parties and show concrete movement on their earlier commitments towards a meaningful devolution of powers, including the implementation of the 13th Amendment, was emphasized. The need to retain the system of Provincial councils was also highlighted. In addition, remarks by EAM at the Joint Press Conference with his Sri Lankan counterpart also alluded to Sri Lanka’s leadership role in BIMSTEC.

The 4th Meeting of the Secretary-level India-Sri Lanka Joint Working Group on Fisheries was held on 30 December 2020 through virtual mode. The Indian side was led by Secretary, Department of Fisheries, and the Sri Lankan side was led by his counterpart R.M.I. Rathnayake. Key stakeholders on both sides including Governments of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard took part in the meeting. The meeting covered the entire gamut of issues that has been on the bilateral agenda for years. Indian side emphasized that issues concerning fishermen and their livelihood had to be dealt with in a humanitarian manner in line with the past understandings.

Covid Cooperation

India and Sri Lanka joined hands to fight challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. India gifted four consignments of essential medicines/medical gloves and other items weighing over 25 tons in total to Sri Lanka. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa participated in the SAARC leaders’ Video Conference on combating Covid-19 steered by India on 15 March 2020. Sri Lanka pledged USD 5 million to the SAARC Covid Emergency fund that was decided to be set up at this Video Conference. Both India and Sri Lanka also closely coordinated in ensuring smooth repatriation of their stranded citizens from each other’s territory. Under the Vande Bharat Mission 12 flights, one ship (INS Jalashwa) and several chartered flights have repatriated around 3500 stranded Indians from Sri Lanka to India. Sri Lanka’s repatriation of several hundreds of its citizens from various Indian cities was facilitated by Indian authorities.

In January 2021, India sent 500,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine as grant assistance to Sri Lanka.

Development Cooperation

Development cooperation is one of the most important aspects of India - Sri Lanka relations. The Indian Housing project in Sri Lanka is the largest grant project of India in any country, wherein India has committed over 60,000 houses in Sri Lanka. Of this commitment, about 49,112 houses have already been completed. In addition, India undertook multiple High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) across Sri Lanka. Construction of the Jaffna Cultural Centre was completed. Several other projects such as construction of buildings for the Faculty of Kandian Dancing at Pallekele, upgradation of Saraswathy Central College in Pussellawa, constructions/ supply and delivery of equipment and vehicles at Vocational Training Center Hatton, construction of a 5000 MT Temperature Controlled Warehouse in Dambulla, renovation of 27 Schools in Northern Province and Construction of 2400 houses under Grama Shakti Housing Project etc. are under progress. India and Sri Lanka also finalized an MOU for implementation of HICDPs for the period 2020–25.

Trade and economic cooperation

Bilateral trade and investment between India and Sri Lanka continued to grow. India is Sri Lanka’s largest trading partner with bilateral trade in 2019 amounted to USD 4.59 billions of which exports from India to Sri Lanka amounted to USD 3.83 billion, while imports into India were USD 0.76 billion. India is one of the major foreign investors in Sri Lanka, with cumulative investments of more than USD 1.2 billion in 2019. Leading Indian IT firm HCL’s first Development Centre in Sri Lanka was inaugurated online by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on 07 September 2020. India is the top source for tourist inflow into Sri Lanka with more than 3.55,000 Indian tourists in 2019. Several online interactions on post Covid-19 economic...
recovery and development were held between the business chambers of both countries.

**Defence Cooperation**

Under defence cooperation, the 8th edition of the annual bilateral maritime exercise SLINEX between Indian Navy and Sri Lankan Navy was conducted from 19-21 October 2020. A virtual expert level interaction between Indian Army and Sri Lankan Army was organised on Covid-19 management on 27 August 2020. Under Operation Sagar Araksha Indian Navy and Coastguard rushed to assist their Sri Lankan counterparts in dousing the fire on board the ship MT New Diamond off the Coast of Sri Lanka in September 2020 and in preventing a potential major oil spill.

In the sphere of culture, the 6th International Day of Yoga was celebrated at Army Headquarters led by Sri Lankan Chief of Defence Staff and Army Commander Lt. Gen. Shavendra Silva. The event, held under strict observance of Covid-19 protocol, also saw participation of several Army units online. The 151st Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and 159th Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore were commemorated in Sri Lanka.

The USD 15 million grant to Sri Lanka announced by Prime Minister during the Virtual Bilateral Summit is expected to assist in deepening people-to-people linkages between the two countries in the sphere of Buddhism including through construction/renovation of Buddhist monasteries, capacity development, cultural exchanges, archaeological cooperation, reciprocal exposition of The Buddha’s relics, strengthening engagement of Buddhist scholars and clergy etc.

Swami Vivekananda Cultural center (SVCC), Colombo organised various events to mark “poya” (full moon) days that are revered in Buddhism including a webinar of Buddhist Scholars from Sri Lanka and India on the topic “Dhamma for Global well-being” (July 2020) and an online workshop “Buddhist Heritage Management and Conservation: from Mountain to Ocean” (August 2020).

28 Sri Lankans availed capacity building under the e-Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (eITEC) programme, during the period.

**Comoros**

India and Comoros share friendly and cordial bilateral ties. This relationship received a strong impetus by the visit of the Vice President of India to Comoros in October 2019 during which an MoU on Defence Cooperation was signed between both sides.

In 2020, India-Comoros bilateral relationship gained further momentum. EAM had a telephone call with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Comoros on 25 April 2020 to express solidarity with the Government and people of Comoros against the Covid crisis. In response to a request for medical assistance from the Comorian side during telephonic conversation, a 14-member Indian Medical Assistance Team visited from 1 to 18 June 2020 as India’s support to Comoros in its fight against the spread of dengue in the country. The medical team visited three islands of Comoros Anjouan, Moheli and Grand Comore during this visit and held camps along with Comorian health authorities for diagnosis and treatment of Dengue and Covid-19 patients. Besides, a consignment of medicines which included Hydroxychloroquine was also donated by India to Comoros in support of its fight against Covid-19 pandemic. This year, the International Day of Yoga was celebrated in Moroni on 21 June, 2020 through online platforms due to Covid-19 pandemic.

**Madagascar**

India and Madagascar enjoy cordial bilateral relations. Pursuant to the visit of the President to Madagascar in March 2018 during which an MoU on Defence Cooperation was signed, the bilateral relations gained further momentum in the year 2020-21.

Responding to the requests for assistance in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, the Government of India provided humanitarian and medical assistance to Madagascar. This included supply of 100,000 tablets of HCQ and 43,950 tablets of Azithromycin.
Mauritius

India and Mauritius share a unique relationship that is strategic, reliable and time-tested on one hand, and is based on historical, cultural and ties of kinship on the other. The relationship has been further strengthened by the close engagement between the leadership and strong people to people ties. India’s engagement with Mauritius has evolved into a multi-faceted relationship encompassing cooperation in key priority areas including people oriented development partnership, defence and maritime cooperation, trade & commercial ties, capacity building through scholarships and ITEC programmes etc.

India’s relationship with Mauritius got further cemented and strengthened in 2020. India was among the first responder countries to Mauritius providing about 14 tonnes of Covid related essential medicines, including 500,000 tablets of HCQ and a special consignment of Ayurvedic medicines. As part of Mission Sagar, Medical Assistance Teams were deployed in Mauritius helping their Governments deal with Covid emergencies. Prime Minister had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth on 23 May 2020. Prime Minister Jugnauth thanked Prime Minister for sending the Indian Naval Ship ‘Kesari’ to Mauritius as part of ‘Operation Sagar’. Prime Minister conveyed his appreciation for the effective Covid-19 response mounted by Mauritius.

During the Covid-19 crisis, the Governments of Mauritius and India cooperated with each other in offering assistance in re-patriation of their nationals from each other’s countries. Both Governments offered all assistance to their national air operators as part of the Vande-Bharat mission. 100,000 doses of Covishield vaccine were sent to Mauritius in January 2021 as grant assistance.

Prime Minister and Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth jointly e-inaugurated the new Supreme Court building in Mauritius through video conference on 30 July 2020. The landmark project has been completed with grant assistance of USD 30 million from the Government of India. The project has been implemented under the ‘Special Economic Package’ of USD 353 million offered by the Government of India to Mauritius in 2016. The project is a testimony to the importance of human-centric approach as the underlying philosophy of India’s development cooperation, and role of people-oriented infrastructure projects in further cementing the close ties between India and Mauritius.

The High Commission of India in Mauritius, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Wellness of Mauritius organized various activities to mark the International Day of Yoga 2020. Minister of Health and Wellness, along with High Commissioner launched a series of activities in the context of the International Day of Yoga 2020, on 22 June 2020. On IDY 2020, 4 Ministers of the Government of Mauritius: Minister of Health and Wellness, Kailash Kumar Singh Jagtani; then Minister for Tourism, Georges Pierre Lejongard; Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation, Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint; and Minister for Arts and Culture, Avinash Teelucksingh shared special video messages talking about the benefits of Yoga.

Following oil spilling in the sea due to the beaching of Japanese bulk carrier ship, MV Wakashio in South-East of Mauritius on 25 July 2020, India was again one of the first responders during the crisis. Responding to the request of the Government of Mauritius for assistance in dealing with the environmental crisis due to the oil spill, India sent 30 tonnes of specialized technical equipment and a 10-member Technical Response Team consisting of Indian Coast Guard personnel for dealing with containment of the oil spills. The Government of India deployed ‘INS Nireekshak’, a diving support vessel to Mauritius in two phases: from 24-30 August 2020; and from 4-6 September 2020. The ship had over 30 diving specialists for underwater assistance.

Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth presided over as the Chief Guest at an event jointly organised by the Government of Mauritius and the High Commission of India to mark the 151st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in Mauritius. Earlier that day, the Vice Prime Minister of Mauritius, Leela Devi Luchoonoom Dookun and Minister of Arts and Culture, Avinash Teelucksingh, launched a series of activities in the context of the International Day of Yoga 2020 for high school students of Lycee Jean Joseph Rabearivelo as part of the promotion of import of renewable energy from India to Madagascar in February 2020. 100,000 NCERT books donated to the Government of Madagascar as grants reached Madagascar in 2019 and were handed over to the Government authorities on 14 January 2020.

The 6th edition of International Day of Yoga was celebrated by the Mission on 21 June 2020. There was an appreciable request received from the Malagasy side.

The 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi was celebrated on 25 July 2020, India was again one of the first responders during the crisis. Responding to the request of the Government of Mauritius for assistance in dealing with the environmental crisis due to the oil spill, India sent 30 tonnes of specialized technical equipment and a 10-member Technical Response Team consisting of Indian Coast Guard personnel for dealing with containment of the oil spills. The Government of India deployed ‘INS Nireekshak’, a diving support vessel to Mauritius in two phases: from 24-30 August 2020; and from 4-6 September 2020. The ship had over 30 diving specialists for underwater assistance.

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India and Seychelles have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations. Seychelles is a key partner for India in the Indian Ocean Region. Seychelles views India as a partner of preference in meeting its developmental and national priority goals. The main areas of cooperation include development partnership, defence cooperation, capacity building through scholarships and ITEC programmes, cultural cooperation, etc. India has expanded the scope and spread of its development assistance in Seychelles by committing support in helping Seychelles in its national developmental priorities.

India’s relations with Seychelles gained further momentum in 2020 through successful implementation of people-oriented and demand-driven projects. Seychelles became an important beneficiary of India’s Covid-19 assistance and was among the first few countries to receive life-saving medicines in the fight against Covid-19. The first such consignment of 4 tonnes of life-saving medicine arrived on 15 April 2020, on board a chartered saving medicine arrived on 15 April 2020, on board a chartered

Developmental cooperation has been one of the strongest pillars of India’s bilateral relations with Seychelles. 12 projects under the High Impact Community Development Project were inaugurated during this period. 7 more projects have been completed and are awaiting formal handing over and contracts for another 5 were signed on 07 September 2020. Seychelles also formally joined the E- Vidyabharati and E-Arogyabharati (Telemedicine & Tele-Education) project with grant assistance from the Ministry on 02 September 2020.

The 6th International Day of Yoga was celebrated at the High Commission on 20 June with high level participation. A six-part series on different types of Yoga was shot and broadcasted on the national television channel SBC in the month of June. The High Commission in partnership with the Seychelles National Parks Authority planted endemic Palms ‘Nephrosperma vanhoutteana’ to mark the International Environment Day on 05 June 2020. The 151st Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi was celebrated by organising a photo exhibition, a painting and an essay competition and a Symposium on the life and works of Mahatma Gandhi in partnership with the University of Seychelles.

EAM met the Foreign Minister of Seychelles in Victoria on 27 November 2020.
Australia

2020-21 was a defining year in bilateral ties as both countries agreed to further deepen bilateral ties in the areas of defence, maritime safety and security, supply chain resilience, cyber security, critical minerals, water resources, clean energy, R&D, skills and governance. As the scheduled visit of Australia’s Prime Minister Scott Morrison to India got postponed during 2020-first in January 2020 due to unprecedented bushfires in Australia and again in May 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic – Prime Ministers of both the countries held a bi-lateral Virtual Leaders’ Summit on 4 June 2020. The Summit proved a milestone in the bilateral relations of India and Aus-

tralia as both nations agreed to elevate their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) - 11 years after forging Strategic Partnership in 2009. To pursue CSP, Foreign and Defence Ministers of both the countries agreed to meet in a 2+2 format to discuss strategic issues at least every two years. With Australia, India already has a 2+2 Foreign and De-
fence Secretaries Dialogue.

In addition to the landmark Joint Statement on a “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” and “Joint Declaration on a Shared Vision for Maritime Cooperation in Indo-Pacific”, Prime Min-
ister-level Summit delivered Seven important MOUs/ agree-
ments to drive cooperation with Australia. It included (i) Arr-
angement concerning Mutual Logistics Support (MILSA); (ii) Framework Arrangement on Cyber & Cyber-Enabled Critical Technology Cooperation, (iii) MoU on Cooperation in Min-
ing and Processing of Critical and Strategic Minerals; (iv) Im-
plementing Arrangement concerning cooperation in Defence Science and Tech(S&T) to MoU on Defence Cooperation; (v) MoU on Cooperation in Public Administration and Governance Reforms; (vi) MoU on Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training; and (vii) MoU on Water Resources Management.

Despite constraints due to Covid-19, high-level engagement continued throughout the year. On 6 April 2020, Prime Min-
ister had a telephonic conversation with the Prime Minister of Australia. Both leaders discussed ongoing pandemic, and do-

mestic response strategies being adopted by their respective Governments. On 8 April 2020, Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne had a teleconference with EAM. Both Foreign Ministers met in Tokyo on 06-07 October 2020 for Austra-

lia-India-Japan-US QUAD Foreign Ministers’ Meeting. Both Ministers also held bilateral talks on the sidelines of the QUAD meeting. Before Covid-19, Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne participated in the Raisina Dialogue in January 2020 and also had a bilateral relations review meeting.

Bilateral defence engagement continued to grow. Indian Navy conducted a Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Royal Aus-

tralian Navy in the East Indian Ocean Region on 23 and 24 September 2020. Australian Navy participated in 1st phase of Malabar Exercises - 2020 from 3-6 November 2020 in the Bay of Bengal, off Visakhapatnam, after an invitation from India in October 2020. Defence Ministers of both nations held a tele-

conference on 26-May 2020 to expand defence cooperation. Both countries also held senior official level Defence Policy Talks on 10 September 2020 through virtual mode.

The 12th meeting of the India-Australia Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism was held on 17 December 2020. 5th JWG meeting between India and Australia on Cooperation in Agriculture was held on 03 December 2020.

In view of the growth in trading relationship, both sides decid-
ed to reengage on a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Coop-
eration Agreement (CECA). On 30 July 2020, Commerce and Industry Minister held a teleconference with Australia’s Trade Minister Simon Birmingham to discuss CECA and other trade related issues. Both sides committed to enhance cooperation in the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector and diverse other industries of both countries should endeav-

our to integrate SME/MSMEs of the other country into their supply chains, thereby diversifying bilateral trade. On 01 Sep-
tember 2020, Commerce and Industry Minister held Trilateral Ministerial VC with Australia’s Minister for Trade, Tourism & Investment, Simon Birmingham and Japan’s Minister of Econo-
my, Trade and Industry, Kajiyama Hiroshi to discuss the launch of a Supply Chain Resilient Initiative (SCRI). On 01 Septem-
ber 2020, Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Minister of Mines and Minister of Coal had a virtual meeting with Keith Pitt, Minister for Resources, Australia.

Virtual Global Investor Roundtable 2020, presided over by the Prime Minister on 05 November 2020 saw participation of Australian Superannuation Funds. Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister of Australia virtually addressed the inaugural session of the Bengaluru Tech Summit on 19 November 2020 which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister.

The first meeting of the Joint Working Group under MoU between India and Australia on cooperation in the field of Mining and Processing of Critical and Strategic Minerals was held on 26 November 2020 whereby both sides agreed on inter alia mechanisms and roadmap for collaboration between the Indian Government owned enterprise, Khandi Bidesh India Ltd and the Critical Minerals Facilitation Office (CMFO) of Australia. The first meeting of India-Australia Joint Working Group on Voc-

tional Education and Training was held on 26 November 2020.

Minister of Commerce and Industry launched the CII Australia Economic Strategy on 18 December 2020. The virtual meet-
ing was also addressed by the Australian Trade Minister Simon Birmingham. The report captured Indian Industry’s response to the India Economic Strategy 2035, released by India in 2018. The report provides an overview of business environ-
ment, market opportunities and investment potential in Aus-

tralia and also gives a template for future cooperation in form of various implementation strategies and action points.

Australia reiterated its support for India’s candidacy for perma-
nent membership of a reformed UN Security Council (UNSC). It also supported India’s candidature for a non-permanent UNSC seat for 2021-22 term. Australia has also reiterated its ‘strong support’ for India’s membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). In order to work cooperatively in the multilateral fora, Foreign Offices of India and Australia initiated the senior of-

ficial level consultation on multilateral issues through virtual mode on 17 August 2020.

Australia also engages with Australia in trilateral, quadrilateral & pluri bilateral formats. 2020 saw the establishment of a new an-

ual trilateral mechanism with Australia & France. Inaugural Foreign Secretary-level India-France-Australia Trilateral Dia-

logue was held virtually on 09 September 2020 for synergis-

ting their respective strengths to ensure a peaceful, secure, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific. It was decided to elevate the level of existing India-Australia-Indonesia Trilater-

dialogue from official to Ministerial level. Foreign Secretary held regular weekly Indo-Pacific coordination calls between 20 March 2020 and 15 May 2020 on Covid-19 with his counter-

parts from Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Korea, Vietnam and US. A Video Conference between Foreign Ministers of India, US, Australia, Japan, Israel, Korea and Brazil took place on 11 May 2020 to discuss the importance of international cooperation, transparency, accountability in combating Covid-19 and in ad-

ressing its causes.

Australia is an important partner in the implementation of the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative tabled by India, as well as in vari-

ous pluri bilateral frameworks such as the Supply Chain Resil-

ience Initiative (SCRI), the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (C-DRIS).

Indian community in Australia continues to grow in size and importance, with a population of nearly 7 lakhs (2.3 % of total population). Indian diaspora in Australia is now the fastestgrow-
ing diaspora, topping the list of source of immigrants to Aus-

tralia during 2019-20. India also reiterates its Australia’s largest source of skilled migrants and 2nd largest source of interna-
tional students. More than 21,000 student visas Indians in Aus-

tralia were repatriated to India through 47 Vande Bharat Mission (VBM) Flights and 51 chartered flights (as on 31 October 2020).

Covid-19 related research projects were approved for fund-
ing under the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF). EAM and the Australian Foreign Minister had a teleconfer-

cence on 1 December 2020 to exchange views on bilateral and regional issues. NITI Aayog’s Australia’s Commonwealth Science and Scientific and Industrial Research Organization together launched a Hackathon on circular economy, which culminated in February 2021.

Brunei Darussalam

Brunei relations continue to be warm and friendly. Brunei is an important part of India’s energy security architecture with export of almost 22%, by value, of its crude oil to India; its major customer in the region. India is an important part in Brunei’s Act East Pol-

icy(AEP) and Indo-Pacific(IPI) Concept and the presence of

around 10,000 Indian nationals in Brunei. Brunei has generally been supportive of India’s candidature to various international bodies. Brunei had supported our candidature to a non-per-

manent seat in UNSC and also supported our candidature on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in 5th
Committee of UNGA). Efforts for upgradation and relocation of Telemetry Tracking & Telecommand (TT&C) Station (established by ISRO in Brunei since 1998) to support tracking of its Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle(GSLV), are ongoing. A 3-member ISRO Team is currently in Brunei. It arrived in Brunei on 8 November 2021 to support the launch of ISRO satellite. The ISRO team will also assess the suitability of the new site, proposed at Telisai by the Government of Brunei Darussalam, for relocation of ISRO’s TTC Station.

As part of India’s commitment to assist Brunei in capacity building, 14 Bruneian officials attended an online Training Course conducted by Human Settlement Management Institute (HSMI) under ITEC Program. Another course on cyber-security was attended by 2 Bruneian officials from Brunei’s Internal Security Department.

Bilateral relations between India and Cambodia remained cordial, friendly and continued to grow stronger. In the context of India’s Act East Policy and ASEAN, Cambodia continues to be an important interlocutor and a positive and forthcoming partner. Teleconsultations between Prime Minister and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen on 10 June 2020, cemented bilateral relations. Prime Minister Hun Sen spoke highly of India’s important international role and humanitarian gesture as well as India’s capacity to produce and supply medicines to 130 countries in the world. Prime Minister conveyed his appreciation for cooperation that has been on India’s co-chairmanship of International Coordinating Committee (ICC) for Restoration and Development of Preah Vihear Temple.

Joint Commission Meeting (JCM), held at the level of Minister of State/Secretary of State, has since been elevated in 2020 to the level of Foreign Ministers. In Defence Cooperation, Agreement on provision of USD 1.5 million Indian Grant Assistance to Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) for procurement of Demining Equipment, was signed on 10 August 2020. Defence Cooperation continued with conduct of annual training capsules for RCAF in Peacekeeping, Demining modules by expert trainers from Indian Army. RCAF also continued to receive training from Indian Defence establishments under ITEC Development cooperation. Human resource development, capacity building activities continued to play pivotal roles in furthering the bilateral relationship. India continued its assistance to Cambodia in provision of safe drinking water to people in rural areas, restoration, preservation of temples and capacity building.

The project for supply and installation of 1,500 Afridev Hand pumps for augmentation of rural water supply in Cambodia, which started in 2017 with the objective to provide safe drinking water in the target communities in Kampong Cham and the bordering Banteay Meanchey Provinces, was completed by WAPCOS in August 2020. The project, which was executed with the financial assistance to the tune of USD 12 million extended by Government of India, received widespread appreciation from beneficiaries in both provinces. Quick Impact Project (QIP) Scheme, launched under the Mekong Ganga Cooperation Initiative in 2015, progressed well in Cambodia. So far, 19 QIP Projects have been implemented in the areas of health, education, agriculture, women empowerment, sanitation, environment & skill development, etc., and 15 more projects are under various stages of implementation.

Despite Covid-19, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) continued to undertake, as planned, the 3rd phase of the restoration and preservation work at the Ta Prohm Temple in the Angkor Wat Park, which had started in November 2016. Pursuant to signing the MoU on restoration of Preah Vihear, a UNESCO world heritage site of Lord Shiva, in August 2018, India, which is also the co-chair of prestigious International Coordination Committee of Preah Vihear (ICC), is starting the restoration and preservation work at Preah Vihear temple soon through ASI at a total cost of USD 5.55 million.

Provision of training programs for Cambodian officers under ITEC progressed smoothly in pre-Covid-19 phase. Till date, 1750 Cambodians benefited from ITEC programs since its launch in Cambodia in 1991. Tailor-made courses as per requirements of Cambodian government brought about qualitative change in utilization of ITEC slots by Cambodia. Even during Covid-19, Cambodia continued to attend ITEC courses organised under ITEC until 2020. Besides, 25 scholarships for UG/PG & higher studies in India are available to Cambodian students under MCG (10), GCSS (12) and CEPI (5) every year. During 2020-21, 7 slots have been accepted by Cambodian students so far. Secretary of State, Ministry of Commerce attended the first Indo-ASEAN Oceanic Business Summit & Expo organised by CIIL on 5 August 2020 in the virtual format. Confederation of Indian Industry (CIIL), in partnership with Mo/C Commerce and Industry, Government of India, organised the 6th India-CLMV Business Conclave : Building Bridges for Constructive Development in virtual format with Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam on 3-4 December, 2020. Minister of State participated in the event while the Secretary of State, Ministry of Commerce represented Cambodia in the Conclave.

India and Malaysia share warm bilateral relations based on people to people linkages, shared history and well-established trading relations. Despite Covid-19 pandemic affecting trade across the world, Malaysia emerged as the 12th largest trading partner for India globally with a total trade of USD 4.75 billion (Exports - USD 2.54 billion; Imports USD 2.21 billion). Malaysia was India’s 13th largest trading partner in 2019-20. India has so far registered a surplus trade balance of USD 332 million (April-August 2020) compared to trade deficit of USD 3.42 billion in 2019-20.

Lao PDR

On 12 June 2020, Prime Minister spoke on phone with Thongloun Sisoulith, Prime Minister of Lao PDR. India also offered medicines and medical supplies to support the fight of Lao PDR against Covid-19. Boukongh Shivation, Lao Health Minister thanked India in his letter. Under ITEC, 7 officers from Lao medical military Dept participated in 1st CLMV e-ITEC defence medical course on Covid-19 organised from 6-9 July 2020. In 2020, Indian Army Training Team completed its 25 years in Lao PDR.

In 2019-20, Lao-India Center for Excellence in Software Development & Training (CESDT) Vientiane imparted training to 90 participants in 4 different courses from 11 different organisations of Laos including government of Laos. An umbrella agreement on Indian Grant Assistance for Quick Impact Projects (QIP) in Laos was extended for another 5 years. A QIP Project for establishment of Fertilizers Analysis Laboratory was completed. The 2nd season of Phase-II of restoration of UNESCO world heritage site at Wat Phou, an ancient Shiva Temple, was completed in July 2020; the 3rd season of restoration work is likely to commence soon.

Indonesia

COVID-19 pandemic did not slow down the pace of overall cooperation with Indonesia in 2020-21. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi has had a telephonic conversation with EAM on 01 April 2020 and discussed a range of issues related to dealing with Covid-19 pandemic, including importing Active Pharma Ingredients (API) and unhindered flow of cargo from India to Indonesia. India exported 2425 kgs of APIs for local manufacturing of Chloroquine Phosphate and APIs of Oseltamivir to Indonesia.

The Prime Minister spoke on the phone with President of Indonesia Joko Widodo on 28 April 2020. The Prime Minister assured Indonesian President that India would do its best to prevent disruption in supplies of medical products or other commodities traded between two countries. Under VBM, more than 2500 Indians were repatriated from Indonesia to different cities in India in May 2020. More than 900 Indonesian nationals were repatriated to Indonesia since Covid-19 related restrictions were imposed.

In defence cooperation, Indonesia-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT), along International Maritime Boundary in Indonesia and Indonesia was conducted on 15-16 June 2020, which sought to build on the robust mutual cooperation that has been strengthened over the last 18 years of closely executing these CORPATs. Both countries reached another important milestone by signing an MoU on Maritime Safety and Security Cooperation between Indian Coast Guard and its Indonesian counterpart BAKMILA on 6 July 2020. Defence Minister of Indonesia Gen (Retd) Prabowo Subianto visited India on 26-27 July 2020 and met with his Indian counterpart Shaukat Manté and National Security Adviser to discuss bilateral and regional issues of defence cooperation. He was the first Minister of any country that was received in India during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bilateral trade in 2019-20 was USD 19 billion, which made Indonesia the second largest trading partner of India in ASEAN. Further cementing and advancing strong economic partnership, 3rd India-Indonesia Biennial Trade Ministers’ Forum was held through video conference on 29 June 2020. Indian side was led by Commerce & Industry Minister and Indonesian side was led by Agus Suparmanto, Minister of Trade. Both ministers discussed ways and means to achieve trade targets of USD 50 billion by 2025.

The 4th DG Level Joint Working Group Meeting between NBC (Narcotics Control Bureau) and BNN (Indonesia National Narcotics Agency) took place virtually on 17 December 2020 where renewed MoU between BNN and BNN was signed during the meeting.

The 2nd JWG on Health Cooperation between India and Indonesia is scheduled to take place virtually during the period up to 31 March 2021 when, Plan of Action for implementation of MOU on Health Cooperation would be signed virtually, inter alia.

Malaysia

India and Malaysia share warm bilateral relations based on people to people linkages, shared history and well-established trading relations. Despite Covid-19 pandemic affecting trade across the world, Malaysia emerged as the 12th largest trading partner for India globally with a total trade of USD 4.75 billion (Exports - USD 2.54 billion; Imports USD 2.21 billion). Malaysia was India’s 13th largest trading partner in 2019-20. India has so far registered a surplus trade balance of USD 332 million (April-August 2020) compared to trade deficit of USD 3.42 billion in 2019-20.

EAM had a telephone conversation with Malaysian Foreign Minister Hintamuddin Hussein on 13 April 2020. In April 2020, India agreed to Malaysia’s request for export of 1.2 mil-
lion tablets of Hydroxychloroquine sulphate (HCQS) and 24 tonnes of Paracetamol to Malaysia. India also permitted the export of 4,000 bottles of Chloroquine (Hand Sanitizers), 6,000 packets of HCl 100mg/ml and 570,785 pieces of 3-ply disposable face masks to Malaysia.

Following travel restrictions due to Covid-19 and India’s decision to operate VBM flights from May 2020, 89 VBM flights have operated from Malaysia repatriating 15,223 Indians so far.

New Zealand

The strong desire to further strengthen bilateral relationship was reflected in the visit from New Zealand of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Winston Peters accompanied by Minister for Trade and Export Growth David Parker and a high-level business delegation. On the eve of the visit, NZ Prime Minister released a Strategy Paper “India-New Zealand – Investing in the Relationship”, envisioning a more “enduring strategic relationship” with India over the next five years. During the visit, the Deputy Prime Minister met EAM and reviewed the state of bilateral relations. He also delivered a keynote address titled “The Indo Pacific: From Principles to Partnership” organised by Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), expressing support for India’s leadership on Indo-Pacific Ocean’s Initiative (IPOI). He called for stronger maritime cooperation and conveyed New Zealand’s desire to join ISA. He also inaugurated “New Zealand Centre at IIT, Delhi on 26 February 2020 that will serve as a nodal point of academic collaboration between all 8 New Zealand universities and Indian institutes of higher learning. Trade Minister Parker met Commerce and Industry Minister and others. He also attended India-New Zealand Business Forum organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

India and New Zealand regularly deliberated telephonically on Cooperation in sectors as part of 7 country group including US, Australia, Japan, South Korea and Vietnam at 5 level. Both sides also cooperated very closely for repatriating each other’s stranded nationals in repatriation of more than 3,000 citizens of New Zealand and residents from India and about 3,700 New Zealand nationals from New Zealand under VBM. In a telephonic conversation on 16 April 2020, New Zealand’s Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Peters thanked EAM for the cooperation in repatriation of New Zealand nationals and for assuring to supply essential pharmaceuticals.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern won a 2nd tenure with an overwhelming majority for her Labour Party in elections held in October 2020. The Prime Minister congratulated her through a tweet and a formal message. Priyanka Radhakrishnan, a person of Indian origin created history by becoming the first Minister of Indian origin in New Zealand’s government. Sukhi Tumde was the first person of Indian origin to occupy the position of Mayor in 1995.

On 6 December, 2020 the Waiakere Indian Association and High Commission of India published a report titled Economic Contributions of NZ Indians’. As per this report the people of Indian origin now contribute more than USD 10 billion to the NZ economy. There are about 250,000 persons of Indian origin, contributing to about 5% of NZ’s population. They are primarily engaged in sectors like retail, hotels, logistics, health, business support, finance, IT, and professional services.

CoV-19 adversely affected bilateral trade in goods and services. During January to June 2020, New Zealand’s exports to India stood at NZ$ 741 million whereas imports from India were worth NZ$ 486 million. The culmination of 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi was marked in a befitting manner on 02 October 2020 at the site of Mahatma Gandhi’s statue in front of Wellington Railway station with the participation of dignitaries including Minister of Finance Grant Robertson, former Governor General of New Zealand Anand Satyanand and Mayor of Wellington Andy Foster.

The Foreign Office Consultation between India and New Zealand took place virtually on 16 February 2021.

Philippines

Building on momentum generated by the State Visit of the President to the Philippines in October 2019, leadership level engagement continued with telephonic conversation between Prime Minister and President Duterte on 9 June 2020. Pres- ident Duterte also appreciated the steps taken by India to maintain supply of essential pharmaceutical products to the Philippines. The 4th Meeting of the India-Philippines Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation, co-chaired by EAM and Teodoro Locsin Jr., Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Philippines, was held virtually on 06 November 2020. Both sides reviewed recent developments in India-Philippines bilateral relations and discussed the future trajectory of their wide-ranging engagement for strengthening trade and investment and cooperation in the fields of health and pharma-aceuticals, agriculture, tourism, energy, ICT, science & technolo- gy including that of the defence sector.

The 13th Meeting of the Joint Working Group on Trade and investment was held on 17 September 2020. The meeting dis-cussed cooperation in vaccine development; PPE and pharma-ceutical industry; textiles; electronics; ICT and IT-BPM; renew-able energy; infrastructure; agriculture; traditional medicine; automobiles; agreement on cooperation and mutual assistance in Customs matters; sharing mechanism of preferential trade data etc. The 2nd meeting of Joint Defence Industry & Logistics Committee (JDILC) was held on 17 September 2020. Meeting identified areas to strengthen cooperation including capability enhancement, transfer of advanced systems and co-production of defence equipment. The 1st meeting of India-Philippines JVGC on Tourism Cooperation was held on 08 October 2020. Both countries also held the 1st meeting on riparian states on a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) in October 2020. With leader-ship of both countries keen to strengthen the bilateral partner-ship, this is a strategic phase for deepening & diversification of bilateral relationship, especially in the economic arena.

Singapore

India and Singapore stood together during Covid-19 to face challenges in the wake of the crisis. Prime Minister and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had a telecon on 23 April 2020 during which Prime Minister promised to provide all possible support for medical supplies of essential goods, including medical products to Singapore. The Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for support being extended to Indian citizens in Singapore. On 11 July, on successful completion of General Elections in Singapore, Prime Minister tweet congratula-tions to Prime Minister Lee.

India purchased 30,000 test kits from Singapore in April which was facilitated by the Temasek Foundation. They donated an additional 40,000 PCR testing Kits on 29 April 2020. 78 tons of Cargo containing a part of 1 million PPE kits acquired through a Singapore based company was delivered to India on 25 and 26 April 2020. A consignment of high-tech components was acquired through Bharat Electronics Limited for local manufacture-ting of ventilators and patient monitoring systems in India was shipped on 02 May 2020.

India approved export of 2.5 million HCQ tablets; 4.8 million pieces of surgical masks; 1.4 million bottles of hand sanitizers; 39,750 for Covid-19 swab test kits; 260 kg of propylene material; 1 kg of SSMMS textile to Singapore for handling Covid-19. Till 30 October 2020, a total of 33,099 passengers were repatriated in 209 flights. More than 5,000 Singapore nationals and Perma-nent Residents were also repatriated from India to Singapore since Covid-19 related restrictions were put in place.

In 2020-21 (till August 2020), bilateral trade stood at USD 7.2 billion. Exports to Singapore for the corresponding period stood at USD 3.6 billion, recording a decline of 24.3% while imports stood at USD 3.3 billion, a decline of 45.0%. (Outward Indian FDI to Singapore was USD 0.84 billion in FY 2020-21 (till August 2020) while it was USD 4.39 billion in FY 2019-20.

The 13th meeting of India-Singapore Defence Working Group took place virtually on 30 June 2020. The 12th IAF-RSAF Air Force Staff Talks (AST) was held via Video-Conference on 3 July 2020. Defence Policy Dialogue (August 2020) and Defence In-dustry Working Group meeting (October 2020) were held.

While annual exercises for Air and Air Force could not be conducted in 2020, 27th edition of the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) was conducted in no-con-tact format for November 2020. Similarly, the 2nd edition of the Exercise ‘Vigilant Ears’ was held in mid-2020. The 12th edition of exercise ‘Hindukush’, an annual exercise between India and Afghanistan was held virtually in November 2020.

Thailand

Bilateral relations continued to grow including cooperation within the framework of ASEAN, Mekong Ganga Coopera-tion(MGC) & BMSTEC during 2020. Thailand as the Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) of BMSTEC was active-ly engaged in facilitating the 17th ASEAN-India Summit and Related Meetings held through video conference from 12-15 November 2020 under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister. Prime Minister had a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister of Thailand General Prayut Chanocha on 01 May 2020 and agreed for collaboration in research and development in the field of medical sciences and vaccine development.

EAM and Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Thai-land’s Foreign Minister co-chaired ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on 12 September 2020 via video conference where ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021-23) was adopted. 22nd ASEAN-India SOM was held on 16 July 2020 through a video conference, co-chaired by Secretary-East (East) and Buasya Mathet-in, Permanent Secretary of Thailand MFA. The 4th Round Table of ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (ANTT) on the theme “ASEAN-India: Strategic Partnership in Post-Covid-19 Era” was jointly inaugurated by EAM and Deputy Prime Minister Don Pramudwinai on 20 August 2020.

The 30th cycle of Indo-Thai CORPAT was held from 18-20 No-vember 2020 as a ‘non-contact at sea’ event. The Singapore-in-
dia-Thailand Trilateral Maritime Exercise SITMEX-2020, host-
ed by Singapore was held from 21-22 November 2020 as a ‘non-contact at sea only’ in Andaman Sea. First phase of Ex Cobras Gold was scheduled from February to 03 March 2021. In-
dian Armed Force Personnel were scheduled to participate in the Exercise in Observer Plus category. Annual Staff Talks between Indian Air Force (IAF) and Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) was held on 21 August 2020 through VC. It is proposed to hold the 4th meet-
ing of the Joint Air Force Control Room & Judicial Cooperation and Maritime Cooperation on 17 February 2021 between India and Thailand by video conference.

Timor Leste

India has cordial relationship with TL with continued coopera-
tion in maritime security. On 29 December 2020, an Exercise in Observer Plus category ‘Tirade-UNDPF-2020’ to achieve shared security, prosperity and growth for all in the region were also agreed. The Prime Minister had a telecon with Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc on 12 April 2020 to discuss global health and eco-
nomic challenges emerging out of Covid-19 pandemic.

The 17th Joint Commission Meeting (virtual) was co-chaired by EAM and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Minh Chinh on 25 August 2020. They agreed to add new mo-
te, flagged off in April 2019, is making remarkable progress and the work is likely to be completed in the next 2 years. The Ministry of Defence continued to augment IT literacy in schools, with a coverage of 12 schools, both through IT innovation labs and mobile IT innovation vans.

India reinvited strategies to remain actively engaged with Vietnam to keep momentum of Comprehensive Strategic Part-
nership during Covid-19. Ongoing cooperation in the fields of trade & commerce, defence & security, development partner-
nship, and capacity building remained active. Prime Min-
ister exchanged views with Prime Minister of Vietnam, Nguyen Xuan Phuc on 21 December 2020 at a Virtual Bilateral Sum-
mit on wide-ranging bilateral, regional and global interests and issued a ‘Joint Vision for Peace, Prosperity and People’ to guide the future development of India-Vietnam Comprehen-
sive Strategic Partnership. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen cooperation against common global challenges, including the Covid-19 Pandemic. All police departments in Vietnam are working for creating an environment which is conducive for normal life and also for the economic growth.

India-Vietnam engagement in multilateral domain was further strengthened with active participation by India at all important ASEAEN events, including virtual Ministerial Meetings of India-ASEAN, East Asia Summit(EAS), ASEAN Regional For-
mum (ARF) organised by Vietnam as ASEAN chair in 2020, and consultations on UN related matters in preparation for con-
current non-permanent membership of India and Vietnam in UNSC.

Cooperation in Defence, maritime security with Vietnam con-
tinued with regular exchanges. Raksha Mantri held online talks with Minister of National Defence, General Ngo Xuan Lich on 27 November 2020. An Agreement on Hydrography cooper-
atin was signed. Defence Secretary held the 13th round of India-Vietnam Annual Security Dialogue with Deputy Defence Minister of Vietnam, Sr Lt Gen Nguyen Chi Vinh through Vid-
 eo conferencing on 29 December 2020. Indian Naval Ship INS Kiltan visited Vietnam in December 2020 to deliver food re-
lief material to Vietnam for assisting flood affected people in Central Vietnam. Defence Secretary held telephonic calls with Deputy Defence Minister of Vietnam, Sr Lt Gen. Nguyen Chi Vinh on 6 July 2020 to review on-going defence partnership and identify new areas of cooperation. Military Medical De-
partments of India and Vietnam held an online conference on Covid-19 prevention and control on 1 July 2020 to learn from each other’s best practices. Separately, the first e-TEC program in the field of Military Medical Services to train the staff of the Department of Military Health from CMLV coun-
tries was held in July 2020 in which eight military officers from Vietnam participated.

Bilateral economic engagement was impacted by Covid-19, even as both sides explored new partnerships to cope with the ongoing disruptions. Ministry of Finance of the Government of Vietnam agreed to accept electronic certificates of Origin issued by Government of India to facilitate trade engagement during Covid-19 related disruption. Bilateral trade for the first 6 months of 2020-21 reached USD 4.73 billion (31.26% de-
crease YoY basis). During this period, Vietnam’s exports to India reached USD 2.50 billion (62.28% decrease YoY basis), while India’s exports to Vietnam was USD 2.23 billion (12.28% de-
crease YoY basis). Top 5 commodities of Indian exports to Viet-
nam include iron & steel, meat products, marine products, mo-
tor vehicles and cotton. Top 4 commodities of Indian imports from Vietnam are electrical machinery & equipment, copper, iron & steel and iron ore. According to Foreign Invest-
ment Agency of Vietnam, total investment by Indian companies in Vietnam reached USD 937.5 million, with new investment of USD 17.2 million in 2020. New private investments were made by Indian companies in Vietnam in the IT and energy sectors. Development Partnership is an important pillar of India-Viet-
nam bilateral cooperation. As of now, total 26 Quick Impact Projects were undertaken, of which 13 were already com-
pleted. In 2020-21, 12 new QIPs have been approved and are under implementation, including 7 QIPs in water management in the Mekong Delta region. An addendum for QIP for setting up an Advanced IT Training Centre at Post and Tele-
communications Institute of Technology (PTIT) in Hochi Minh City, to be set up under India-UNDP Fund, over USD 1 million to create a state-of-the-art facility for IT training and skillling, was signed on 7 August 2020, which will enhance Vietnam’s IT training capabilities. Vietnamese students enrolled under pro-
gram for ASEAN students to avail 1000 doctoral scholarships for higher studies at IITs in India.

Support to conservation of archaeological heritage sites in Vietnam is an important part of India’s cultural outreach as well as development partnership with Vietnam. The Archaeological Survey of India’s ongoing 5-year project of conservation and restoration of UNESCO World Heritage Site. A MoU in cen-
tral Vietnam continued to progress as per schedule. During the 4th session of restoration work in 2020-21, ASI team found a monolithic sandstone Shiva Linga of the 9th century, which further highlighted rich civilizational and cultural connections between India and Vietnam.

Pacific Island Countries

Fiji: Project Document on a regional solarization project fund-
ed by Government of India under India-UNDP Fund was signed on 1 June 2020 between UN Development Program (UNDP), Suva & Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDS), which en-
tails solarisation of Heads of State Residences in 11 countries of the Pacific and PIDS headquarters in Suva. Out of the total cost of USD 1.65 million, India will provide USD 1.35 million and Government of Fiji will provide USD 300,000, 400,000 via the Commonwealth Window under In-
dia-UNDPF, managed by UN Office for South-South Cooper-
ation (UNOSSC).

India-UNDPF. Target sites for the Project include Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. The Project is being executed by the Indian National Cooper-
ating Unit for the South Pacific and PIDF headquarters in Suva. Out of the total funding of USD 1.65 million, USD 1.35 million is provided by India-UNDP Fund, managed by UN Office for South-South Cooper-
ation. In terms of solarisation, the project is expected to meet the goal of reaching 100% solarisation of Heads of State Residences in 11 countries of the region.

Fiji: Fiji was hit by a Category 5 Tropical Cyclone Yasa on 17-18 Decem-
ber 2020, which caused extensive damage and destruction of critical infrastructure. The first consignment of relief mate-
rials from India for the cyclone-affected people reached Fijian in the first week of January 2021. The relief material was handed over to Minister of Defence and Disaster Man-
agement of Fiji on 11 January 2021 in Suva by the Acting High Commissioner of India. Early response to Fiji’s need postdis-
saster highlighted India’s commitment to provide humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) support to Foreign-
countries under the Indo-Pacific Oceans’ Initiative (IPO).

Niue: India-Niue Centre of Excellence in IT, set up with finan-
cial and technical assistance of India was launched in August 2020 with a MoU signed on 16 August 2019 between the Government of Niue and Ministry of External Affairs. India has agreed to support the development and promotion of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) in Niue. Earlier a grant-aid of USD 346,085 was released to Niue on 03 March 2020 for the sec-
ond phase of 4G telecommunication services, taking Niue’s total support for the project to USD 12,56,785 for extending 4G telecom services to the entire population of Niue.
Kiribati: Government of India approved USD 1 million fund- ing for support to Kiribati’s response to Covid-19 pandemic on 28 August 2020, approved through India-UNDPF, managed by UNOSSC.

Republic of Marshall Islands: Development Assis- tance from India to RMI continues to be an important pillar of bilateral relationship. In August 2020, funds worth USD 200,000 were disbursed to RMI for “Coral & Calm Project Phase II,” which made significant positive impacts on the lo- cal community by making contributions towards women’s em- ployment and sustainable aquaculture farming. In September 2020, 7,500 tablets of Hydroxychloroquine were sent to RMI in response to their request as medical assistance. Subsequent to the signing of Agreement between India and RMI on Ex- emption from Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic and Official passports on 18 February 2020, RMI has concurred with India’s proposal for entry into force of the Agreement on 30 October 2020. The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) ratified the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance on 24 December 2020. The Agreement was signed by RMI on 8 August 2019.

Palau: During 2020, India partnered with Palau under UN- DPPF in establishing Global Village conference facilities, ren- ovation of Palau Civic Hall, Palau Community College which will provide critical institutional support to Ocean Conference 2020 slated to be held in Palau. President of Palau, Tommy Re- mengesau Jr. while addressing 75th UNGA on 24 September 2020 thanked Government of India for helping Palau to im- prove its healthcare system through India-UNDPF. Palau also held a detailed discussion with the State Councilor and Foreign Affairs Advisor of China, Wang Yi on 17 June 2020 and strongly conveyed India’s concerns. EAM also stressed that the Chinese side needed to take appropriate action so as to restore peace and tranquility along the LAC.

Papua New Guinea: India and PNG enjoy a warm and friendly relationship. PNG leadership has conveyed consist-ently its desire to focus on India and deepen ties in political, cultural & economic fields. Both countries have been work- ing closely supporting each other in international fora, includ- ing Commonwealth, Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations Organization. During 2020, significant progress was achieved towards Line of Credit (LoC) of USD 100 million ex- tended by EXIM Bank of India to the PNG Government for construction of Madang-Bayer and Hohlsins-Kimbe Roads in PNG. A grant-in-aid of USD 1 million was approved for PNG under India-UN Cooperation Development Fund for purchase of much needed 10 fully equipped ambulances. Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Excellence in Information Technology in Port Moresby has become fully functional and a second batch of students are studying at the Centre. Government of India approved a MoU between Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) & Certified Practicing Accountants, PNG which would strengthen institutional arrangements between the two professional bodies.

Samoa: On 12 March 2020, Samoa Prime Minister and High Commissioner of India to Samoa signed a ‘Tax Information Ex- change Agreement’, that will facilitate exchange of information relevant to administration and enforcement of the domestic tax laws of both countries.

On 13 March 2020, Samoa Prime Minister and High Commis- sioner jointly inaugurated the Centre of Excellence in IT, set up in Samoa’s capital Apia with financial & technical assistance from Government of India for conducting short term training courses in IT for Samoan officials and the general public. Earlier in the year, the ‘Samoa Knowledge Society Initiative’, Samoa’s capital Apia, became operational. The USD 1 million project is funded by India under the auspices of India-UN Development Partnership Fund, and is aimed to promote knowledge-based sustainable development in Samoa. India extended a financial support of USD 250,000 to Samoa to help in relief and rehabili- tation after one of its worst ever measles epidemics in the last quarter of 2019 that took 82 lives and affected almost 6000 others.

Solomon Islands: India-Solomon Islands relations are friendly. Both countries have been working closely supporting each other in international fora, including the Commonwealth, Non-Aligned Movement and UN. Both sides signed MoU for establishment of Centre of Excellence in IT in Honiara on 17 February 2020. A Grant-in-Aid of USD 1 million under In- dia-UN Cooperation Development Fund to Solomon Islands was finalized to support Solomon Islands in its fight against Covid-19. Solomon Islands agreed to sign MoU on Exemption of Visa for Official & Diplomatic Passport Holders.

Tonga: Government of India approved funding of USD 1,018,844 for support to Tonga’s response to Covid-19 pan- demic on 28 August 2020, approved through India-UNDPF, managed by UNOSSC.

On 8 January 2021, Tonga ratified the amendments to the In- ternational Solar Alliance Framework Agreement, paving the way for all UN-Member countries to apply for the ISA mem- bership.

Tuvalu: Government of India approved funding of USD 370,353 for support to Tuvalu’s response to Covid-19 pan- demic on 28 August 2020, approved through India-UNDPF, managed by UNOSSC.
Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi in Moscow on the side-lines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting regarding the current tensions in the India-China border areas. The Ministers reached an agreement on five points to guide the approach to the current situation, ensure disengagement from all friction areas and restore peace and tranquility. During the leadership level engagements, the two sides agreed to maintain close communication at the diplomatic and military level to achieve a peaceful resolution to the situation along the LAC.

The 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th meetings of the Working Mechanism for Consultation & Coordination on In-dia-China Border Affairs (WMCC) were held through video-conference on 24 June 2020, 10 July 2020, 24 July 2020, 20 August 2020, 30 September 2020 and 18 December 2020 respectively. Nine rounds of meetings between the Senior Commanders (headed by Commander of 14th Corps on Indian side) were also held with the last round being held on 24 January 2021.

During these diplomatic and military level meetings, the two sides had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on the situation along the LAC in the India-China border areas. They reaffirmed that the two sides will continue to sincerely work towards complete disengagement of the troops at all friction points along the LAC in the Western Sector. The two sides were in agreement that restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas would be essential for the overall development of bilateral relations.

As on date, the military and diplomatic engagements to resolve the situation and restore full peace and tranquility are continuing.

Covid-19 Related International Cooperation

Prime Minister wrote to Chinese President Xi Jinping on 8 February 2020, in view of the coronavirus outbreak in China, conveying the solidarity of the people and Government of India with the people of China and the readiness of the Government of India to provide assistance. The Government of India also provided 15 tonnes of medical assistance comprising masks, gloves and other emergency medical equipment to China on 26 February 2020. These medical supplies cost approximately Rs. 2.11 crores. They were handed over to the Hubei Charity Federation in Wuhan, China.

EAM had a telephone conversation with China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on 24 March 2020. EAM discussed working together in combating Covid-19 and agreed to build further on our bilateral efforts in this domain. Separately, procurement of essential medical equipment such as Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs), ventilators related to Covid-19 through commercial imports from China was also facilitated.

The Government of India organised three special flights on 31 January 2020, 1 February 2020 and 26 February 2020 to evacuate 766 persons, including students from the city of Wuhan as well as other cities of Hubei Province in China in view of the continuing lockdown of the Hubei Province because of coronavirus. The evacuated persons included 723 Indian nationals and 43 foreign nationals. The foreign nationals included 23 from Bangladesh, 9 from Maldives, 2 from Myanmar, 1 from South Africa, 1 from Madagascar and 5 from the United States of America who was a partner of an Indian national. In addition, 6 Chinese citizens who were spouses and/or children of Indian nationals were also evacuated.

As Covid-19 related restrictions were imposed on regular travel and cargo movement between India and China, several Vande Bharat Flights were organised from cities in China and Hong Kong to repatriate stranded Indian nationals. In all till 31 December 2020, 2,734 Indian citizens were brought back from China and Hong Kong on these Vande Bharat Flights. These flights were also used to facilitate movement of Indians to China and Hong Kong. Besides this, 170 seafarers were repatriat- ed in charter flights from Hong Kong to India.

The Government of India extended medical assistance worth USD 1 million to DPR Korea in the form of anti-tuberculosis medicines. The medical assistance is under the aegis of an ongoing WHO anti-tuberculosis programme in DPRK.

Japan

The year saw further strengthening of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership that was announced by Prime Minister and former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2018. The bilateral relationship has today become multifacet- ed and there is growing convergence of economic and strategic interests between the two countries.

While the Covid-19 pandemic caused disruption in regular visits and exchanges, the two sides still maintained the momentum of their ties through virtual meetings and phone calls. Prime Minister spoke to former Prime Minister Abe in April 2020 to exchange views on the response of each country for managing Covid-19 and for strengthening cooperation in the post-Covid world. The two leaders also held a telephone conversation just before Prime Minister Abe stepped down as Prime Minister of Japan in September 2020. On 25 September 2020, Prime Minister held a telephone conversation with the newly appointed Prime Minister of Japan, Suga Yoshihide. The two leaders expressed their intention to further strengthen the relationship based on mutual trust and shared values. On 21 December 2020, the sixth edition of the SAMVAD dialogue was held in Tokyo in the hybrid format. Prime Minister delivered a video message while Prime Minister Suga delivered remarks in person.

EAM visited Tokyo for the 12th India-Japan Foreign Ministers’ Strategic Dialogue with Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi Toshimitsu on 07 October 2020. The two ministers reviewed the progress made in the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership and in this context discussed cooperation in various areas, including maritime security, trade and investment, manufacturing, skill and development, connectivity and infrastructure, cybersecurity, etc. Japan also conveyed its agreement to be the lead partner in the connectivity pillar of the Indo-Pacific Oceans’ Initiative (IPOI), which was announced by Prime Minister in November 2019. Earlier in May 2020, EAM held a telephone conversation with Japanese Foreign Minister Motegi where they discussed India-Japan cooperation in the post-Covid scenario.

The year witnessed further strengthening of bilateral security and defence cooperation. Raksha Mantri held a telephone conversation with the then Japanese Defence Minister Kono Taro on 08 May 2020 and with the new Defence Minister of Japan, Kishi Nobuo on 22 November 2020. National Security Advisor and his Japanese counterpart Kitamura Shigeru also had a telephone conversation to discuss bilateral defense and security ties on 18 September 2020. The two countries concluded and signed the Agreement on Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Indian Armed Forces (so called “Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement” or ACSA) on 09 September 2020. The agreement will help in enhancing cooperation in the areas of maritime security and maritime domain awareness. Joint operational engagements continued in 2020 with the completion of the 4th edition of the maritime bilateral exercise JIMEX between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force from 26-28 September 2020. India, the U.S. and Australia also participated in Malabar 2020 which was conducted in two phases. Phase-1 was conducted in the Bay of Bengal from 3-6 November 2020 and Phase-2 was conducted in the Arabian Sea from 17-20 November 2020. General Ijutsu Shunji, Chief of Staff, Japan Air Self Defense Force visited India on an official visit from 9-10 December 2020.

On the economic front, Japan continued to be a key partner in India’s growth and socioeconomic development. In the financial year 2019-20, Japanese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was USD 3.23 billion. Cumulative investment since 2000 has been USD 33.49 billion, ranking Japan fourth among major investors. The number of Japanese companies registered in India rose to 1544. Japan continued to be India’s largest donor of bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA), with an ODA commitment of JPY 374.44 billion (approximately USD 3.7 billion) in 2019-20. In August 2020, a loan agreement was signed for JICA to provide a Japanese ODA loan of up to JPY 50 billion (approximately USD 500 million) as Covid-19 emergency support. Japan also provided grant assistance worth JPY 1 billion to aid India’s efforts in combating the Covid-19 pandemic. On 8 January 2021, another loan agreement was signed for JICA to provide a Japanese ODA loan of up to JPY 30 billion (approximately USD 268 million).
Mongolia

India and Mongolia enjoy warm and cordial bilateral relations. Mongolia regards India as a ‘Spiritual Third Neighbour’. The bilateral relationship was upgraded to a Strategic Partnership in 2015 during the historic visit of Prime Minister which has proven to be a watershed event in our bilateral relations with Mongolia.

Minister & Chief Cabinet Secretary (CCS) of the Government of Mongolia, Oyun-Erdene led a group of 18 Governors and 7 high officials from all 21 provinces of Mongolia in January 2020 for a special capacity building programme at IIM, Indore under the ITEC Executive initiative. During the visit, the delegation also called on EAM and the Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Though due to Covid-19 and ensuing travel restrictions, physical meetings could not take place during most part of the year, exchanges were conducted through VC and telephone conversations. In May 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with his Japanese counterpart Kajiyama Hiroshi on 08 May 2020 to discuss bilateral economic and commercial relations. The meeting was chaired jointly by EAM and Chief Cabinet Secretary of the Government of Mongolia. The two Ministers held comprehensive discussions on the entire range of issues covering bilateral cooperation including reviewing the progress of the Oil Refinery project which is being developed through a line of credit of USD 1.236 billion extended by India. The two Ministers agreed that successful completion of this project would contribute immensely to energy security of Mongolia. Mongolia confirmed joining the International Solar Alliance. As part of the celebration of the 65th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, EAM released 25 volumes of Mongolian literature and jointly unveiled a commemorative stamp printed by Mongol Post. The President, Vice President and Prime Minister exchanged congratulatory letters.

The Election Commission of India and the General Election Commission of Mongolia signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation in the field of Elections on 30 August 2020.

Republic of Korea

The momentum of bilateral relationship between India and the Republic of Korea (RoK) intensified with several high-level visits, including the State visit of the Prime Minister to Seoul in February 2019, the visit of President Moon Jaein to India in July 2018 and the visit of First Lady of RoK in November 2019. The relationship continued to gain traction this year through regular high-level interactions of senior leadership.

The Prime Minister had telephone conversations with President Moon during the Covid-19 pandemic on 08 April 2020 and on 21 October 2020 and discussed issues related to bilateral cooperation and also exchanged views on global developments, particularly the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

EAM held a video conference with RoK Foreign Minister on 19 May 2020 to discuss bilateral relations, Covid-19 related cooperation and easing of travel restrictions. Through a video conference, Secretary (East) also held a meeting with First Vice-Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea on 23 December 2020. The two sides discussed issues related to bilateral cooperation and also international issues of mutual interest including high-level bilateral exchanges, defence and security cooperation, COVID19 response, and coordination in multilateral fora.

Jeong Kyeong-Doo, Minister of National Defence of RoK visited India from 04-06 February 2020 during which he also attended the opening ceremony of DEFEXPO 2020 in Lucknow. Raksha Mantri had a telephone conversation with RoK Minister of National Defence on 10 July 2020 on issues pertaining to bilateral defence cooperation. Chief of Army Staff led a 7 member delegation to Seoul from 28-31 December 2020 on a goodwill visit for enhancement of defence cooperation through interactions at the highest military level.

On 20 August 2020, the India-Republic of Korea Consultations on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation were held virtually during which the two sides exchanged views on global developments and contemporary issues of mutual interest in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Both countries also facilitated the travel of their stranded citizens to each other’s countries. India also facilitated the travel of essential personnel of RoK business enterprises to resume operations in India. By 2 VBM flights, 242 Indians were repatriated from RoK to India and 234 Indians were facilitated to travel from India to RoK. In addition, around 1350 Indians traveled between India and RoK by chartered flights.

The 7th meeting of the India-Mongolia Joint Committee on Cooperation was held virtually on 03 December 2020. The meeting was chaired jointly by EAM and Chief Cabinet Secretary of the Government of Mongolia. The two Ministers held comprehensive discussions on the entire range of issues covering bilateral cooperation including reviewing the progress of the Oil Refinery project which is being developed through a line of credit of USD 1.236 billion extended by India. The two Ministers agreed that successful completion of this project would contribute immensely to energy security of Mongolia. Mongolia confirmed joining the International Solar Alliance. As part of the celebration of the 65th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, EAM released 25 volumes of Mongolian literature and jointly unveiled a commemorative stamp printed by Mongol Post. The President, Vice President and Prime Minister exchanged congratulatory letters.

The Election Commission of India and the General Election Commission of Mongolia signed a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation in the field of Elections on 30 August 2020.
Russian Federation

Prime Minister held 3 telephone conversations with President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation. On 01 July 2020, Prime Minister congratulated President Putin on the successful completion of the national vote in Russia on constitutional amendments. On 17 September 2020, President Putin called to congratulate Prime Minister on his birthday, while on 07 October 2020 Prime Minister called to congratulate President Putin on his birthday. 

Raksha Mantri visited Moscow from 22-24 June 2020 to participate in the celebrations of the 75th Anniversary of the victory in the Second World War, while a Tri-Service Indian contingent participated in the military parade in Moscow. Raksha Mantri visited Moscow again from 02-04 September 2020 for the joint meeting of Defence Ministers of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States), and CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organisation) to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the victory in the Second World War. On the sidelines, Raksha Mantri had a bilateral meeting with Defence Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Shoigu.

EAM participated in the video-conference meeting of the BRICS Foreign Ministers on 04 September 2020. From 9-10 September 2020, EAM visited Moscow for the meeting of the Council of SCO Foreign Ministers. On the sidelines, EAM had a bilateral meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, and also participated in the Russia-India-China (RIC) Foreign Minister’s meeting.

Defence Secretary visited Moscow from 19-22 October 2020, to discuss important issues of bilateral military-technical cooperation.

Russia and India cooperated closely in facilitating the repatriation of citizens under the Vande Bharat Mission. In April 2020, India allowed export of Hydroxychloroquine to Russia which was greatly appreciated by the Russian leadership. BIRAC (Biotechnology Research Assistance Council), a Public Sector Enterprise under the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), is working with the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) regarding testing and production of Sputnik-V vaccine in India. RDIF also signed agreements with some Indian companies to cooperate on clinical trials and supply of SputnikV vaccine.

Armenia

In April 2020, India provided Hydroxychloroquine tablets as humanitarian medical assistance to Armenia in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic. The return of Indian nationals stranded in Armenia was facilitated under the Vande Bharat Mission.

In May 2020, the Government of Armenia as well as the Municipality of Yerevan granted approval for installation of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Yerevan.

Azerbaijan

On 04 May 2020, Prime Minister participated in the online Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group themed “United Against Covid-19 Pandemic”, under the chairmanship of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev.
On 20 May 2020, Minister of Health and Family Welfare attended the NAM Health Ministers’ meeting chaired by the Minister of Health of Azerbaijan Ogtay Sh iraliyev.

The return of Indian nationals stranded in Azerbaijan was facilitated by the Vande Bharat Mission.

An 8-member Working Group on Azerbaijan-India Inter-Parliamentary Relations headed by Member of Parliament Nagi Hamzayev was set up in Azerbaijan in May 2020.

As part of the 6th International Day of Yoga celebrations themed on ‘Yoga at Home, Yoga with Family’, 11 online events were organised by the Mission in Azerbaijan on 21 June 2020. Expert level negotiations on the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) between India and Azerbaijan were held in the digital videoconference format on 17 August 2020 while negotiations on India-Azerbaijan Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) were held on 21 September 2020. Despite Covid-19, business delegations from India and Azerbaijan continued their active engagement in the online format.

Belarus

In May 2020, the return of Indian nationals stranded in Belarus was facilitated under the Vande Bharat Mission. On 02 October 2020, our Mission in Minsk organised a cultural event to mark the closing ceremony of Gandhi@150 celebration at the Belarusian State Medical University (BSMU), Minsk.

Georgia

In May 2020, The Government of Georgia issued a stamp to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Kazakhstan

EAM met the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tleuberdi on 10 September 2020 in Moscow on the sidelines of the 2nd meeting of India-Central Asia Dialogue held virtually on 28 October 2020.

EAM met Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan on 10 September 2020

The Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tleuberdi participated in the 2nd meeting of India-Central Asia Dialogue held in video-conference format on 28 October 2020, under the chairmanship of EAM.

Raksha Mantri met the Defence Minister of Kazakhstan Lt. Gen. Nurlan Yermekbayev in Moscow on 04 September 2020, on the sidelines of the SCO Defence Ministers meeting. In April 2020, India provided Hydroxychloroquine tablets as humanitarian assistance to Kazakhstan in the fight against Covid-19. The return of Indian nationals stranded in Kazakhstan was facilitated during May-August 2020 under the Vande Bharat Mission.

On 27 October 2020, the 1st Joint Working Group on Space Cooperation between Aéro Space Committee of Kazakhstan (KASA) and ISRO was held in the digital video-conference format.

The 7th Session of India-Kazakhstan Joint Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held virtually on 10 September. Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry led the Indian delegation while the Kazakh delegation was led by Vice-Minister of Trade Kairat Torebayev.

Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) under the Mission in Nur-Sultan organised several events to celebrate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Hindi version of the famous Kazakh author and poet Abai Kunanbaev’s ‘Book of Words’ was released on 10 August 2020. Rabindra Jayanti was celebrated on 08 May 2020 with rendition of his songs, poems and solo dance performances. 4th International Day of Yoga was observed on 21 June 2020 with performance of yoga protocols and discourses on yoga in various cities.

Kyrgyz Republic

EAM met the then Foreign Minister of the Kyrgyz Republic Chingiz Aidarbekov on 09 September 2020 in Moscow on the sidelines of the 7th Session of India-Kazakhstan Joint Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Kazakhstan was the 1st country for which an online course on Hindi language was launched on 09 May 2020 under the Vande Bharat Mission.

The 6th International Day of Yoga was celebrated by abiding with the social distancing norms at the Embassy premises on 21 June 2020.

On 25 September 2020, Indian Ambassador in Bishkek handed over IT hardware and equipment (personal computers, tablets and notebooks) worth over Rs 27 lakh to the Kyrgyz Central Commission for Elections and Referenda (CEC), as India’s assistance for smooth conduct of parliamentary elections.

Celebrations of the 150th birthday of Mahatma Gandhi were held in Bishkek on 25 September 2020 with the participation of the Chairperson of Kyrgyz Central Election Commission, Nurzhan Shaldabaev.
Tajikistan

On 06 May 2020, EAM had a telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan Sirojiddin Muhriddin to discuss issues related to cooperation in the fight against Covid-19, and other bilateral and regional issues.

Defense Minister met the Defense Minister of Tajikistan Col. Gen. Sherali Mirzo in Moscow on 03 September 2020, on the sidelines of joint meeting of the Defense Ministers of the CIS, SCO and CSTO to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the victory in the Second World War.

On 09 September 2020, EAM met the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, Sirojiddin Muhriddin on the sidelines of the Council of SCO Foreign Ministers’ meeting.

The Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, Sirojiddin Muhriddin participated in 2nd India-Central Asia Dialogue chaired by EAM on 28 October 2020 in digital video-conference format.

On 05 May 2020, India provided humanitarian assistance of tablets of Hydroxychloroquine and Paracetamol to Tajikistan. On 28 May 2020, India airlifted medicines to Tajikistan which was received by Tajik First Deputy Minister of Health. Another consignment of critical medicines was handed over to Tajik authorities on 15 June 2020. India also sent medicines to India-Tajikistan Friendship Hospital in Tajikistan.

The return of Indian nationals stranded in Tajikistan was facilitated under the Vande Bharat Mission.

On 31 August 2020, the 2nd Meeting of India-Tajikistan Joint Working Group on Peaceful Use of Space Technology was held through digital video-conference.

Tajik experts participated in an online webinar “Weaving Relations: Textile Traditions” organised by ICCR on 03 October 2020 to mark the culmination of Gandhi(150).

Turkmenistan

On 15 October 2020, President held a telephone conversation with the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdymuhamedov to discuss the state and prospects of India-Turkmenistan relations.

Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov participated in the 2nd India-Central Asia Dialogue held in digital video-conference format on 28 October 2020.

The 3rd India-Turkmenistan Consular Dialogue was held on 09 July 2020 in digital video-conference format to discuss issues related to the signing of consular documents, visa facilitation etc.

On 05 May 2020, India provided vaccines for Cholera, Typhoid, Meningococcal and Mefloquine tablets for Malaria to assist the Ukrainian contingent going on a United Nations Peacekeeping Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

On 21 June 2020, hundreds of Yoga enthusiasts across Ukraine participated in the Common Yoga Protocol to mark the 6th International Day of Yoga.

During May-August 2020, India and Ukraine worked close to ensure the safe and timely repatriation of more than 8,000 Indians from Ukraine under the Vande Bharat Mission flights. These flights also facilitated the return of hundreds of Ukrainian citizens back to Ukraine.

From 14 August 2020, Ukraine extended electronic visas facility for the citizens of India for the purpose of business, private visit, tourism, treatment, activities in the field of culture, science, education, sports, as well as for representatives of foreign media.

First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine Emine Dzhaparova was the Chief Guest at the ceremony to unveil the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Kyiv on 02 October 2020, to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

On 14 October 2020, India and Ukraine initiated an Air Bubble arrangement to further widen the scope of international air connectivity.

Ukraine

In April 2020, India provided humanitarian medical assistance in the form of Hydroxychloroquine, Chloroquine and Atazanavir tablets to assist Ukraine in the fight against Covid-19.

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Minister of Commerce and Industry held a video-conference meeting with Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Foreign Economic Affairs of Uzbekistan Sardor Umurzakov on 21 April 2020, to discuss issues relating to trade, investment and connectivity.

EAM held a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov on 08 May 2020 to discuss the ongoing cooperation during the pandemic crisis, bilateral relations and developments in Afghanistan. EAM met the Uzbek Foreign Minister in Moscow on 10 September 2020 on the sidelines of the Council of SCO Foreign Ministers’ meeting.

Prime Minister at the India-Uzbekistan Virtual Bilateral Summit on 11 December 2020
2020, e-ITEC programmes were conducted by India in which medical professionals from Uzbekistan participated.

An India Room providing Indian multimedia educational material has been opened in Bukhara State University in April 2020 under the grant assistance provided by the Ministry of External Affairs.

**Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation, established on 15 June 2001. In June 2017, during the meeting of Head of State Council (HSC) in Astana, the status of a full member of the Organization was granted to the Republic of India. On 30 November 2020, on the completion of one year of its chairmanship, India hosted the 19th meeting of SCO Council of Heads of Government. The meeting was chaired by Vice President. During the coronavirus pandemic, the member states hosted various meetings virtually.

**Major Achievements**

On 30 November 2020 India successfully hosted the 19th Meeting of SCO Council of Heads of Government in virtual format, that was chaired by Vice President.

On 13 May 2020, EAM participated in a video-conference meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held in Moscow. The meeting reviewed the preparations for the forthcoming SCO Summit and also exchanged views on international and regional issues.

On 10 September 2020, the Minister for Culture participated in the 17th SCO Culture Ministers Meeting through virtual mode. The participants discussed the development of cooperation in culture and arts in the preceding period, exchanged views on the implementation of the agreements reached at previous SCO Culture Ministers’ meetings and discussed measures taken in their countries to support cultural facilities during the coronavirus pandemic.

On 15 September 2020, National Security Advisor led the Indian delegation at the 15th Meeting of Secretaries of Security Councils of SCO. In preparation for the meeting of the Council of Heads of SCO Member States, the Secretaries of the Security Councils exchanged views on the situation in the field of ensuring security and stability in the SCO region.

On 22 September 2020, the Minister for AYUSH inaugurated the Webinar on the topic “Role of Ayurveda and other Traditional Medicine to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-3) in SCO Countries’. The Minister emphasized that the cooperation in the field of Traditional Medicine can act as a force multiplier in providing access to low-cost, safe and effective coverage for promotion of health and prevention of diseases in all Member states.

On 16 October 2020, Minister of Law and Justice chaired the 7th Session of the Ministers of Justice of the SCO Member States.

On 20 October 2020, during the 18th Prosecutor Generals virtual meet, Solicitor General of India led the Indian delegation.

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On 24 July 2020, Minister of Health and Family Welfare participated in the 3rd Meeting of Health Ministers of SCO member States. The Indian side proposed to set up a new sub-group of Traditional Medicine under the SCO Health Ministers Meeting for achievement of SDG-3.

On 11 August 2020, Preparatory Seminar for the first ever SCO Start-up Forum hosted by Invest India. From 20-21 August 2020, 1st virtual Meeting of Consortium of Economic Think Tanks of SCO was hosted by the Centre for Regional Trade.

On 4 September 2020, Raksha Mantri led an Indian delegation to the joint Meeting of Defence Ministers of the SCO, CIS and CSTO countries held in Kubinka, a town situated in Odnosovsky district of Moscow Oblast. The ministers exchanged views on current international and regional security topics, the consolidation of efforts to prevent wars and armed conflicts, as well as the further strengthening of military cooperation.

On 27 October 2020, Minister of Commerce and Industry launched the first-ever online SCO Start-up Forum. The Forum saw registration from 2500 plus participants from 60 countries.

On 28 October 2020 during the 8th virtual meet of the SCO Transport Ministers, Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways represented India.


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India’s engagement with Gulf countries continued through virtual meetings and physical visits. The Prime Minister participated in the virtual G-20 Summit under the presidency of Saudi Arabia in November 2020. He also had telephone conversations with virtually every GCC country during the pandemic. EAM visited UAE and Bahrain in November 2020 and held virtual meetings with his counterparts from UAE as well as GCC Troika during the year. Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas visited Kuwait in October 2020 to convey condolences on behalf of India to Kuwait on the sad demise of the Amir of Kuwait. India welcomed the decision of UAE and Bahrain to normalise relations with Israel.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic there was a sharp drop in trade between India and the Gulf countries during the year. However, there was mutual confidence that trade will be back to normal levels and an upward trajectory post Covid. India continued to attract investments from Gulf countries and remained a major buyer of energy from the Gulf. Both sides kept looking for new vistas to further strengthen their energy relationship. There was also a contraction of the number of Indian workers in the Gulf countries as employment opportunities diminished due to the pandemic. However, the Gulf countries and India remained confident that Indian workers will be able to return back once the economic situation improves.

The traditional trade and investment and cultural ties between India and the Gulf countries also continued to diversify in various areas including strategic areas such as defence and security, space and counter-terrorism.

On 3 November 2020, the annual Political Dialogue between India and the GCC, Troika was held in virtual mode. The Indian delegation was led by EAM and the GCC was represented at the Troika level by Secretary General of GCC, Bahraini Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, UAE. Senior representatives from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar also participated in the meeting. They held a detailed review of their previous interactions and held a detailed review of their previous interactions. The topics of these Political Dialogues were: (i) India and the Gulf: Leveraging energy partnerships, investment opportunities and emerging technologies for ‘Atma-nirbhar Bharat’; and (ii) Skill sets of the future for Indians in the Gulf. The first Panel Discussion discussed the ways and means in which the historic people-to-people ties and excellent political and economic relations between India and GCC could be used to contribute to the vision of a self-reliant India on the path towards a USD 5 trillion economy. The discussions also focussed on the role that the large and successful Indian diaspora in the GCC can play in realising this vision. The second Panel Discussion deliberated harmonising the skill sets of our workforce in keeping with the pace of technological developments and economic changes in the Gulf region. It also discussed the various steps taken by the Government of India to safeguard the interests of Indian workers especially those in the Gulf region. Panellists from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE participated in the discussions besides the panellists from India.

**Bahrain**

India-Bahrain bilateral relations are characterised by civilizational links, age-old cultural and trade ties, and close people-to-people contacts. The presence of a sizeable Indian community in Bahrain remains the cornerstone of bilateral ties. The close and friendly relations between the two countries have continued to be on an upward trajectory, following the historical visit of Prime Minister to Bahrain in August 2019. Our bilateral cooperation has diversified to include new areas of cooperation including defence and maritime security, space technology, health, fintech, IT and solar/renewable energy. The bilateral trade in 2019-20 was close to USD 1 billion of which exports from India to Bahrain were over USD 550 million and imports from Bahrain over USD 400 million.

The high level political interaction continued during the year. On 06 April 2020, Prime Minister and the King of Bahrain held a telephone call during which they reviewed the bilateral relations. The King lauded distinguished ties binding both countries, describing them as strategic, deep-rooted and based on common interests as well as mutual respect and understanding. The King praised the pivotal role of India at the region-
als were repatriated to various states of India through 127 special Air India flights and 115 Gulf Air special flights. Air bubble arrangement between India and Bahrain was operation-
alised on 1 September 2020. Over 11,000 Indian nationals travelled back to Bahrain from India after the operationa-
isation of Air bubble arrangement. Bahrain provided medical and other necessary support to the Indian community in fighting Covid-19. Bahrain also received a shipment of 1.5 million Hydroxychloroquine tablets from India in April 2020 for use in its treatment protocol for active Covid patients. Both sides explored possibilities of cooperation in Covid-19 vaccine, par-
ticularly for supply of vaccines being developed in India to Bahrain.

The other important events expected to take place during January-March 2021 include:

i. The 3rd HJC meeting between India and Bahrain is scheduled to take place in New Delhi in March 2021.

ii. Visit of Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) to Bahrain in February/ March 2021.

Oman

India and Oman share deep bonds of friendship rooted in thou-
sands of years of historical contacts. The relationship has now evolved into a vibrant and multifaceted strategic partnership. High-level exchanges in recent years have helped to move for-
ward and strengthen cooperation in key areas, including trade and commerce, defence and security, technology, health, edu-
cation and people-to-people ties.

Long time ruler of Oman and architect of India-Oman strategic partnership, late Sultan Qaboos bin Saif Al Said passed away on 10 January 2020 after a prolonged illness. Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq was announced as the new Sultan of Oman on 11 Jan-
uary 2020. Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq was Minister of Heritage and Culture since January 2020. Minister of Minority Affairs visited Oman on 14 January 2020 and conveyed condolences on the passing of Sultan Qaboos on behalf of the Government and people of India. The Government of India also announced one day’s official mourning on 13 January 2020 to pay tribute to the departed dignitary.

Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the resilience of India-Oman relations. Even during the peak Covid-19 lockdown, when sup-
ply chains all over the world were disrupted, supply chains between India and Oman remained functional. Both countries cooperated in the repatriation of respective citizens. Oman bought 1 million Hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) tablets from India and India facilitated the return of Indian healthcare profession-
als to Oman, when international flights were severely disrupt-
ed. Prime Minister spoke with Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq over telephone in April 2020. Both leaders discussed the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic and reaffirmed their commitment to work together.

EAM called newly appointed Foreign Minister of Oman, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Al Buxaidi in August 2020 and congratulated him on the assumption of bilateral relations. The Health Minister of Oman, Ahmed Mohammed Al Sareidi and India’s Minister of Health and Family Welfare had a telephone conversation in September 2020 and discussed co-

A Joint Commission Meeting was held virtually in October 2020. The meeting was co-chaired by Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promo-
tion of Oman and Union Minister (Independent Charge), Min-
istry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Minister of State, Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The JCMM discussed enhancing cooperation in economic, trade, in-
vestment and service fields, and increasing trade exchange be-
tween both the countries. It was also decided to hold the JCMM annually.

A virtual meeting to discuss bilateral, regional and multilateral-
issues including healthcare, Covid-19 vaccine development was held between EAM and Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Ha-
moord Albusaidi, Foreign Minister of Oman on 2 December 2020.

Minister of State paid an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman from 16 – 17 December 2020 and met Oman’s Foreign Minis-
ter, Minister of Labour and Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion.

The 7th session of India Oman Strategic Consultative Group meeting was held on 14 January 2021 in New Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by Secretary (CPV&OIA), Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs, Foreign
India’s deep-rooted historical, cultural and people-to-people ties with Qatar have further strengthened progressively in the past few years. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the momentum of bilateral exchange was maintained in virtual mode. Prime Minister held telephone conversations with the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani on 26 March 2020, during which they reviewed bilateral relations and discussed the efforts of both countries to combat Covid-19 and ways to cooperate to contain the spread of the virus.

Qatar

Ministry of Oman, who is leading the delegation also called on EAM and National Security Advisor during his visit. During the peak Covid period, India facilitated the return of a large number of Indian healthcare professionals from India to Oman to augment Oman’s healthcare capacity. Oman India Friendship Association, comprising prominent Omani and Indian origin businessmen was established in November 2020. Oman also announced visa free entry for certain categories of Indian passport holders in December 2020.

On the side-lines of the 4th edition of India Energy Forum by CERA Week, the Qatari Minister of State for Energy Affairs and the President and CEO of Qatar Petroleum, Mr. Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi had a virtual interaction session with our Prime Minister on 26 October 2020. EAM paid a two day visit to Qatar from 27 & 28 December 2020. During the visit he called on the Amir and Father Amir of Qatar, as well as the Prime Minister and Interior Minister of the State of Qatar and held detailed discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

The total volume of bilateral trade in 2019-20 was USD 10.94 billion which was a decrease of about 11% over the previous year. Exports from India to Qatar were USD 1.16 billion and India’s imports from Qatar were USD 9.78 billion. Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar invested USD 450 million for acquiring a 25.1% stake in Adani Electricity Mumbai Ltd. The Chief Executive Officer of QIA, Mansoor Bin Ebrahim Al Mahmoud, participated in the Virtual Global Investors’ Roundtable chaired by the Prime Minister and hosted by the Ministry of Finance and National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) on 5 November 2020.

The 2nd meeting of Joint Committee on Cooperation on Security and Law Enforcement Matters between India and Qatar is proposed to be held virtually in February 2021. In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, more than 1 Lakh Indians have been repatriated from Qatar to India by Vande Bharat Mission flights till December 2020. Air Bubble arrangement between India and Qatar has been in place since 18 August 2020 for flights to and from either side.

On 8 December 2020, PM held a telephone conversation with Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar. Both leaders decided to create a special Task-Force to further facilitate investments by Qatar Investment Authority into India, and also resolved to explore Qatari investments in the entire energy value-chain in India.

On 10 December 2020, PM had a virtual meeting with Mansoor Bin Ebrahim, Al Mahmoud, Chief Executive Officer, Qatar Investment Authority and discussed investment opportunities for QIA in India. On 10 December 2020, EAM held a telephone call with Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, following up on the recent telephonic conversation between the Prime Minister and Qatar’s Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

On 11 December 2020, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas had a telephone call with Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, Qatar’s Minister of State for Energy Affairs and President and Chief Executive Officer Qatar Petroleum on promoting Qatari investments in the entire energy value chain in India.

On the 4th round of Foreign Office Consultations between India and Qatar was held on 01 February 2021. The 6th Meeting of India-Qatar Joint Committee on Labour and Manpower Development was held virtually on 09 December 2020.

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The 4th round of Foreign Office Consultations between India and Qatar was held on 01 February 2021. The 6th Meeting of India-Qatar Joint Committee on Labour and Manpower Development was held virtually on 09 December 2020.

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The Custodian of the two Holy Mosques, King Salman of Saudi Arabia called Prime Minister on 09 and 29 September 2020. The leaders discussed bilateral relations and the G20 summit, in addition to regional and international developments of mutual interest. On 22 July 2020, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan called EAM. They reviewed bilateral relations and the strategic partnership between the two friendly countries. On 24 September, the two Ministers again discussed joint cooperation in all fields, focusing on the G20 agenda as well as regional and international issues of mutual concern. Commerce and Industry Minister spoke to his Saudi counterpart Dr. Majid Al Qasabi over telephone on 12 June and 05 August to discuss bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Prime Minister participated virtually in the 15th G20 Summit on 21 November 2020. He congratulated the Kingdom for its successful presidency of the G20 this year and termed the pandemic as an important turning point in the history of humanity.

EAM held a telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of UAE, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan (ABZ) on 24 April 2020 wherein both the Ministers discussed various aspects of bilateral cooperation and the global fight against the Covid-19 and ways of containing the spread of the pandemic.

EAM paid a 2-day official visit to UAE on 25-26 November, 2020. EAM met with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and his counterpart, the Foreign Affairs Minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed. During the meeting with UAE leadership, EAM discussed regional and global issues of mutual interest. EAM also met Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, Prime Minister of UAE and Ruler of Dubai on 29 November 2020 during his transit in Dubai on the way back from Seychelles and discussed ongoing bilateral cooperation.

Minister of Defence met with his UAE counterpart from UAE, Noura Al Kaabi on 28 April 2020 to discuss the meeting.

Minister for Culture had a virtual meeting with his UAE counterpart, Hussain bin Ibrahim Al Hammadi, on 09 December 2020 to discuss the ways to enhance the cooperation between India and the UAE in the field of education.

Minister of State visited UAE from 19-21 January 2021 and held meetings with Indian diaspora and his counterparts and various authorities in the UAE government.

As the UAE authorities took initiatives and efforts towards containing the spread of Covid-19 epidemic, the collaboration in the fight against Covid-19 emerged as another area for the India-UAE bilateral cooperation. The increasing cooperation between India and the UAE in the fight against Covid-19 resulted in UAE supporting India by dispatching seven tons of medical supplies and India in turn, helping in augmenting the UAE’s health system by allowing Indian health-care professionals to join health services in the UAE. To repatriate stranded Indians from across the globe, Government of India launched its ‘Vande Bharat Mission’ from Abu Dhabi with a flight to Kochi on 07 May 2020. India subsequently created an Air Bubble arrangement with the UAE in July 2020 that was extended till 31 December 2020. By the end October 2020, more than 6,00,000 Indians had travelled back from UAE to India.

India hoped that parties to the conflict in Yemen will be able to resume negotiations for a comprehensive ceasefire for peace to prevail. India also expressed its commitment to provide humanitarian help to Yemen as it has done in the past.

Annual Report 2020-21

Gulf, West Asia and North Africa

Yemen

India and Yemen enjoy a long history of close and historical people-to-people contacts. Due to the deterioration of the political and security situation in Yemen, the Embassy of India to Yemen has been temporarily relocated to Djibouti since 14 April 2015. The Embassy continued to render its services from its Camp Office in Djibouti during the year.

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EAM met the Foreign Minister of UAE in Abu Dhabi on 26 November 2020.

United Arab Emirates

With the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, bilateral ties between India and UAE have been further strengthened by bilateral exchanges. Prime Minister called Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ), Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, on 25 May 2020, on the occasion of ‘Eid-Ul-Fitr’ and discussed an array of regional and international developments, primarily focusing on the global fight against the Covid-19 and ways of containing the repercussions of the pandemic.

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EAM had a telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of UAE, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan (ABZ), on 24 April 2020 wherein both the Ministers discussed various aspects of bilateral cooperation including the global fight against Covid 19. EAM applauded the robust India-UAE relations and specifically praised UAE for its “generosity of spirit and clarity of policy that has characterised its approach.” EAM again held virtual discussions with UAE’s Foreign Minister on 08 June and 22 July 2020 to review the bilateral relations. Anwar Gargash, UAE’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs also held discussions with EAM during his transit visit in Dubai on 08 October.

At the level of institutional mechanism for bilateral cooperation, India and UAE convened the 13th Session of the India-UAE Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) and the 8th meeting of India-UAE High Level Task Force on Investments (HLTFI).

The 13th Session of JCM, held virtually on 17 August 2020, was co-chaired by EAM and Foreign Minister of UAE. Bilateral cooperation in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, cooperation at the UN and other multilateral fora and investment were among the key issues that were discussed under the aegis of JCM.

The 8th meeting of HLTFI was held virtually on 03 November 2020. The meeting was co-Chaired by Minister of Railways and Industry Minister spoke to his Saudi counterpart Dr. Majid Al Qasabi over telephone on 12 June and 05 August to discuss bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Prime Minister participated virtually in the 15th G20 Summit on 21 November 2020. He congratulated the Kingdom for its successful presidency of the G20 this year and termed the pandemic as an important turning point in the history of humanity.

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India and the GCC Troika held their annual Political Dialogue on 03 November 2020 in virtual mode. The Indian delegation was led by EAM. The GCC was represented at the Troika-level by Nayasir Falah Al-Hajjar, Secretary General of GCC, Abdulatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bahrain and Anwar bin Mohammed Gargash, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, UAE. Senior representatives from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar also participated in the meeting. The leaders undertook detailed review of India-GCC ties and appreciated the upward trajectory in ties witnessed in the last few years. They expressed satisfaction that India and GCC countries have continued their close cooperation even during the Covid-19 pandemic. EAM mentioned that a large number of Indian workers and professionals were eager to return to the GCC countries to resume their work and urged the GCC leaders to facilitate this through sustainable travel bubble arrangements with India. The leaders also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual concern.

West Asia & North Africa

The countries in West Asia and North Africa are grappling under the stress of the protracted Covid-19 pandemic with cases increasing on a daily basis, posing severe challenges to their health infrastructure and economy. To alleviate the suffering of these friendly countries, Government of India sent medical aid to Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt among others; facilitated import of medicines to Jordan, Israel, and Egypt; sent food aid and relief materials in the aftermath of 04 August 2020 Beirut explosions to Lebanon and following the devastating floods in Sudan and South Sudan in September 2020; to Sudan, South Sudan, and upon request from Djibouti and Eritrea. Stranded Indian nationals in various WANA countries and foreign nationals were repatriated under the Vande Bharat mission.

Despite the restrictions of the pandemic, high level interactions continued to keep the momentum of our bilateral relations up through telephone calls with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Djibouti and Algeria. Bilateral interactions moved to the virtual mode including the virtual meeting of EAM with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates Nassir Bourita; virtual meeting of Minister of State with the Syrian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Faysal Mekdad; and Foreign Office Consultations with Palestine. EAM inaugurated the 15th EIB-EXIM Bank, Digital Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership virtually on 22 September 2020 in New Delhi.

Algeria

The diplomatic relations between India and Algeria remained warm and cordial despite the challenging times posed by Covid-19. There was a telephonic conversation between the Algerian Foreign Minister, Sabri Boukadoum and EAM on 09 April 2020 to discuss medical cooperation and evacuation of Algerian nationals stranded in India. In our joint fight against Covid-19, India provided assistance to Algeria by supplying PPE and testing equipment such as real-time diagnostic PCR reagents, PCR machine, bio-safety cabinet, RNA extraction kits and PCR machines in April 2020. Despite a ban on its export, surgical masks worth USD 3 Million were supplied to India.

In cooperation with the Government of India, more than 4000 Indian nationals stranded in India due to Covid-19 were repatriated via the Vande Bharat Mission special flights and two Indi- an Naval ships, INS Shardul and INS Jalashwa, as part of Operation Samudra Setu. The Indian nationals included more than 1100 pilgrims, mostly from the UIs of J&K and Ladakh, and more than 900 fishermen from Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat.

Similarly, the return of Indians who were stranded in India due to the pandemic was also facilitated.
Djibouti

EAM had a telephone call with his Djiboutian counterpart, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in April 2020 to discuss the Covid situation in Djibouti. INS Sumedha, deployed for anti-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Aden, visited Djibouti port in January 2020 on the occasion of the first Republic Day celebration of the newly established government of the first Republic Day celebration of the newly established government.

Egypt

Despite the impact of Covid-19, high level engagements between Egypt and India continued virtually. Prime Minister held phone conversations with Egyptian President Abdel Fatah Al Sisi on 17 April 2020 to discuss efforts to halt the spread of Covid, and again on 26 April 2020 to exchange Eid-ul-Fitr greetings. India gifted two tranches of medicines and medical equipment to support Egypt’s efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic on 05 May 2020 and 29 May 2020. Under the Vande Bharat Mission, 03 repatriation flights with 631 passengers were operated in May - June 2020 and stranded Indian nationals were also evacuated on special chartered flights operated for seafarers.

Eritrea

A delegation from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) headed by Director, AIIMS, visited Eritrea on 26-29 January 2020, to explore possibilities of forging partnership in capacity building of Eritrean medical practitioners. More than 20 Eritreans attended various training courses conducted in India under IITEC/IIFS Programmes. 6 Eritreans were also nominated for ICCR scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate/phD courses. Three stranded Eritrean students were flown back to Eritrea in August 2020 by special flights operated by Ethiopian Airlines from Delhi to Addis Ababa and from Addis Ababa to Asmara. Likewise, two stranded Indian nationals in Eritrea were repatriated to Dubai and India in August 2020 by Ethiopian Airlines special flight. 33 Indians stranded in Eritrea were also facilitate to return to India by special flight. Eritrean participation was facilitated in various virtual summits/events such as First World Solar Technology Summit held on 08 September 2020, 15th CIIFXIM Bank Digital India-Africa Project Partnership Conclave held from 22-24 September 2020, International webinar organised by ICCR and UP Institute of Design on “Weaving Relations: Textile Traditions” on textiles and weaving to celebrate 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi etc.

INS Airavat undertook an HADR mission to Port Masawa and delivered 50 MT of food aid to Eritrea on 8 November 2020.

Israel

The 35th Government of Israel, headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanayhu, was sworn in on 17 May 2020, following three unprecedented elections within a year during April 2019-March 2020. The Knesset was dissolved on 22 December 2020. The two Prime Ministers have spoken four times since March 2020, while EAM and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi have been interacting bilaterally and as part of aid-focused conferences chaired by the then US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, along with Foreign Ministers of South Korea, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Vietnam.

Close to 550 Indian nationals were repatriated from Israel by three flights under the Vande Bharat Mission on 25 May 2020, 26 August 2020 and 22 October 2020.

Plan of Cooperation in Electric Propulsion for Small Satellite between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Israel Space Agency (April 2020); MoU on Operational Collaboration on Cyber Security between CERTs of India and Israel (15 July 2020); Cultural Exchange Programme for 2020-21 (20 August 2020) and Plan of Cooperation in the field of Water Utility on the India-Israel Bundelkhand Water Project between the Government of Uttar Pradesh and Ministry of Water Resources (Israel) (20 August 2020) were signed during this period.

Israel normalized relations with UAE by signing a Treaty of Peace, Diplomatic Relations and Full Normalization (15 September 2020) and with Bahrain by signing the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic, Peaceful and Friendly Relations (18 October 2020). India welcomed the agreements, while reiterating “our traditional support for the Palestinian cause and hope for early resumption of direct negotiations for an acceptable two-state solution”. On 23 October 2020, Israel, the United States and Sudan issued a joint statement announcing that Israel and Sudan have agreed to normalisation of relations. Israel and Lebanon commenced negotiations on the maritime border on 14 October 2020.

The 16th round of India-Israel Foreign Office Consultations was held through video conference on 7 December 2020, led by Secretary (CPV&OIA) and Alon Ushpiz, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel.

Jordan

National Security Advisor visited Jordan in January 2020 to move forward bilateral security dialogue. Despite Covid restrictions, high level engagements continued in the virtual mode with the Prime Minister’s telephonic call with King Abdullah-II on 16 April 2020. EAM also had a telephone conversation with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Al Safadi, on 05 October 2020, wherein bilateral cooperation, regional developments and Covid cooperation were discussed.

Under the Vande Bharat Mission, 812 stranded Indian nationals in Jordan (including a 58-member Malayalam film crew who were stranded in Jordan due to the Covid-19 crisis) were repatriated to India via four Special Air India Flights operated on 21 May, 29 June, 04 September, and 07 September 2020 which also evacuated stranded Jordanian nationals from India.

In July 2020, IRCON International Ltd. appointed Jordan Panorama for Consultancy & Development (UPCD) as its representative to explore possibilities for IRCON in the railways sector in Jordan.

Lebanon

Following a massive explosion on 04 August 2020 in Beirut which left nearly 200 dead, thousands injured and nearly 300,000 homeless amid a worsening economic situation, Government of India provided 56 MT of emergency humanitarian aid to the Lebanese Government on 14 August 2020. The aid was brought by a special Indian Air Force C-17 plane from India to Beirut. The consignment of medical aid containing 70 boxes of PPEs was also provided by Government of India to the Government of Lebanon. Three special community charter flights for repatriating Indians were organised between June-August 2020.

In December 2020, the Government of India donated office equipment (computers, printers and photocopiers) to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lebanon on their request.

Libya

India continued to maintain contacts with both the Libyan administrations in the east and west, mainly for welfare of the Indians residing in Libya.
Morocco

Relations between India and Morocco remained vibrant, reinforced by the close cooperation in the face of common challenges arising due to Covid-19 pandemic. A virtual meeting between EAM and Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates of the Kingdom of Morocco was held on 22 October 2020, wherein various facets of bilateral relationship were discussed.

Palestine

The 3rd round of bilateral Foreign Office Consultations was held through video conference on 10 September 2020, led by Secretary (CPV & OIA) and Amal Jadou Shakka, Deputy Foreign Minister of the State of Palestine.

As part of India’s developmental partnership with Palestine, protocols to extend previously signed agreements for projects funded by the Government of India were signed between the Representative Office of India and the Government of Palestine on 29 September 2020 at the Office of the Prime Minister in Ramallah in the presence of Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh.

On request from Palestine, India supplied anti-cancer drugs and PPEs to Palestine in June 2020. In July and September 2020, India facilitated the return of 19 Palestinians through Vande Bharat Mission flights.

Government of India has contributed the third tranche of USD 5 million in the year 2020.

Syria

Minister of State had a wide-ranging conversation with the Syrian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs & Expatriates, Faysal Mekdad, in a virtual meeting on 03 September 2020. During the meeting, Minister of State agreed to increase the number of annual IITEC slots from 90 to 150; offered 250 fresh scholarships under “Study in India” Programme during the academic year 2020-21; offered to continue annual training programme for the Syrian diplomats at SSIFS; to extend tele-education and tele-medicine services through connecting Syria into e-Vidya and e-Arogya Bharti Projects, etc.

On request of Syrian side, and as part of the Government of India’s commitment to extend humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, a 2000 MT consignment of rice is expected to be delivered in the first quarter of 2021.

The first Artificial Limb Fitment Camp was organised in Damassus, 2021 under the theme “India for Humanity” during December 2019- January 2020 in association of BMVSS (Jaipur Foot).

Tunisia

On 21 May 2020, 25 stranded Indian nationals were repatriated via a Tunisian military flight which was heading to India. On 14 December 2020, 250 fresh scholarships under “Study in India” Programme during the academic year 2020-21. We expect to send a 10MT consignment of life-saving drugs to South Sudan by end-January 2021.

South Sudan

Four evacuation flights repatriated stranded Indians and South Sudanese nationals under Vande Bharat Mission. To alleviate the sufferings of the South Sudanese due to recent flooding, Government of India donated 70 MT of food aid to the country. The food aid was transported through INS Airavat from Mumbai to Mombasa port (Kenya) on 20 November 2020 for onward transportation by road to Juba.

India sent 10 MT medical aid to Damascus on 02 July 2020, to assist Syria in their fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. At the request of Syrian side, and as part of the Government of India’s commitment to extend humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, a 2000 MT consignment of rice to Syria is expected to be delivered in the first quarter of 2021.

The first Artificial Limb Fitment Camp was organised in Damassus under the theme “India for Humanity” during December 2019- January 2020 in association of BMVSS (Jaipur Foot).
The region covers 25 countries in west, northwest, central and southwest Africa. The region is home to Africa’s largest population and fastest growing economies with huge reserves of energy resources and minerals. India sources about 18% of its crude oil requirement from this region. All 25 West African countries continued to support India’s candidacy in various elections in the United Nations and related international bodies.

During 2020-21, despite the outbreak of the Covid pandemic and the resultant travel restrictions, the spirit of development and progress continued to dominate India’s relations with countries in Central and West Africa which were constantly expanding and diversifying gradually.

India is currently implementing a flagship project in tele-education and tele-medicine for Africa called e-VidyaBharati ArogyaBharati Network Project (e-VBAB). So far, 17 African countries have signed agreements including the countries from the Central and West Africa region. The enrolments for graduate and post-graduate programmes commenced in February 2020.

The travel restrictions did not hinder India’s dynamic Africa Outreach Policy. India actively engaged with the countries in the region virtually, to conduct its scheduled engagements. EAM held telephonic conversations with his counterparts from several countries.

The diplomatic presence in Africa further increased with the opening of two more Missions during the year in Sao Tome Principe and in Sierra Leone. Diplomatic Missions in Mauritania, Liberia, Guinea Bissau and Cabo Verde are likely to be opened shortly as the requisite approvals for them have already been obtained.

India continued its development partnership association with Africa by announcing various lines of credit. India assisted 14 African countries in overcoming the pandemic by providing Covid medicines worth approximately USD 1.8 million. Several flights were organised to bring back thousands of stranded Indian nationals from different African countries to India and also for evacuating stranded African nationals to their home countries in Africa.

Angola

Relations with Angola gained further impetus during the year. EAM and the Foreign Minister of Angola, Téte António, co-chaired the 1st India-Angola Joint Commission Meeting in September 2020. Both sides comprehensively reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and agreed to diversify trade relations in the areas of health, pharmaceuticals, defence, agriculture, food processing, digitization & telecom. Three MoUs on Health, Training of Diplomats and Visa facilitation were signed during the meeting.

Earlier during the year, a high-level delegation headed by General Afonso Carlos Neto, Secretary of State for Material Resources and Infrastructure, participated in DEFEXPO 2020.

The Secretary of State also participated in the India-Africa Defence Ministers Meet held alongside the DEFEXPO.

Benin

India-Benin bilateral engagement gained in substance with the landmark State visit of President of India to Benin in July 2019. During the visit, he met President of Benin Patrice Talon, and reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations. 4 Agreements/MoUs were signed during the visit –
Burkina Faso
India and Burkina Faso have warm and cordial bilateral relations. To help the people and Government of Burkina Faso tide over the crisis caused by Covid-19 pandemic, medicines including tablets of hydroxychloroquine and other essentials were handed over. The Ministry of Health of Burkina Faso appreciated this gesture of Government of India.

Cameroon
With the opening of our Mission in Yaoundé in September 2019, relations between India and Cameroon further strengthened. After a gap of 12 years, Foreign Office Consultations are likely to be held in Yaoundé in the first quarter of 2021. The Minister of External Relations of Cameroon attended the 15th CII-Exim Bank Digital Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership held from 22-24 September 2020 on a virtual platform.

Bilateral trade, which stood at USD 904.81 million during 2019-20, increased by 73% as compared to 2018-19. India’s exports registered an increase of 20% reaching USD 228.45 million as against USD 187 million during 2018-19. India’s imports registered an increase by 97% reaching USD 676.36 million as against USD 343.30 million during 2018-19.

The project for construction of 225KV Nkongsamba Bafousam-Abong Mbang - Yaoundé transmission line under the Government of India LoC of 93.50 million as against USD 179 million during 2018-19. India’s initiatives in the field of Export Credit and Investment Insurance (ECII) are expected to play a major role in promoting Indian exports to Cameroon.

The 6th International Day of Yoga 2020 was celebrated virtually with the opening of our Mission in Yaoundé in September 2020. The closing ceremony of the commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi organised by the Mission in virtual mode.

Central African Republic
Relations between India and Central African Republic (CAR) remained friendly and cordial. The Government of India has initiated steps to revive two stalled projects under the LoCs viz., setting up a cement plant of 400 TPD capacity (USD 29.95 million) and Development of Mining Project (USD 20 million). CAR continued to support India in all the multilateral fora. Mission has facilitated repatriation of many Indian nationals stranded in CAR due to Covid-19 by organising special chartered flights.

Chad
India’s bilateral relations with Chad has gained momentum following the visit of the Prime Minister of Chad, Pahimi Padacke Albert, to India in March 2018 to attend the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Solar Summit in New Delhi.

Chad opened its resident embassy in New Delhi in early 2020 and India is likely to open one in 2021.

The bilateral trade recorded USD 329.44 million in 2019-20. The ‘Extension of Spinning Mill Project’, under the USD 15.90 million Government of India LoC to Chad has been fully completed.

Cote d’Ivoire
India’s friendly relations and cooperation with Cote d’Ivoire continued to grow during the year. Cote d’Ivoire supported India’s candidacy for various elections in international organisations, including the non-permanent membership at the UNSC for the term 2021-22.

India’s engagement with the host government intensified with a focus on strengthening our business linkages for trade and investment. Bilateral trade between India and Cote d’Ivoire for the period April to August 2020 was USD 307.32 million. 100 IITEC training slots and 10 ICCR scholarships are offered to Cote d’Ivoire which are being utilized satisfactorily each year.

With the onset of Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, the general focus shifted towards containing the pandemic. Mission’s activities during the period were focused on engaging with the Indian community who were stranded due to travel restrictions. 3 chartered flights were organised and 631 stranded NRIs were repatriated from Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia. Mission along with the Indian community in Cote d’Ivoire launched an India-Cote d’Ivoire ‘Covid-19 Response Fund’ and donated relief material worth 40 million CFA and subsequently donated 5,000 Covid-19 test kits worth USD 25 thousand to aid the local government in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mission also organised the 6th International Yoga Day on 21 June 2020 which was live streamed on social media highlighting the benefits of practicing yoga in boosting self-immunity in the current situation of pandemic. To mark the conclusion of the commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Mission organised a series of events over two days, paying floral tribute at the Mahatma Gandhi bust in VITIB, tree plantation and the commencement of commercial production of the Computer Assembly line installed by an Indian company under Government of India line of credit at Mahatma Gandhi IT & Biotechnology Park (MGIT-BP) in VITIB.

Annual Report 2020-21 Africa

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Democratic Republic Of Congo

Bilateral relations with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continued to remain cordial during the year. Government of India has approved 6 solar power projects totalling 744 MW, under fresh LoC, worth USD 223.44 million. Work on 1st Power Distribution Project worth USD 34.50 million for generating power from the Kakoldola Hydropower project in the Bandundu Province is underway and is likely to be completed soon. India continues to provide capacity building support to DRC, under e-Vidya Bharti and e-Arogya Bharti (e-VBAB). DRC extended support to India’s candidates at the elections to UN and related international bodies.

Mission facilitated repatriation of 1329 Indian nationals who were stranded in DRC due to the Covid Pandemic by organising special chartered flights.

Equatorial Guinea

India-Equatorial Guinea bilateral relations continued to expand during the period. In June 2020, India gifted consignment of essential supplies to Equatorial Guinea for addressing the Covid 19 pandemic. Agreement between India and Equatorial Guinea on visa e-Visa facility was introduced for Equatoguinean nationals.

Gabon

Gabon continued to support India’s candidatures at various international fora and India’s candidacies for various elections including the UNSC non-permanent seat for the term 2021-22. India continued to support in capacity building. Gana utilised slots under ITEC programme (Civilian & Defence), India-Africa Forum Summit decision and ICCR scholarships.

India continued to offer a large number of slots to The Gambian of international bodies. Oil India Ltd. (OIL) in partnership with OIL’s Indian Oil Ltd. is conducting oil exploration in the Shakti Block over an area of 3761 sq. km. OIL is in Phase II of exploration which is projected to continue till 2023. Gabonese Minister of Higher Education, Ivungw Musakani paid a private visit to India to explore the education facilities available in India in the private universities.

The Gambia

India and The Gambia have historically had warm and cordial relations, sharing English as a common language. Gambia supported India’s candidate for the Presidency of International Solar Alliance for the period 2020-22. EAM had a telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of the Gambia, Mamadiou Tangara in July 2020. Both leaders had fruitful and productive discussions touching upon bilateral, multilateral and regional issues of mutual interest.

Sheikh Omar Faye, Minister of Defence, had participated in India’s Digital Expo and the second India-Africa Project Partnership held from 22-24 September 2020 on virtual platform. Equatorial Guinea continued its support to India’s candidatures in all multilateral fora.

Ghana

Bilateral relations between India and Ghana continued to strengthen. Joe Ghartey, Minister of Railways and Carlos Kingsley Ahenkorah, Deputy Trade Minister of Ghana participated at the inaugural session of the 15th CII-EXIM Bank India-Africa Project Partnership Conclave held in September 2020. India-Ghana bilateral trade was recorded at USD 2390.97 million in 2019-20. India exported goods worth USD 617.42 million and India’s imports amounted to USD 1773.55 million. During the period between April-July 2020, bilateral trade amounted to USD 557.17 million with India’s exports amounting to USD 204.04 million and India importing goods worth USD 353.13 million.

India’s developmental partnership made significant strides. 3 LoCs, viz., USD 150 million for ‘Strengthening of Agriculture Mechanisation Service Centres’ in Ghana, USD 30 million for Rehabilitation & Upgradation of Potable Water System in Yendi and USD 7 million for construction of Foreign Service Institute Rehabilitation & Upgradation of Potable Water System in Yendi are currently under implementation. On 30 July 2020, President Akufo-Addo cut soil for the construction of Yendi Water Supply Project to provide the Yendi Municipality and its environs with 15,000 cubic metres of water daily. On 29 September 2020, Ghana Railways Development Authority and Afcons Infrastructure Ltd, India, signed a contract valued at USD 419 million, to construct a railway line from Edudrin to Obubi in the Ashanti Region.

The High Commission launched the ‘India Business Forum in Ghana (IBF)’ on 23 November 2020 in the presence of Deputy Minister for Trade & Industry of Ghana, Robert Atohoma-Lindsay and prominent business houses in Ghana as part of its efforts to promote bilateral trade and investment.

An MoU between the Governments of India and Ghana on cooperation in the Peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy and another MoU for Cooperation between the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership, India and the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission are ready for signatures and likely to be signed in the first quarter of 2021.

India continued to provide capacity building, Ghana utilised slots under ITEC programme (Civilian & Defence), India-Africa Forum Summit decision and ICCR scholarships. More than 200 students from Ghana enrolled to attend the courses offered under e-VBAB network project.

1500 Indian nationals stranded in Ghana were repatriated to India during Covid-19 by chartered flights.

The 6th International Day of Yoga 2020 was celebrated virtually on 11 September 2020.

Republic Of Guinea

Following the visit of the President to Guinea in August 2019, the bilateral relations have received a big boost. India has gifted 6 tonnes of essential medicines to Guinea to fight against Covid pandemic in July 2020. Two charter flights were arranged to repatriate 160 stranded Indian nationals to India in the months of June and July 2020.

Guinea Bissau

India continued to develop its existing cordial relations with Guinea Bissau during the year. Guinea Bissau supported India’s candidate for the UNSC non-permanent seat for the term 2021-2022.

India-Guinea Bissau bilateral trade remained steady at USD 113 million, despite the global downturn witnessed due to Covid-19. Mission regularly organised online seminars to promote bilateral trade in various sectors, such as dairy, textiles, artificial jewelry, engineering goods, etc. which were well attended and helped explore new avenues of cooperation.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, India has donated a large quantity of medicines to Guinea Bissau in August 2020. India also continued to offer a large number of slots to the Bissau-Guinean officials under ITEC programme including ICCR scholarships to pursue various courses in India. ITEC Day was virtually celebrated on 11 September 2020.

The 6th International Day of Yoga was celebrated in a virtual format. The Prime Minister of Guinea Bissau Nuno Gomes Nabiam gave a special message for Doctorshah on Mahatma Gandhi on 20 October 2020.

Liberia

India and Liberia continued to enjoy warm and friendly relations although no high-level visits took place during the year. Liberia has been supportive of India’s position at the international fora and India’s candidacies for various elections including India’s candidature for the non-permanent membership at the UNSC for the term 2021-22.

India gifted 4.2 tonnes of life saving drugs to Liberia to aid in
its fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. A significant bilateral cooperation project has been the completion of the 14-military hospital which is being used as the only Covid-19 hospital.

Niger

India and Niger continued to engage in spite of the challenges posed by Covid-19 pandemic. EAM had a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Niger Kalla Ankourao on 24 April 2020. Both leaders discussed the existing state of bilateral relationship and avenues of enhancing bilateral coop- eration further.

India and Niger maintained close cooperation at the United Nations and other international fora. Both countries have supported each other’s candidate in the UN Security Council. India and Niger will have the opportunity to work together as non-permanent members of the Security Council in the year 2021. The bilateral trade in 2019-20 was USD 74.50 million. Despite the slowdown induced by Covid-19, bilateral trade was record- ed at USD 20.64 million in the first four months of 2020-2021.

The developmental assistance projects in rural electrification made progress. Contracts were awarded for electrification of 40 villages under the unutilized USD 7.69 million available from an earlier LoC of USD 34.54 million. A USD 10 million Solar Rural Electrification Project of 50 villages in the regions of Dosso, Tillabery and Tahoua in Niger funded through an LoC extended to EBID is under implementation.

Additional projects for electrification of resettlement sites of the Kandadji Dam and upgrading of Power Distribution Net- work in the dam area worth USD 10.5 million, Potable Water Supply Networks Extension and Upgrading work of the three Capital Cities of Maradi, Dosso and Diffa regions worth USD 56.7 million and Agriculture Irrigation Project for the Re- settlement Sites of the Kandadji Dam amounting to USD 14.6 million were allocated to Niger out of the USD 500 million LoC extended to EBID.

India donated 6.4 tons of life-saving and other essential med- icines to support the fight against Covid-19 pandemic. India continued its support to Niger in providing educational and ca- pacity building opportunities in diverse disciplines through the ITEC programme and ICCR scholarships.

The 6th International Day of Yoga was held in June 2020 and Gandhi Jayanti on 02 October 2020 with the closing ceremony of 150th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi.
The Embassy, in association with the Association of Indians, managed to evacuate 100 Indian nationals under Vande Bharat Mission by a special charter flight in July 2020.

**Sao Tome & Prince**

India and Sao Tome & Prince maintained close and friendly relations. A diplomatic Mission was opened in Sao Tome in September 2020. A high level defence delegation led by Oscar Aguiar Sacramento e Sousa, Minister of Defence and Internal Order, participated in the 11th edition of the Def-Expo 2020 (5-9 February 2020) and the ‘India-Africa Defence Ministers Meet’, held in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Sao Tome supported India’s candidature in various multilateral fora including UN elections. India and Sao Tome are actively collaborating in the areas of economic cooperation, traditional medicine, medicinal plants, International Solar Alliance and exploration and uses of outer space for peaceful purposes.

Relations with Senegal continued to deepen and strengthen during the year. Senegal supported India’s candidature for the Presidency of the International Solar Alliance for the period 2020-22, and for the UNSC non-permanent seat for the term 2021-2022.

India-Senegal bilateral trade stood at USD 947 million, showing a slight decrease over the previous year, mainly because of a decrease in export of rice from India to Senegal. This was offset, to a small extent, by increase in export of clothing and pharmaceuticals from India. Mission regularly organised online seminars to promote bilateral trade in various sectors, such as dairy, textiles, artificial jewelry, engineering goods, etc which were well attended and helped explore new avenues of cooperation.

During the pandemic, two Vande Bharat Mission flights repatriated close to 300 stranded Indians from Senegal. The Gambian, Guinean Bissau and Mauritanian. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, India donated a large quantity of medicines to Senegal.

**Sierra Leone**

The High Commission of India in Freetown, Sierra Leone, became functional with effect from 25 August 2020. India’s development cooperation with Sierra Leone through Lines of Credit and through ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) aggregates to USD 217.5 million covering a range of infrastructure sectors. During the year, India has agreed to provide a fresh loan of USD 32 million through EBID to set up a University of Science & Technology in Kono District of Sierra Leone.

In accordance with the announcement made during the visit of the Vice President of India to Freetown in October 2019, India provided 1000 MTs of rice to Sierra Leone in November 2020, as a goodwill gesture.

India donated about 7 tonnes of medicines to Sierra Leone in November 2020 to fight the Covid-19 pandemic, as part of our assistance to various African countries.

**Togo**

The Embassy of India was opened in Lome on 03 September 2020 in line with the Government of India’s decision of opening 18 Missions in Africa. The Embassy is presently functioning from a hotel and will be shifted to a rented building on 01 January 2021. The Government of State had announced the opening of Indian mission in Togo during his visit to Togo in September 2019. The mission is still working from the hotel at present. Robert Duissen, Foreign Minister of Togo has acknowledged the opening of the Embassy of India in Togo. India and Togo continue to share warm and cordial relations which are further strengthened by establishing Indian embassy in Togo.

Cira Lawson, Minister of Digital Economy and Digital Transformation of the Republic of Togo attended a virtual conference on Global Technology Summit being organised by Carnegie India with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs in December 2020. The mission participated in the video conference organised by the PHD Chamber of commerce in November 2020. In order to strengthen business activities between India and West Africa, PHDCCI organised a virtual summit between Indian and West African business leaders to explore the process of exploring the possibilities of increasing business possibility between India and Togo.

Export Import Bank of India has extended five Lines of Credit (LoC) amounting to USD 150.1 million as on 30 June 2020 for rural electrification projects, farming and cultivation of rice, maize and sorghum, setting up of power transmission lines and electrification of villages through solar Photovoltaic system in Togo. The project for setting up a 161 KV power transmission line through Line of Credit of USD 52 million is expected to start by November 2020 and will be completed in 36 months.

During the Covid pandemic, 2 flights were organised and 186 Indian nationals stranded in Togo were repatriated and similarly Togo nationals stranded in India were repatriated to their home countries. The bilateral trade continued to grow despite pandemic.

**Eastern & Southern Africa**

The period marked high-level virtual interaction despite the adverse conditions created by Covid-19 pandemic. The India-Africa political engagement intensified the focus on the strengthening of the health and business linkages. In solidarity with African nations during the Covid-19 pandemic, Prime Minister had a telephone conversation on 17 April 2020 with President Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa, who is also the current Chairperson of the African Union. In his conversation, the Prime Minister conveyed India’s full support for the joint African effort against the virus.

The Prime Minister also had telephone conversations with President Yoweri Museveni of the Republic of Uganda (09 April 2020), Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, President of Egypt (17 April & 26 May 2020), Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali of Ethiopia (06 May 2020), Pravin Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius (23 May 2020), Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, President of Mozambique (03 June 2020), Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda (05 June 2020), and John Pombe Joseph Magufuli, President of the United Republic of Tanzania (12 June 2020).

EAM spoke to his counterparts in several African countries including Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda to reiterate India’s solidarity with African people in the fight against Covid-19 and offered all assistance in this context. His offers were deeply appreciated by these countries.

India’s Medical Assistance to Africa in their fight against Covid-19

India’s role as the “pharmacy of the world” has come into focus during this pandemic. India has a world-class pharmaceutical industry that is the producer of choice for affordable critical medications with brand recognition in all geographies and markets. In a coordinated response involving several branches of government and multiple private sector pharma companies, India was able to supply large volumes of these drugs to friends and consumers across the world, after ensuring adequate domestic stockpiles India has provided medical assistance to 35 African nations, on a grant basis, to support their response to the pandemic. These essential medicines are expected to complement the national efforts of various countries in Africa to combat the pandemic.

Evacuation of Stranded Indian Nationals

India also facilitated the evacuation of thousands of stranded Indian nationals to India from Africa. It also assisted in repatriation of the African nationals from several nations including South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia from India to their home countries.

Debt Service Waiver

As a member of G-20, India is committed to implement the recent decision of G-20 to suspend debt service payments for the poorest countries that request forbearance. The eligible countries for debt relief belong to the list of poorest countries of the International Development Association Initiative of the World Bank as well as the UN list of Least Developed Countries.
During the G-20 virtual meeting of Finance Ministers and Cen- tral Bank Governors in April 2020, India agreed to a time bound suspension of debt service payment by official bilateral credit- ors for the poorest countries which have requested such sus- pension in the light of Covid-19 pandemic. Accordingly, In-
dia has till date suspended debt for Zambia, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique and Lesotho in the wake of Covid-19 pandem- ic, in line with India’s commitment to assist all African partner countries to improve their health, economic and social indices as a gesture of solidarity.

Botswana

The Mission, through the Southern African Development Community, coordinated relief efforts for medical requirements from India for the Southern African region. 252 Indian nationals were evacuated under Vande Bharat Mission from Botswana. Botswana supported India’s candidature at the United Nations, including for UNSC non-permanent seat; at the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage; and at the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Person of Indian Origin Jamal Ahmad was conferred with the Pravasi Bhartan Samman Award-2021 for outstanding contribution in business. She is the first recipient of the award from Botswana.

Burundi

During the Covid-19 pandemic situation, 18 stranded Indi- an nationals in Burundi were evacuated by special chartered flight (arranged by HCL, Kigali) from Burundi-Kigali-Mumbai on 02 July 2020. Burundi was offered 10 slots for under-gradu- ate, post-graduate and Ph.D courses in the ICCR Scholarship scheme 2020-2021. Till now 8 students have accepted the scholarship offers and are participating in the online classes as they could not travel to India due to the pandemic.

Ethiopia

The Prime Minister had a telephonic conversation with Ethi- opian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali on 06 May 2020 and discussed challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister assured India’s support to Ethiopia including supply of essential medicines. In pursuance of the Prime Minis-
ter’s assurance, India gifted medical aid including HCQ tablets and other life-saving antibiotics to Ethiopia. This was handed over to Dereje Dauguma, State Minister of Health on 21 August 2020. On Ethiopian side’s request, surgical face masks worth USD 5 million were supplied by M/s Trident on a commercial basis to combat Covid-19 pandemic. The Mission facilitated 6 charter flights of Ethiopian airlines to facilitate repatriation of 734 Indian nationals. India and Ethiopia signed the Air Services Agreement on 17 February 2021. The event was attended by 110 participants. CII in collaboration with the Mission organized a webinar on Trade and Investment oppor-
tunities between India and Ethiopia – post Covid-19 on 11 Jan-
uary 2021. The event was attended by 110 participants. CII in collaboration with the Mission organized another seminar on India-Ethiopia business session on 29 January 2021.

Esuatini

Essential Medicines as humanitarian assistance valued at Rs. 1 crore were handed over to Prime Minister Ambrose Mandlovuo Dlamini in June 2020. In August 2020, USD 200,000 was handed over to Minister of Agriculture Jabulani Mabuza as India’s grant assistance to- wards Lubuyane Irrigation Scheme benefitting the Mahalaleni community to transcend subsistence to commercial farming. For Gandhi@150 celebrations held on 02 October 2020, a Mini Urban Forest was established with planting of 150 indige- nous plants in Mbabane.

In November 2020, a special e-ITEC course on Legislative Drafting was conducted for 42 Law/Legislative Officers of the Kingdom of Eswatini. Another e-ITEC course for 13 Lectur- ers/Teachers of Eswatini was held between 07-18 December 2020 by the National Institute of Technical Teachers Training & Research Chennai on “Strengthening Technical & Vocational Education Training Systems” to meet the Sustainable Develop-
ment Goals of UN. Eswatini-exclusive e-ITEC programmes for Performance Audit, Compliance Audit are being conducted be- tween January-March 2021.

On 27 November 2020, Eswatini conveyed its approval to EXIM Bank of India for signing of Line of Credit Agreement for USD 108.28 million for construction of a new Parliament Building and another LoC Agreement for USD 10.4 million for construction of a Disaster Recovery Site for RSTP. 22 Indians were repatriated through Vande Bharat Mission flight.

Kenya

During the period under review, EAM had three telephonic conversations with his counterpart, Cabinet Secretary of For- eign Affairs - Amb. Raychelle Omamo to discuss issues of mu-
tual interest including cooperation in healthcare.

EAM, Raychelle Omamo, CS of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Commerce and Industry, spoke at the 15th CII-Exim Bank Dig-
tal conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership on 23 Septem-
ber 2020. Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Trade of Kenya, also addressed the Conclave.

Essential medicines worth USD 1.54 million were gifted to Kenya in May 2020. Commitment for this was made during the visit of Prime Minister in July 2016. Another consignment of medicines related to Covid-19 was handed to Kenya on 12 Au-
gust 2020. Chief Administrative Secretaries of Foreign Affairs & Health were present at the handing over ceremony.

The Postal Corporation of Kenya, also known as ‘Posta Ken-
ya’ released a Commemorative stamp on Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti on 02 October 2020. The event was attended by DG, United Nations and Chief Administrative Secretaries of Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of ICT of Kenya.

Five Air India flights & four chartered flights under ‘Vande Bharat Mission’ repatriated a total of 1487 stranded Indians. These flights also took back stranded Kenyans from India. An MoU to set up an “air bubble” arrangement between India and Kenya was signed on 29 September 2020. Flights from India and Kenya have started operating under the arrangement. The Indian Naval Ship Alwar docked at Mombasa harbour on 20 November 2020 and delivered 70 MT of food aid comprising wheat flour, sugar and rice for South Sudan which had faced food shortages, induced by the Covid-19 pandemic and natural calamities.

General Robert Kimochi, Chief of Defence Forces, Kenya visited India from 02-06 November 2020. This was his first visit out-
side of Africa since taking charge. He met the Chief of Defence Staff and the three Service Chiefs.

Lesotho

India exported Paracetamol formulations to Lesotho in April 2020 to combat Covid-19 pandemic.

Malawi

India-Malawi relations continued to see growth and develop-
ment over the past year, benefiting from the momentum im-
parted by Prime Minister’s visit to Malawi in November 2018. Malawi is closely working with Malawi and the bilateral relations be-
 tween both the countries are progressing well.

India is an active partner to Malawi’s development and sup-
ports a number of developmental projects. EXIM Bank signed an agreement with the Government of Malawi for LoC worth USD 213.68 million for water projects in Malawi. In July 2020, a gift of medicines worth USD 2 Million was handed over to the Government of Malawi. As announced earlier during the Vice President’s visit in November 2018, 1000 metric tonnes of rice for humanitarian relief assistance were handed over to the Malawian Government in October 2020.

Many development projects have already been completed in Malawi under Government of India assistance. In May 2020, cooperation in the field of power generation was established between India and Malawi through an MoU between NTPC, an India public sector company and Electricity Generation Compa-
ny in Malawi. An important initiative presently being pursued is the establishment of India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development, a Pan-African premier Institution in the agricultural field at the premises of Lilongwe University of Agri-
culture and Natural Resources. These goodwill initiatives of the Government of India have been well appreciated by the political leadership and general public of Malawi.

The Mission organised the International Day of Yoga on 21 June 2020 through virtual interaction. The Mission also cele-
brated Gandhi@150 in a ceremony where a bust of Gandhi ji was unveiled in the High Commission, jointly by the Foreign Minister of Malawi and India’s High Commissioner.
Mozambique

Relations between India and Mozambique gained momentum during the year due to high level telephonic talks, drawing upon the momentum created by increased high level interactions in the recent past, donation of medicine towards the fight against Covid-19, developmental cooperation projects, and business and cultural events.

The Prime Minister spoke on phone with the President of Mozambique Filipe Jacinto Nyusi. Both leaders discussed the challenges posed in both countries by the Covid-19 pandemic. They discussed the entire gamut of bilateral ties including Indian investments and development projects in Mozambique.

The period saw a further strengthening of relations with Namibia and the Mozambican Ministry of Economy and Finance. Government of India offered a grant of USD 10 million for a water project in Mueda, the hometown of the President of Mozambique, which is under process. A Vocational Training Centre which was granted by Government of India during JAFS-I in 2008 at the cost of Rs. 5 crores was inaugurated. Government of India donated 13 essential medicines worth Rs. 2.3 crore including Hydroxychloroquine, Azithromycin and Paracetamol to the Government of Mozambique.

The Mission in Maputo organised the first virtual business event between the Mozambican Association of Information Technology Professionals and Companies and Electronic and Computer Software Export Promotion Council of India. A virtual business event was organised between Confederation of Economic Associations, Mozambique, and Engineering Export Promotion Council of India in the Engineering Goods sector. Mission organised two special flights to repatriate 100 stranded Indians in Mozambique and a second flight was operated between Maputo and New Delhi with 102 Indian passengers.

The 6th International Yoga Day celebrations were telecasted on Mozambican National Television. Mission also celebrated a 3-month long Bollywood Ronga Rang 1.1 & 1.2 Film Festival. A month-long Gandhi & Khadi Exhibition was held from 02 October to 01 November, 2020. To mark the 150th Gandhi anniversary, 70 Solar lamps provided by IIT Bombay were distributed among Joaquim Chissano University students.

Namibia

The period saw a further strengthening of relations with Namibia on bilateral and multilateral fronts, in a year when Namibian Government and other local authorities that saw activities were held in Windhoek, including in collaboration with Indian community of Namibia, with the President of Mozambique.

The small yet vibrant Indian community in Namibia, with the support of the High Commission, contributed NS 150,000 (approx. Rs. 7.25 lakhs) and provided in-kind support of food products and other essential items to the Namibian Government for distribution to needy people in April 2020 during the Covid-19 lockdown period in Namibia.

35 stranded Indians were repatriated from Namibia to India via Windhoek between June and August 2020 by special chartered flights under Vande Bharat Mission. Additionally, 6 Namibian Defence Force trainees in India were repatriated to Namibia between March and July 2020.

Negotiations between India and Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), headquartered in Windhoek, were restarted after a gap of 10 years for the conclusion of a Preferential Trade Agreement. The 6th round of talks were held virtually on 15 July 2020 with Namibia being the coordinator on the SACU side.

Rwanda

On 05 June 2020, Prime Minister had a telephonic conversa- tion with the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame. During the call, both leaders discussed the historically good relationship between the two countries and the challenges posed to the healthcare systems and economies by the Covid-19 pandemic. Prime Minister appreciated Rwanda for effectively managing the Covid-19 crisis. President Kagame thanked Prime Minister for promising to donate medical supplies and equipment.

On 10 June 2020, Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council in collaboration with the High Commission organised a Virtual Business Meet on Fostering Indo-Rwanda Cooperation in Information and Communication Technolo- gy (ICT). The Meet saw participation from various Indian and Rwandan companies in the ICT sector.

On 21 June 2020, the High Commission celebrated the Inter- national Day of Yoga by organising a virtual Yoga practice ses- sion.

On 25 June 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda, Vincent Biruta. The two Ministers discussed bilateral cooperation between India and Rwanda, the Covid-19 situa- tion, international organisations and the upcoming Common- wealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali in June 2021.

On 02 July 2020, High Commission facilitated a chartered flight that took Indian nationals stranded in Rwanda back to India and took back Rwandan nationals stranded in India to Rwanda.

On 23 September 2020, the Minister of Trade and Industry of Rwanda, Soraya Hakuziyaremye addressed the Ministerial Ses- sion of the 15th India Africa Conclave hosted by the Confeder- ation of Indian Industry. On 01 October 2020, as part of the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the High Commission or- ganised a virtual Gandhi Katha by an internationally acclaimed speaker on Mahatma Gandhi.

South Africa

India’s high-level outreach between Prime Minister and Presi- dent Ramaphosa continued in April 2020, discussing collabora- tion in combating the Covid-19 pandemic.

In September, EAM discussed bilateral cooperation with the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Nale- di Pandor, and also interacted with Pandor during the BRICS Foreign Ministers Council and a virtual IBSA Foreign Ministers meeting.

In response to the request from the Minister of Trade and In- dustry, Ebrahim Patel in April 2020, India facilitated the export of 2 consignments of Paracetamol and Hydroxychloroquine tablets to South Africa to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

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On 23 September 2020, the Minister of Trade and Industry of Rwanda, Soraya Hakuziyaremye addressed the Ministerial Ses- sion of the 15th India Africa Conclave hosted by the Confeder- ation of Indian Industry. On 01 October 2020, as part of the celebrations of the 150th Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the High Commission or- ganised a virtual Gandhi Katha by an internationally acclaimed speaker on Mahatma Gandhi.

On 01 November 2020, the bilateral ‘air bubble’ agreement between India and Rwanda came into effect. Following the agreement, the National carrier of Rwanda, RwandAir restarted direct flights from Kigali to Mumbai.

Tanzania

The Government of India granted permission for commercial export of Hydroxychloroquine & Paracetamol to Tanzania, in April 2020.

The LoC water project in Zanzibar worth USD 92.18 million was awarded and work on it has commenced. EXIM Bank of India has pre-qualified Indian companies for award of contracts under the USD 500 million LoC for water supply to 25 towns in Tanzania. The work is expected to be awarded soon. Another water supply project from Lake Victoria which is undertaken with India’s loan assistance of USD 268.35 million has reached its completion.

The Government of India formally approved the Government of Tanzania’s request for deferment of repayments of soft loans in respect of 6 LoC projects for the period between 01 May to 31 December 2020 in view of difficulties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

A bilateral ‘air bubble’ arrangement between India and Tanzania was announced on 28 October 2020 by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India.
The High Commissioner formally handed over the second tranche of essential medicines to the Chief Pharmacist of the Government of Tanzania in a ceremony at the Medical Stores Department (MSD), Dar es Salaam on 10 September 2020. A total of 15 Tanzanian IITEC scholars studying in different institutes in India were repatriated from India during the Covid-19 lockdown.

As there were no Vande Bharat Mission flights to Tanzania, 23 special charted flights to Mumbai, Kochi, Hyderabad and Delhi were operated from 29 May 2020 to 19 June 2020 which carried 2232 passengers back to India.

The Mission celebrated Hindi Diwas on 26 September 2020 at Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC) in Dar es Salaam in association with a diaspora organisation ‘Swarganand’, involved in the promotion of Hindi. Tanzanian children sang India’s national anthem and also took a pledge in Hindi to work towards betterment of India-Tanzania relations.

The Mission virtually celebrated its 6th International Day of Yoga on 21 June 2020. Video blogging competition ‘My Life, My Yoga’ was publicised widely and the Mission received over 40 entries. A special Yoga Video was also uploaded on the Facebook page of the Mission and SVCC on 21 June 2020 for a live yoga session from the convenience of homes of the view- ers and yoga practitioners.

The Mission virtually celebrated Gandhi@150, information on special events such as Ayurveda Day and Teachers Day was widely disseminated through social media. This included a spe- cial tribute by Tanzania’s Foreign Minister to his Indian teachers and endorsement of Ayurveda by two local celebrities.

Gandhi Jayanti was celebrated on 2 October 2020 at the University of Dar es Salaam. A special streaming of record- ed version of GandhiKatha by famous Gandhian speaker was arranged on 03 October 2020 through the social media plat- forms of High Commission and SVCC.

The First India-Tanzania Joint Defence Cooperation Committee meeting was held in New Delhi on 14-15 January 2021. A deleg- ation of 4 members from Tanzania Peoples’ Defence Forces visited New Delhi on 13th January 2021. Tanzania Air Force Commander, Maj. Gen. G.W. Ingram participated in Aero India 2021 which was held in Bengaluru from 03-07 February 2021. India gifted medicines worth USD 2 million in two tranches to mainland Tanzania, and medicines worth of Rs. 1.36 crores were dispatched to Zanzibar Island in January 2021.

**Uganda**

Prime Minister had a telephonic conversation on 09 April 2020 with President Yoweri Museveni. The two leaders discus- sed the health and economic challenges arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister assured President Mu- seveni that India stood in solidarity with its friends in Africa during this health crisis and would extend all possible support to the Ugandan Government’s efforts to control the spread of the virus in its territory. Prime Minister expressed his appreci- ation for the goodwill and care extended to the Indian diaspora in Uganda by the host Government and society, including during the Covid-19 situation.

EAM had a telephonic conversation on 25 April 2020 with the Foreign Minister of Uganda, in connection with the September call was a follow-up of the telephonic conversation held between Prime Minister and the President of Uganda. EAM confirmed the im- pending shipment of medicine supplies from India.

The Confederation of Indian Industry organised a digital ses- sion on doing business with Uganda on 18 August 2020. Vari- ous trade association bodies of Uganda and India, like Private Sector Foundation, Uganda, Uganda Investment Authority, Exim Bank of India, Ajanta Pharma Ltd, India, Samta Group, In- dia etc. participated. The session was attended by more than 200 participants. Another session was organised on business opportunities for Indian Mining Sector in Uganda with collabor- ation of Federation of Indian Mineral Industries and the Pri- vate Sector Foundation Uganda on 07 October 2020.

During the Covid period, considerable increase in pharma- ceuticals export from India was witnessed with export from April-September 2020 being USD 111.72 million in compari- son to total export of USD 163.84 million in 2019-20 and USD 160.06 million in 2018-19.

As per the announcement by the Government of India, during Prime Minister’s visit to Uganda in July 2018, India gifted 268 aircrafts to Uganda, for civilian and defence forces use (44 each), 44 utility vehicles for civilian use were handed over in March 2020 to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and 36 vehicles (10 buses, 10 troop carriers, 2 ambulances and 14 motorcycles) for the use of defence forces were handed over on 24 August 2020 by the High Commissioner to Adolphe Msige, Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs of Uganda. Four SVLs (Mahinda XLV) were handed over on 11 December 2020 to Mr. Kahinda Otufare, Minister of East African Com- munity Affairs of the Government of Uganda. The gift of vehi- cles was part of financial support of USD 929,705 for capacity building and creating supportive infrastructure for the East Af- rican Community announced by Prime Minister during his visit to Uganda in July 2018.

20 laptops were also handed over by the High Commissioner to Maj. Gen. (Retd) Kahinda Otufare, Minister of East African Com- munity Affairs, Govt. of Uganda on 05 August 2020.

Uganda was offered 35 slots for under-graduate, post-graduate and Ph.D in the ICCR Scholarship Scheme for the year 2020- 21. These scholarships are under the Indo-Africa Friendship Fund. The scholarships offers participation in the online classes as they could not travel to India due to the Covid-19 pandemic disruption.

Zambia

India and Zambia continued their cordial and friendly bilateral relations. As part of India’s commitment under the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration of 2005, India offers various trade-related benefits to Zambia such as duty-free market access and preferential duties as well as business visa-related concessions. Zambia remains an attractive destination for In- dia’s private investments, which is over USD 5 billion, ranging from pharmaceutical manufacturing to copper cables and min- ing.

Over the years, Zambia has supported India’s candidatures at international organizations and UN agencies. In 2020, Zambia supported India’s candidature for the non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council for 2021-22, Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and Intergovernmen- tal Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heri- tage, an indication of strong bilateral relations.

Economic and Development Cooperation is the main feature of India’s engagement with Zambia. India provides economic assistance to Zambia and assists in a wide range of skill de- velopment courses and training courses offered under ITEC programmes; specialized programmes under India-Africa Fo- rum Summit and ICCR-sponsored scholarship. Under ITEC De- fence, a candidate from the Zambia army joined the Defence Staff Service College Course 76 in July 2020 at DSSC, Welling- ton, India. Under the mission’s ‘India for Humanity’ initiative, Zambia attended COVID-19 and medical related courses under the e-ITEC programme.

Setting up of 650 primary health posts across Zambia is an advanced stage of implementation, supported by Government of India through ITEC and ICCR-sponsored scholarship. Under ITEC De- fence, a candidate from the Zambia army joined the Defence Staff Service College Course 76 in July 2020 at DSSC, Welling- ton, India. Under the mission’s ‘India for Humanity’ initiative, Zambia attended COVID-19 and medical related courses under the e-ITEC programme.

The International Day of Yoga was celebrated on 21 June 2020 through an online event ‘YOGATHAN’ in collaboration with the Art of Living members in Uganda. Later on, the High Com- mission of India, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and Indian Asso- ciation also organised another online Yoga Day celebration on 28 June 2020.

The High Commission celebrated the 150th Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on 02 October 2020 with In- dian community members and prominent Ugandans. Around 100 guests attended the event and 200 watched online. Vice President of Uganda, Edward Ssekandi, was the Chief Guest at the event, who un-veiled a ‘Charkha’ installed at the High Com- mission premises. The Charkha was received from Khoji India.

Under the Ministry’s ‘India for Humanity’ initiative, in connec- tion with the celebration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Ma- hatma Gandhi, an Artifical Limbs Camp was organised with the support of Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti in Kampala from 21 November 2020 – 28 December 2020. The camp was officially inaugurated by Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of the Uganda Parliament and the High Commissioner on 28 No- vember 2020. Uganda’s Minister for the Elderly and Disabled, Minister of Works and Transport, State Minister for Finance for Investment and Privatization, and Health Minister visited the camp.

A total of 513 persons were fitted with artificial limbs during the camp.
fulfillment of an announcement made during the state visit of Zambian President to India in August 2019, India also donated 1000 MT non-Basmati rice.

The first India-Zambia Joint Working Group meeting in the field of Geology and Mineral Resources took place virtually on 23 September 2020. The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in terms of capacity building in geology and mining and promoting trade and investment collaboration in this sector between both public and private sector companies.

Mission organised 8 chartered flights in which 649 persons including 4 foreign nationals were repatriated to India. 26 Indian nationals from Namibia and 30 from Zimbabwe were also repatriated to India in the first chartered flight on 09 June 2020.

Keeping Covid-19 related restrictions in view, Mission celebrated International Day of Yoga and Teachers’ Day, which were live webcast on Mission’s Facebook page. At the culmination of Gandhi@150 celebrations, Mission organised virtual narration of Gandhi Katha by famous Gandhian speaker on 03 October 2020.

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India-Zimbabwe relations continued to develop during 2020 despite the adverse conditions created by the Covid-19 pandemic. The agreement signed between India and Zimbabwe on reciprocal exemption of visa requirement for holders of diplomatic passports was operationalized with effect from 30 October 2020.

Business interactions continued through the virtual mode. Vice President, Gen (Retd) Constantino Chiwenga, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Sibusiso Moyo, attended the CII-EXIM Bank Virtual Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership on 24 September 2020. Foreign Minister Moyo also attended the webinar organised by CII on Business Opportunities between India and Zimbabwe held on 07 October 2020. The Ministry of Ayush held a video conference with the Ministry of Health and Child Care of Zimbabwe on 21 October 2020, to discuss collaboration in the field of traditional medicines.

During the year, medicines worth USD 1.05 million were donated to the Government of Zimbabwe to assist in the fight against Covid-19. A consignment of 1000 MT of rice was handed over on 22 October 2020, to the Government of Zimbabwe to help tide over food shortages created by natural disasters, including Cyclone Idai. The appreciation for these gestures was conveyed by the President of Zimbabwe.

India shared with the Government of Zimbabwe its experience in handling the Covid-19 pandemic. The two sides coordinated to ensure repatriation of stranded nationals in each other’s country. On the request of the Government of Zimbabwe, India facilitated the export of Hydroxychloroquine to Zimbabwe in the month of June 2020.

Albania

India-Albania bilateral relations are friendly and remain one of mutual trust and understanding. The 6th International Day of Yoga was celebrated virtually. Doctors, experts and Ayurveda enthusiasts from Albania participated in the webinar organised on Ayurveda Day.

Austria

India and Austria share warm and cordial relations. The bilateral relations were further strengthened during the year through telephone conversations between the leaders and foreign ministers, trade interactions, cultural programmes and people-to-people interactions amidst the global pandemic.

EAM had a telephonic conversation with the Austrian Minister for Europe and International Affairs on 11 May 2020. They exchanged experiences on combating Covid-19 and agreed to continue the dialogue on preventing and fighting Covid-19. EAM thanked Foreign Minister Schallenberg for taking care of the Indian community in Austria. Foreign Minister Schallenberg also invited EAM to Vienna.

Prime Minister had a telephone conversation with President Alexander Van der Bellen on 26 May 2020. The leaders exchanged views on measures taken in their countries to manage the adverse health and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Both leaders reiterated their shared desire to further strengthen and diversify India-Austria relations in the post-Covid world. Prime Minister highlighted opportunities for enhanced cooperation in sectors like infrastructure, technology, research and innovation, SMEs etc.

A preparatory meeting of the India-Austria Joint Economic Commission was held on 29 September 2020. The meeting discussed ways to reinvigorate the JEC mechanism and make it more result-oriented.

Prime Minister expressed his solidarity with Austria after a terrorist attack was perpetrated in Vienna on 2 November 2020. Sebastian Kurz, Federal Chancellor, Republic of Austria replied to Prime Minister’s message and further addressed a letter of appreciation to Prime Minister.
Margaret Schramböck, the Minister for Digital and Economic Affairs, Republic of Austria gave a special address on “India and Austria: Imperatives for a Digital Future” during the 5th annual virtual Global Technology Summit, hosted by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace India in collaboration with the Ministry from 14–18 December 2020.

India's relationship with Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) continued to be steady during the year. India is admired for its vibrant democracy and diversity by the people of BiH, who have seen intensive ethnic strife in the past. Culture and Yoga are popular strands of the bilateral relationship. The total bilateral trade for the period Jan - July 2020 was approximately USD 40.8 million.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Bulgaria continued to be a strong partner, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora, extending support to India's candidacy for a non-permanent UNSC seat, UNESCO, Postal Operations Council, etc. EAM and the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister for Judicial Reform and Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva had a telephone conversation to discuss the challenges brought about by the global pandemic. Foreign Minister Zaharieva thanked EAM for facilitating the emergency evacuation of Bulgarian and EU citizens through special flights, the last of which took off on 09 April. Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov congratulated Prime Minister on the occasion of International Yoga Day and expounded the benefits of Yoga in a video message.

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Croatia supports India's membership to the UNSC and NSG. Croatia imported 400,000 tablets of chloroquine phosphate from India, an amount sufficient to treat about 20,000 Covid-19 patients at a critical period of a pandemic situation. A significant development during the year was the installation of Mahatma Gandhi’s bust on 02 October, 2019, the first such bust in Croatia. The bust was unveiled by the Croatian Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic (first such instance of Croatian Prime Minister unveiling a bust) and Zagreb Mayor Milan Bandic.

Croatia

Croatia supports India for a non-permanent seat in UNSC. Croatia has also provided reciprocal support to India's candidacy to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Croatia is the 8th top investor in India with cumulative investments of USD 10.757 billion during April 2000 – June 2020. These investments as FDI equity inflows were in sectors including services, computer and software, auto manufacture, manufacturing industries, real estate, cargo handling, construction, shipping and pharmaceuticals. A Charter Flight repatriated Indian citizens (137 passengers) on 15 July 2020 apart from constant support to Indian citizens throughout the Covid-19 lockdown period. India facilitated, through Israel, a consignment of Hydroxychloroquine to Cyprus for which the Government of Cyprus expressed gratitude and expressed appreciation for India's help in support to Cyprus in dealing with the unprecedented pandemic of Covid-19.

Cyprus

Prime Minister and Prime Minister of Denmark at the India-Denmark Virtual Bilateral Summit on 28 September 2020

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Prime Minister and the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen held their first ever Virtual Summit on 28 September 2020 where they agreed to elevate India-Denmark relations to a Green Strategic Partnership. This was the first Green Strategic Partnership to be signed by India or Denmark with any country. The Prime Minister stated that this was a new age partnership and will add a new dimension to bilateral relations and help to expand economic relations and green growth, strengthen cooperation on addressing global challenges, with focus on implementation of the Paris Agreement and the climate change goals.

Czech Republic

This year witnessed an upswing in India-Czech bilateral relationship, generated through the high-level visits of the President of India to Czech Republic and Czech Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to India from 2018-2020 could be seen through strengthened and broadened political, economic and defence engagement between the two countries. The bilateral trade of around USD 1.5 billion and investments by Indian and Czech companies in various sectors indicates the importance of trade and investment relationship for the two countries.

During the Covid crisis, EAM spoke to the Czech Foreign Minister, Tomas Petricek on 24 April 2020 and expressed interest in strengthening bilateral cooperation including on Covid related issues. The Czech Foreign Minister also showed interest in increasing the quota for Indian skilled professionals to Czech Republic and to further streamline their visa procedures. During the early stage of the pandemic, in response to the request, the Czech companies expressed support in engaging with Indian counterparts for manufacturing of critical equipment like PPEs, masks etc. More than 100 stranded Indian nationals, including students, were repatriated from different parts of the Czech Republic to India through Vande Bharat flights.

The Czech Government actively participated at the highest level in the culmination of celebrations of Bapu@150 through the video message / tweet from Prime Minister Andrej Babis, Foreign Minister Tomas Petricek and Environment Minister Richard Brabec. On the occasion of the International Day of Yoga, several Czech organizations associated with Yoga and the Czech nationals participated in large numbers in events held across the country.

India and Czech Republic supported each other's candidacy at the elections of the UN bodies and other multilateral organizations. The Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis also nominated an Indian scientist on the apex Rand council headed by him.

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Denmark

Bilateral relations continued to strengthen during the year and were marked by close interactions between EAM and Danish Foreign Minister, as well as both Prime Ministers through telecom and virtual summits. In spite of the pandemic, 4 JWGs were held and 3 MoUs signed while several significant investments were made by Danish companies in India.

The 3rd JCM between India and Denmark was held on 12 May 2020 by video conference. EAM and the Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod discussed India-Denmark ties and strengthening of bilateral relations with focus on clean-tech, urbanization, renewable energy, green solutions, food processing and a stronger political partnership as well as creating a Green Strategic Partnership between India and Denmark.

The Prime Minister and the Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen had a telephone call on 14 May 2020 during which they compared notes on the steps taken by India and Denmark to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic.
try of Electronics and Information Technology and the Danish Agency for Digitization; Urban Development (24 June 2020) between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Danish Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs, and

India’s relations with Estonia remained friendly during the year. Focus shifted to virtual meetings and events due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Foreign Minister of Estonia Urmas Reinsalu participated at the virtual CII India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave on 5 November 2020 along with several Finnish companies. A Joint Committee on Science and Technology Meeting was held virtually on 17 November 2020 which identified 5G, Sustainability and Quantum Computing as the three areas of future cooperation between the countries.

On 26 November 2020, an MoU on cooperation in Environment was signed by the Environment Ministers of both countries. Another MoU for Cooperation in the field of Geology and Mineral Resources was signed between the Geological Survey of India and Geological Survey of Finland on 3 December 2020.

India’s friendly relations with Hungary continued to grow during the year though the pace of activities and exchanges were significantly impacted due to the pandemic. Hungary supported India’s non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for 2021-22. Both countries agreed to further strengthen their cooperation in bilateral and multilateral forums. A virtual meeting between EAM and his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias was held on 29 October 2020. The talks were focused on bilateral, regional and international issues, with emphasis on the deepening of bilateral relations and on developments in the Eastern Mediterranean and South Asia.

EAM had expressed the desire to visit Greece in the near future. In March 2021, India will participate at the Greece ‘Food Expo’ scheduled to be held in Athens.

India and Malta remained fruitfully engaged during this period, including at the highest levels which, apart from the bilateral engagements, included cooperation at UN and multilateral fora. The Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Malta Evarist Bartolo sent a congratulatory message to EAM on India’s election as a member of the United Nations Security Council for the term 2021-22. The period also saw a trend of increased cooperation between the two sides in the commercial field, witnessed by India’s increased exports, especially pharma exports, to Malta.

The relationship between India and Iceland continued to be warm and friendly with positive cooperation in the United Nations and other international fora. The 1st Meeting of the India-Iceland Joint Working Group (JWG) on Cooperation in the field of Sustainable Fisheries Development was held in a virtual mode on 2 July 2020. Both sides discussed ways of collaboration in the field of fisheries for tangible outcomes.

The 3rd Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) on Renewable Energy Cooperation between India and Iceland took place through videoconferencing on 28 August 2020. At the meeting both sides gave presentations on the geothermal energy sector in India and Iceland. Both sides re-established communication between all the key players in the geothermal sector, an area which has significant potential in India with an estimated 100,000 MWs of geothermal energy.

The Indian co-chair informed about the geothermal project being developed in the Union Territory of Ladakh by ONGC Energy Cooperation was held on 18 November 2020 between the Ministry of Power and the Danish Energy Agency. The 2nd JWG on Energy Cooperation was held on 18 November 2020 between the Ministry of Power and the Danish Energy Agency.

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Montenegro

India’s relations with Montenegro have traditionally been close and friendly since the days of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SF Yugoslavl) of which it was a constituent republic. There is considerable goodwill and feeling of friendship for India in Montenegro.

North Macedonia

North Macedonia is a long-standing friend of India and remains a reliable partner bilaterally and multilaterally. It extended support to India’s candidature for the Non-Permanent seat at the UNSC (2021-22), the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), etc. EAM sent a letter of felicitation to his counterpart Bujar Osmani upon the latter taking over as North Macedonia’s Foreign Minister.

Norway

The EAM had a virtual meeting with the Foreign Minister of Norway Ine Eriksen Søreide on 12 June 2020 and discussed the issues of mutual interest including economic recovery and Covid situation, ocean management and multilateralism. Norway was committed to forge a strong partnership with India in the areas of combating Covid-19, global health and advancing sustainable development and ocean management.

The 6th Joint Commission Meeting between India and Norway was held on virtual platform on 13 October 2020. The Indian delegation was led by EAM and the Norwegian delegation was led by Ine Eriksen Søreide, the Foreign Minister of Norway. Both ministers reiterated their commitment to cooperate closely in combating the Covid-19 pandemic, and welcomed the establishment of the CIVAX alliance to ensure fair global access to vaccines. Both sides also noted with satisfaction the India-Norway Dialogue on Trade and Investment (DTI) and the significant progress made in the Ocean Dialogue and initiatives under the Task Force on Blue Economy for Sustainable Development, and highlighted the activities under the Joint Working Groups (JWG) on Maritime, Marine, Hydrocarbons, Environment, Science and Technology, and Higher Education. Moreover, as India and Norway both got elected as incoming members of the UN Security Council, both sides agreed to engage in regular consultations at senior officials’ level on Security Council issues during the membership period 2021-22.

Poland

India and Poland share a long-standing friendly relationship, marked by strong political partnership, vibrant economic engagement and traditional cultural links. This positive trend in the relationship, particularly in economic and commercial ties, is reflected in the almost 200 percent increase in the bilateral trade over a period of a decade i.e. from USD 808 million in 2009-10 to USD 2398 million in 2019-20. Poland continues to be India’s largest trading and investment partner in Central and Eastern Europe. The balance of trade has always remained in favour of India. Indian investment in Poland is estimated at USD 3 billion providing employment to over 25,000 Poles and Polish investment in India, which has also risen significantly, is estimated at over USD 673.62 million.

Romania

India’s bilateral relations with Romania are warm and friendly based on mutual trust and deep understanding. Minister of State represented India in the 20th Anniversary virtual Conference of the Community of Democracies held on 26 June 2020, which was presided over by the Romanian Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu. Virtual consultation was held between Secretaries (West) and State Secretary of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 19 June 2020. Foreign Office Consultations and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), etc. EAM sent a letter of felicitation to his counterpart Bujar Osmani upon the latter taking over as North Macedonia’s Foreign Minister.

Serbia

After the formation of a new Government in Serbia, traditional close relations between India and Serbia continued and further strengthened during this year. Serbians take great interest in Indian art and culture. In spite of disruptions caused by the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, bilateral trade for the period January-September 2020 grew 4% and reached USD 138.6 million. Export of Pharmaceutical and Chemicals including Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) to Serbia increased by 43%. Serbian imported gloves and face masks from India for use in the fight against coronavirus pandemic. Several Indian pharmaceutical companies received extensive coverage in Serbia media.

Slovenia

India-Slovenia bilateral relations through Covid-19 pandemic continued to remain cordial. Virtual meeting between EAM and Slovenian Foreign Minister Anze Logar took place on 17 June 2020. Indian suppliers provided PPE to Slovenia during the first wave of pandemic. Collaboration on research between Slovenian scientists and India’s Serum Institute for Covid-19 vaccine is currently underway. At the multilateral fora, Slovenia supported India’s candidature for the Non-Permanent seat of the UNSC for the period 2021-22. It also supported Indian candidature for UNSC’s Intergovernmental Committee for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind for the period 2020-24.

The next session of Foreign Office Consultations, and Joint Committee on Technical and Economic Cooperation (JCTEC) are due to take place in the first quarter of 2021.

Agreements and MoUs on cooperation between (1) the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India and Slovenian Ministry of Energy, (2) National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad and Design Institute of Slovenia, (3) Ministries of Culture of two countries to realize Namaste India – Indian Heritage of Mankind for the period 2020-24.

The next Session of Joint Economic Commission (JEC) between our two countries is due to take place in 2021 in Slovenia, on a date mutually agreed through diplomatic channels.

Slovakia

The 9th Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Poland was held virtually on 10 August 2020. The 7th Session of Strategic Dialogue between Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) - The Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISIM) was held virtually on 27 October 2020. India and Poland have agreed to conduct regular Foreign Policy Dialogue with the first dialogue starting in December 2020. Poland extended support to India’s candidatures as a non-permanent member of the UNSC for the period 2021-22 and to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for the term 2021-2023.

Sweden

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For the period January – July 2020, India’s export to Slovenia reached USD 159.6 million, a decrease of 15.8% in comparison to the same period of 2019. Import from Slovenia stood at USD 77.7 million, an increase of 3.4% year on year. Total trade was USD 217.3 million, a drop of 12%. A total number of 30 Indian nationals availed repatriation facility under the Vande Bharat Mission. The next Session of Joint Economic Commission (JEC) between our two countries is due to take place in 2021 in Slovenia, on a date mutually agreed through diplomatic channels.

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The Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven called Prime Minister on 07 April 2020 to discuss the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the potential for collaboration and data sharing between Indian and Swedish researchers and scientists.

Several ministerial-level telephonic conversations took place during April-October 2020. During the telephonic call between the Minister for Commerce, Industry and Railways, and the Swedish Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs, Anna Hallberg on May 24, 2020, two Ministers discussed current global coronavirus pandemic situation as well as ways to further enhance economic cooperation between the two countries, WTO reforms, signing of a comprehensive BTIA etc.

The Swedish Minister for Health and Social Affairs Lena Hallengren held virtual consultation with, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare to discuss cooperation in the field of health and medicine. Minister Hallengren congratulated Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare for his election as Chair of WHO Executive Board and praised India for increasing the testing capacity. On 23 September, on the invitation of Minister for Health and Family Welfare, the Swedish Health and Social Affairs Minister, Lena Hallengren spoke about Sweden's experience on handling Covid-19 at Argoa Manhattan 2.0 - Moving towards Universal Health Coverage and catalyzing more robust health systems through digital technologies.
Switzerland


Turkey

A new bilateral mechanism, the ‘India-Turkey Policy Planning Dialogue’ was institutionalized between the two Foreign Ministries with the First Round held virtually on 22 October 2020. Despite both countries having partial lockdown and restricted movement of men and material, bilateral trade between India and Turkey during April-September 2020 was USD 2.36 billion. During the period, several activities including interactions between think tanks, cultural organizations and chambers of commerce and Industries of the two countries continued in a hybrid/virtual format. People to people contact were promoted through extensive use of the social media, besides events such as International Yoga Day and commemorative events to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. There is a likelihood of holding of (i) India-Turkey Joint Committee on Economic and Technical Cooperation (JCETC) and (ii) Foreign Office Consultations (FOC). However, holding of these events is contingent on several factors, including the evolving situation due to the ongoing pandemic and finalisation of mutually agreeable dates by the two sides.

United Kingdom

The year witnessed close partnership between India and the UK despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Covid-19 Cooperation

Starting April 2020, India has supplied to the UK critical medical and equipment, including 45.36 million paracetamol tablets and two consignments of 4.0 MT and 19.2 million hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) tablets. India also supplied etamol tablets and two consignments of 10.95 million 2/3 ply surgical masks to the UK in June 2020. In October 2020, a Panel Discussion on India-European Free Trade Association (BFTA) Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) was held in Bern. The Swiss Association of Ayurveda Physicians and Therapists (VSAMT) participated as a partner Organization in the 4th Edition of ‘CII Global Ayurveda Summit’ on 15 September - 14 October 2020. Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Vice President of the Swiss Federal Council and Head, Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, virtually addressed the inaugural session of the 23rd edition of Bengaluru Tech Summit on 19 November 2020. In March 2021, the UK Home Secretary Priti Patel and the Minister of State at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Lord Tariq Ahmed held a virtual meeting with Chief Minister of Gujarat, to discuss about regional and global issues of mutual interest reiterating their shared commitment to a multi-polar world and faith in multilateralism. They explored ways to strengthen cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, on countering terrorism and radical extremism and addressing emerging challenges in the cyber, maritime and space domains. During the visit, Lord Tariq Ahmed also met with the Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and the Minister for Education.

Economic relations

During April 2020 to August 2021, India’s merchandise export to the UK was USD 2.33 billion and Import was USD 1.47 billion, totalling USD 3.80 billion. A virtual 14th Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) meeting was held on 24 July between Minister of Railways and Commerce and Industry, and Elizabeth Truss MP, UK’s Secretary of State for International Trade. Both sides agreed to remove barriers to trade as part of a roadmap to a Free Trade Agreement. The two Ministers, joined by UK Minister for In-
International Trade Ranil Jayawardena, and Indian Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, also met business leaders representing bilateral working groups in three priority sectors: food and drink, life science and healthcare, and digital and data services.

Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, and his counterpart Ranil Jayawardena, UK’s Minister for International Trade, met virtually on 02 September 2020 and on 20 October 2020 as a follow up of 14th JETCO meeting CIM and Secretary of State Elizabeth Truss also had a review meeting on 9 November 2020. Both sides reiterates their commitment to working in the direction of signing a Free Trade Agreement in a staged manner. They also agreed to explore the possibility of signing a Social Security Agreement (SSA) between the two countries. India has requested the UK to consider giving a 5 years exemption from contribution towards social security to Indian professionals working in the UK.

Bilateral ministerial interaction between Minister for Commerce and Industry, and Elizabeth Truss, Secretary of State for International Trade, UK, took place on 9 November 2020. Both the ministers expressed gratitude on the ongoing support and engagement that is driving forward the India-UK trade partnership. They further engaged in a high-level talk on The Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP) as the first step in the roadmap towards a potential Free Trade Agreement, WTO compatible India-UK Early-Harvest agreement, etc. Taking the bilateral dis- cussion further, both the ministers also celebrated the progress made to date on removing trade barriers and taking forward joint initiatives to strengthen collaboration in light of Covid-19.

The 10th Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) was held on 28 October virtually between the Finance Minister of India, and Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of Exchequer, UK. The UK side welcomed the recent announcement by India to permit Indian companies to list directly on stock exchanges in select foreign jurisdictions, including the UK as well as India’s deci- sion to grant 100% tax exemptions to sovereign wealth funds for investments in infrastructure. The UK side also welcomed India’s support for consistent disclosure of climate risks in the financial system and SEBI’s expansion of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) related disclosures to India’s top 100 companies.

The 5th India Water Impact Summit (IWIS) was held on 10 December 2020 through a virtual format. The programme has a special track dedicated for strengthening international part- nerships with key nations including the UK. The UK is a key partner to India’s green financing needs.

Inaugural India-UK Policy Planning Dialogue (virtual) was held on 17 December 2020 in virtual format. Virtual India - UK bi- lateral consultation on Disarmament related issues was held on 17 December 2020. Inaugural India-UK Bilateral Consultation on UN Security Council related issues was held virtually on 18 December 2020. The 14th India – UK Joint Working Group meeting on Counter-Terrorism was held on 21-22 January 2020 virtually.

Defence cooperation

An MOU was signed between the Defence Institute of Advanced Technology (DIAT), Pune, and the University of West England (UWE), Bristol, on 17 August for implementing various collaborative research and academic programmes. Both the parties further agreed to work together in planning and exec- ute science and technology outreach activities and promot- ing STEM careers among the youth. The MOU is valid for five years.

An MOU between DIAT, Pune, and Cranfield University, UK, on ‘Dual Degree Programme’ was signed on 27 August 2020. The MOU enables students to pursue their two-year master degree programme in two years’ segment – one year in India and another in London. The programme covers aerospace, gun system design, guided weapons system and other advanced technologies.

The 15th Executive Steering Group (ESG) virtual meeting between the Indian Air Force and Royal Air Force was held on 12 November 2020. Both services engaged the talks to work towards capability development and further growth of their own service. The Aero India – 2021 is planned to be held from 3-7 February 2021 at Air Force Station, Yelahanka, Bengaluru.

High Commission of India in London celebrated ‘Indian Navy Day’ on 4 December 2020 to commemorate the success of ‘Op- Trident’ during the Indo-Pak conflict 1971. On the occasion, High Commissioner underlined the contributions made by the Indian Navy in ensuring security of India and in humanitarian operations. A Naval Exhibition, screening of the Navy Week Theme video, was held.

On 1 December 2020, General Manoj Mukund Naravane, Chief of Staff, held a telephone talk with General Sir Mark Carl- ton-Smith, Chief of General Staff, British Army. The discussions focussed on increasing bilateral engagement between the two armies. The 11th Executive Steering Group (ESG) Meeting (Army Staff Talks) is proposed to be held on 10 March 2021 in New Delhi.

Mistependent

The High Commission of India and the All Party Parliamentary Group – Indian Traditional Sciences (APPG-ITS) jointly cele- brated the 5th Aayurveda Day 2020 on 13 November 2020. The event was attended by Lords, Baroness, MPs and many experts and luminaries in the field of Ayurveda from India and other countries.

The online event of Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conference was organised in a virtual mode on 8 January 2021. Also, the online event of the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention was organized by the High Commission on 9 January 2021. An online programme was organized on 10 January 2021 to com- memorate World Hindi Divas.

France

India and France have traditionally had close and friendly rela- tions. In 1998, the two countries entered into a Strategic Part- nership, which is emblematic of their convergence of views on a range of regional and global issues. This strong bilateral rela- tionship has acquired greater depth in areas such as defence and security cooperation, space cooperation and civil nuclear cooperation and UN reforms.

Apart from these traditional fields of cooperation, India and France are increasingly engaged in new areas of cooperation such as maritime security in the Indian Ocean region, counter terrorism, climate change including the International Solar Alli- ance, and sustainable growth and development among others. India and France enjoy vibrant cultural and educational link- ages reflected in the growing people-to-people contacts. This was further strengthened by the signing of the Migration and Mobility Agreement, which is expected to come into force in early 2021 after it is ratified by the French Parliament. The Indi- an diaspora also has a sizable presence in metropolitan France and its overseas departments/territories.

Recent high-level political exchanges

Prime Minister held telephone conversation with President Emmanuel Macron on 10 January 2020 to exchange New Year’s greetings and on 31 March 2020 to discuss possible joint efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. On 24 July 2020 President Macron wrote to Prime Minister thanking him for India’s decision to lift export bans on life-saving drugs such as paracetamol, which had been exported to France when it was in the midst of the first wave of the pandemic. He also expressed solidarity with India in the fight against Covid-19, by sharing medical equipment and technical expertise. Prime Minister delivered a virtual address to the Paris Peace Forum held on 11-13 November 2020 on the theme “Bouncing Back to a Better Planet”.

The two leaders had a telephone conversation again on 7 De- cember 2020 where the Prime Minister conveyed to President Macron his condolences for the terror attacks in France, and reiterated India’s full support to France in the fight against ter- rorism, extremism and radicalism. The leaders also discussed other bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest, in- cluding improving the affordability and accessibility of Covid-19 vaccines, post-Covid economic recovery, cooperation in the In- do-Pacific region, maritime security, defence cooperation, dig- ital economy and cyber security, strengthening multilateralism, and climate change and biodiversity.

On 26 June and 26 September 2020, EAM participated in the virtual meetings of the Alliance for Multilateralism. He also had a telephonic conversation with his French counterpart, Jean- Yves Le Drian on 30 June 2020.

India and France held their annual Strategic Dialogue on 7 Janu- ary 2021 in New Delhi. National Security Advisor led the Indian delegation while the French delegation was led by Emmanuel Bonne, Diplomatic Advisor to the French President. Both sides reaffirmed the high priority they accord to the India-France
Cooperation in the field of maritime domain awareness. India and France also entered into a trilateral dialogue with Australia in the Track 1 format. Foreign Secretary co-chaired the dialogue where the three sides discussed areas of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region such as protection of marine global commons, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) and maritime security cooperation.

On 29 June 2020, Foreign Secretary held virtual Foreign Office Consultations with his counterpart Francois Delattre, Secretary-General, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs. On 29-30 October 2020, Foreign Secretary visited France for bilateral consultations and meetings with his counterpart and other senior officials in the French government. He also met Alain Guillon, Director General, Directorate General of Strategic and International Relations, and Emmanuel Bonne, Diplomatic Advisor to the French President. France is the ninth largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative FDI stock of USD 7.10 billion from April 2000 to December 2019, which represents 1.55% of the total FDI inflows into India. There are more than 150 Indian companies operating in France (including subsidiaries), employing more than 7,000 persons. In May 2020, bilateral trade stood at USD 456 million. A Joint Economic Committee exists at the level of Ministers of Commerce and Foreign Trade from both sides. The 18th Joint Economic Committee meeting was held virtually on 27 November, 2020. Minister of State, Commerce and Industries, and Franck Riester, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness. They discussed ways to enhance bilateral trade and investment and launched the Fast Track Mechanism for Indian and French companies.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation

France remains a major supplier of components and equipment for the Indian space programme. ISRO and CNES are currently finalizing an agreement to implement the Trishna infrared satellite project between 2024 and 2030.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation

During the visit of the French President to India in March 2018, NPCIL and EDF concluded an “Industrial Way Forward Agreement”. Discussions between EDF and NPCIL have been ongoing with the objective of expeditious realization of the JNPP project. In this regard, the JNPP Financing Committee Meeting was held in November 2020 to finalize the financing mechanism of the project.

Economic Relations

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Commercial Cooperation

India and France closely cooperated at the peak of the pandemic. India supplied France with nearly 2 million HCQ tablets and 36 MT of paracetamol (API) after having lifted export restrictions on these life-saving drugs. France expressed its gratitude by sending 120 ventilators, 50 thousand serological tests and 7000 persons. In May 2020, bilateral trade stood at USD 456 million. A Joint Economic Committee exists at the level of Ministers of Commerce and Foreign Trade from both sides. The 18th Joint Economic Committee meeting was held virtually on 27 November, 2020. Minister of State, Commerce and Industries, and Franck Riester, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness. They discussed ways to enhance bilateral trade and investment and launched the Fast Track Mechanism for Indian and French companies.

Defence Cooperation

The major ongoing defence-related projects include the purchase of Rafale aircrafts and the P-75 Scorpene Project. The first five Rafale jets arrived in India on 29 July 2020 and were inducted into the Indian Air Force at Air Force Station, Ambala on 10 September 2020. Florence Parly, Minister of the Armed Forces physically attended the induction ceremony and held a bilateral meeting with our defence minister. The second batch of three Rafales have also reached India. Exercise VARUNA was held between the two Navies on 19 of three Rafales have also reached India. The High Defence Committee meeting between the Defence Secretary and his German counterpart was held virtually on 12 January 2021, where they discussed various areas of defence cooperation.

Space Cooperation

Germany

Germany is one of India’s most important partners in Europe on account of its leadership role in the EU and its membership of the G4 alongside India. With the release of its Indo-Pacific guidelines, Germany has displayed interest in playing a bigger role in this region and it considers India an important partner in the Indo-Pacific.

In the uncertainty surrounding the post-pandemic scenario, Germany is now looking to diversify its economic supply chains, thus making India an attractive and reliable partner in this endeavour. Besides the economic interest, other areas of convergence include an open, free and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, desire for reformed multilateralism and a rules-based international order.

The two sides hold Intergovernmental Consultations (IGC) once every two years covering a wide range of areas of mutual interest and cooperation. The next edition, sixth, of the IGC is to be held in 2021 in Germany.

Germany is a preferred destination for Indian students to pursue higher education. More than 25,000 Indian students are currently studying in Germany. Around 800 German students are studying or doing internships in India.

Covid-19 Cooperation

India and Germany closely cooperated at the peak of the pandemic in both countries. India supplied Germany with nearly 50 thousand nose/throat swabs as aid. Germany also announced an EUR 200 million loan to India to help those most severely affected by the pandemic. Over 2500 Indians had been repatriated from India to their home countries through special flights. An ‘Air Bubble’ arrangement was established to facilitate smooth air travel between India and France.

The two leaders also held a video teleconference on 6 January 2021, where they discussed key issues of mutual importance including the response to the Covid-19 pandemic, bilateral ties, regional and global issues, particularly India-EU relations.

On 26 June and 26 September 2020, EAM participated in the virtual meetings of the Alliance for Multilateralism jointly organised by France and Germany.

On 26 June 2020, Foreign Secretary visited France and Germany for bilateral consultations and meetings with his counterpart and other senior officials in the French government. He also called on Niels Annen, Minister of State, German Federal Foreign Ministry and met Jan Hecker, Foreign and Security Policy Advisor to the German Chancellor.
1.5 tonnes of HCQ and 240 MT of paracetamol (API) after having lifted export restrictions on these life-saving drugs. In- dia also exported 8 million 3 ply surgical masks to Germany. For its part, it pledged to provide grants worth EUR 20 million and EUR 460 million in short-term loans to India to help those most severely affected by the pandemic. Germany also provided 5000 testing kits to India at the beginning of the pan- demic. From 22 July 2020 onwards the two sides established an ‘Air Bridge’ arrangement for smooth travel between the two countries.

**Economic and Commercial Relations**

Germany is India’s largest trading partner in Europe. It has con- sistedly been among India’s top ten global partners and was the eighth largest trading partner in FY 2019-20 (7th during FY 2020-21 up to August 2020).

Bilateral trade in 2019-20 was USD 22 billion. Indian exports during this period decreased by 6.87% reaching USD 8.29 bil- lion and Indian imports decreased by 9.7% to USD 13.69 bil- lion. During 2020-21 (until August 2020), bilateral trade was USD 6.74 billion. The global economic slowdown in 2019, and thereafter the Covid-19 pandemic have adversely impacted bi- lateral trade.

Germany is the 7th largest FDI source for India. The total FDI from Germany to India from April 2000-March 2020 is over USD 12 billion. In FY 2019-20, German FDI in India was USD 488 million. As per Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, there are more than 1,700 German companies in India. Ger- man investments in India have been mainly in sectors such as transportation, electrical equipment, metallurgical industries, services sector (IT, chemicals), construction activity, trade and automobiles among others.

Indian investments in Germany till date, is over USD 7 billion. As per CII, there are more than 213 Indian companies oper- ating in Germany, and are involved in Trading, manufacturing, R&D and innovation, and services. Indian companies have in- vested in Germany mainly through Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A). Investments are mostly in IT, automotive, pharma, bio- tech and manufacturing. The penetration of Indian software companies in German market is increasing. Major clusters of Indian companies are in the States of North Rhine Westphalia, Hesse, Bavaria and Baden-Wurttemberg.

Recent Indian investments in Germany include opening of a new Digital Innovation Centre in Düsseldorf by Infosys to support their clients in digital transformation. JBM Group’s ac- quisition of majority stake in German auto components manu- facturer Linde-Wiemann GmbH, establishment of the first global R&D Centre near Munich by Hero MotoCorp and L&T’s acquisition of German IT firm Nielsen+ Partner to strengthen its banking and financial services software segment.

Fast Track mechanisms are in place by DPIIT and German Min- istry of Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) to address issues/ grievances of companies in India and Germany.

**Development Cooperation**

Germany has been an important development cooperation partner for several decades. Total bilateral technical and Finan- cial Cooperation since it began in 1958, amounts to approx. USD 22.73 billion. Energy, sustainable economic development and environment and management of natural resources are pri- ority areas.

Financial assistance from Germany is mainly as soft loan, com- bosite loans or grants routed through KfW, German Govern- ment’s Development Bank. Technical assistance is provided through GIZ, German Government’s development agency.

Major strategic projects in the energy sector (renewables, Green Energy Corridor Indo-German Solar Partnership), urban development and sustainable urban development (water/sanita- tion/waste, climate friendly urban mobility, smart cities).

**Economic and Commercial Relations**

Bilateral trade in goods surpassed USD 1 billion in the 2019 calendar year for the first time in history, reaching USD 1.06 billion and recording an annual growth rate of 21% year-on-year. Portuguese investment into India has doubled in the last two years from USD 49 million to USD 99 million as of De- cember 2019 in sectors like petrochemicals, industrial moulds, ferries, tourism and tax matters. Financial assistance is mainly as soft loan, com- bosite loans or grants routed through KfW, German Govern- ment’s Development Bank. Technical assistance is provided through GIZ, German Government’s development agency. Major strategic projects in the energy sector (renewables, Green Energy Corridor Indo-German Solar Partnership), urban development and sustainable urban development (water/sanita- tion/waste, climate friendly urban mobility, smart cities).

**Covid-19 cooperation**

Around 120 Indian citizens were repatriated to India on special flights under the ‘Vande Bharat’ initiative. Following an official Portuguese request for HCQ tablets during Covid-19, India lifted the export ban, allowing a sale of 2.5 million HCQ tablets to Portugal. India also supplied Portugal with 15 tonnes of sani- tary equipment such as protective gloves.

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Ireland

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdowns, a lot of annual events of the Mission had to be curtailed or shifted to digital platforms. The Embassy adapted to the changed circumstances and continued its functions, including rendering consular, visa and passport services in accordance with local guidelines.

Bilateral political and economic relations between India and Ireland remained upbeat, despite the Covid-19 challenge. In the midst of the pandemic, Prime Minister had a telecon with the then Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar (on 22 April 2020) to discuss collaboration in pharmaceuticals and medical research in joint global fight against the pandemic. Varadkar expressed appreciation for the exceptional role played by Indian doctors and nurses in difficult times. The commemorative centenary of Connacht Rangers Muntry, one of the most extraordinary acts of defiance against the British Empire in India on 28 June 1920 by Irish soldiers serving in the British army, was organised in Dublin, led by Leo Varadkar. The 35th anniversary of the crash of Air India Kanishka off the South West coast of Ireland near Ahakista was marked virtually (23 June 2020) with the local community. With the lifting of pandemic restrictions, Mission has proposed a high level visit by EAM/CJI as well as an Irish Parliamentary delegation to India in Q1-2021 to provide a spur to bilateral relations. At the multilateral level, both India and Ireland were elected as non-permanent members of the UNSC for 2021-22, Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney spoke to EAM on August 2020 to discuss the common agenda of multilateralism, peacekeeping, climate change and rule-based international order. Ireland supported India’s candidature to the Security Council for the period 2019-2020.

Parliamentary Elections and Government Formation

Following inconclusive general elections in Ireland a 3-party historic coalition Government comprising Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Greens, was formed on 26 June 2020. Micheal Martin, historic coalition Government comprising Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Greens, was formed on 26 June 2020. Micheal Martin, led by Leo Varadkar. The 35th anniversary of the crash of Air India Kanishka off the South West coast of Ireland near Ahakista was marked virtually (23 June 2020) with the local community. With the lifting of pandemic restrictions, Mission has proposed a high level visit by EAM/CJI as well as an Irish Parliamentary delegation to India in Q1-2021 to provide a spur to bilateral relations. At the multilateral level, both India and Ireland were elected as non-permanent members of the UNSC for 2021-22, Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney spoke to EAM on August 2020 to discuss the common agenda of multilateralism, peacekeeping, climate change and rule-based international order. Ireland supported India’s candidature to the Security Council for the period 2019-2020.

Cooperation within the framework of the EU

Mission has identified niche areas of CT, climate change, renewable energy and cyber security for strengthened cooperation.

Covid-19 Pandemic

At bilateral level, as demonstration of its commitment, India supplied around 1,700 MT does of paracetamol to Ireland. To assist the large Indian community and students, the Embassy set up various support structures, including the Community Support Group (CSG), in all major cities viz. Dublin, Cork, Galway, Wexford, Athlone, Sligo and Limerick, representing members from different professions like doctors, academics, clinical psychologists, entrepreneurs and students. Effective partnerships were also set up with regional Indian Associations representing different provinces of India, religious bodies and voluntary groups. For the welfare of Indian students, (5000 throughout Ireland), liaison was maintained with the Heads of major universities for establishment of special student support systems. Regular webinar interactions were held with Indian community, students and entrepreneurs. To lift spirits, virtual Yoga, dance, meditation, cookery and film screening were held. Two Vande Bharat repatriation flights were organised to Bengaluru-Kochi (30 May 2020) and Delhi-Mumbai (03 June 2020).

IDY and Ayurveda Day 2020

IDY 2020 was dedicated to frontline staff in Ireland, representing nurses, police force, fire service, National Ambulance, Dublin Bus, hospitals and cleaning services (20 June 2020). It was highlighted that the quintessential message of Yoga promoting holistic health, community connectivity, peace and harmony was particularly relevant in the time of Covid and resonated strongly with the core value system critical to tackling the pandemic. The live-streamed event was joined by more than 10,000 people practicing from home, as per stipulated local health protocol. Other events included virtual Yoga quiz competition, My-Life-My-Yoga video blogging competition, online Yoga films and free online Yoga classes offered by some institutes.

Ayurveda Day (13 November 2020) was marked through various online events, with participation of Ayurveda practitioners, patients and other stakeholders.

Gandhi@150 finale events

The Embassy, in collaboration with the local institutions/ colleges/schools, clubs, associations and websites, put together a series of events. These included: “Gandhi Kshatva” by Shobhanna Radhakrishna, Gandhian Forum for Ethical Corporate Governance (28 September 2020), screening of “Lage Raho Munna Bhai” (29 September 2020); drawing Competition and Quiz on Gandhi for children (30 September 2020); talk by Jacob Pulicikan, Founder and Director at Gandhi Centre for Rural Development, Swadesh and Gandhi Darshan (01 October 2020); panel discussion in partnership with University College Dublin (UCD) (02 October 2020); Gandhi commemorative event at John Scottus School, Dublin (School has been teaching Sanskrit since inception in 1987) (02 October 2020); and inter-cultural talk on “Mahatma Gandhi’s Contribution to World Religion and Spirituality”, organised by Vedic Hindu Culture Centre of Ireland (WHCI) (30 October 2020). Former Irish PM Mr. Bertie Ahern (he was PM from 1997 - 2008 and had visited India in 2006) also contributed to the celebrations with a short video message and his insights on Gandhi’s contributions to humanity has been trying to promote Khadi collaboration with Irish industry.

Culture

The Embassy assisted the Indian community in celebration of virtual regional festivals. The first Hindu temple in Ireland was inaugurated (22 August 2020) by Vedic Hindu Culture Centre, Ireland (VHCCI), towards realization of socio-cultural-religious aspirations of the community. The Teachers Day was organised (07 September 2020) through virtual panel discussion with Indian-origin teachers in Ireland, centered around propagation of Indian culture, languages and value system. Hindi Divas and Vishwa Hindi Divas were marked through week-long campaign of events, centred around #WordOfHindi. Constitution Day (26 November 2020) was marked by events organised in association with Indian students representing various Irish Universities.

Belgium

India and Belgium enjoy excellent bilateral relations. The ties further strengthened, with focus on enhanced multilateral engagement, as Belgium held the non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for the period 2019-2020.

Cooperation within the framework of the EU

Mission has identified niche areas of CT, climate change, renewable energy and cyber security for strengthened cooperation.

Covid-19 cooperation

In general cooperation, in the fight against Covid-19 affected the bilateral agenda. 1000ks of HCQ/APV was exported to India Community

There are approximately 45,000 persons of Indian origin in Ireland, approximately 25,000 PIOs. The bulk of the community is in health-care, IT, engineering and senior management positions. The community is well integrated into Irish society and is involved in several cultural events. Passport and 110 visas were issued, 421 documents were attested, and 327 new births and 5 deaths were registered.

Provincial Outreach

Dependent on easing of internal travel restrictions, the Embassy continued with its provincial outreach activities, mainly to explore post-Covid collaboration, particularly in economic and medical fields. Ambassador visited the Counties of Sligo (June); Port Laoise, Monaghan, Wicklow and Carlow (July); Meath, Leitrim and Carrick-on-Suir (August); Cork and Laois (August); as well as Galway and Waterford (December). During these visits, meetings were held with the Mayors/City Council officials, Presidents of local Chambers of Commerce and Enterprise Centres as well as Heads of Universities. Site visits were made to local business firms with potential for collaboration with India. There were also important opportunities to pay tribute to Indian frontline workers at city hospitals for their outstanding work during the Covid. A key element of the programme was interaction with members of the Indian community in the Counties, to assure full Embassy support.

Economic

Trade between Ireland and India for 2019-20 was EUR 1.08 billion, with Indian exports amounting to EUR 590.43 million and imports EUR 495.74 million, leaving a trade balance of EUR 94.69 million in India’s favour. As per the last available figures, trade in services amounted to EUR 4.02 billion, with Ireland exports at EUR 3.12 billion and imports at EUR 896 million, with a balance of trade in Ireland’s favour by EUR 2.23 billion. Trade from April – September 2020 was EUR 339.94 million, as against EUR 497.5 million for April-September 2019, reflecting a decrease of 20.89%, impacted by the pandemic.

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India and Belgium enjoy excellent bilateral relations. The ties further strengthened, with focus on enhanced multilateral engagement, as Belgium held the non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for the period 2019-2020.

Cooperation within the framework of the EU

Mission has identified niche areas of CT, climate change, renewable energy and cyber security for strengthened cooperation.

Covid-19 cooperation

In general cooperation, in the fight against Covid-19 affected the bilateral agenda. 1000ks of HCQ/APV was exported to
Belgium after the lifting of restrictions by the Government of India.

**Trade and economic relations**

The central pillar of India-Belgium bilateral relations has traditionally been trade and investment. The total bilateral trade in goods between India and Belgium from January to July 2020 totaled EUR 4.39 billion (USD 4.87 billion). The total bilateral trade in services between India and Belgium is EUR 1.05 billion (USD 1.24 billion). Total investment by Belgium in India stood at USD 1.876 million from April 2000 to June 2019, making it the 19th most important investor in India.

**Scientific cooperation**

Belgian Company AMOS organised a celebratory event on 16 October 2020, on the successful completion of their project of 2.5m telescope for the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad. Mr. Willy Borsus, Vice-President of Walonia, and Minister of the Economy graced the occasion with his presence. The telescope will be installed at Mount Abu, Rajasthan. The 5th meeting of the India-Belgium Joint Committee between Department of Science and Technology (India) and the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office was held on 18 January 2021.

**India enjoys warm and friendly relations with the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.**

**Political exchanges**

On 19 November 2020, the Prime Minister held a Virtual Summit with Xavier Bettel, Prime Minister of Luxembourg which was the first high level engagement between the two countries in nearly 20 years. A Joint Statement was issued and three financial sector MOUs were concluded to coincide with the Summit.

**Economic relations**

The India-Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union Joint Committee (India-BLEU JCM) established in 1997 is the main forum for deliberating on bilateral economic and commercial issues. A range of subjects including trade diversification, investment, economic cooperation, renewable energy, clean-tech, water treatment, ICT, services, traditional medicines, yoga, tourism, market access issues, multilateral cooperation, etc. are discussed at this platform.

The total bilateral trade in goods between India and Luxembourg from January to July 2020 stood at EUR 29 million (USD 32.19 million) while the figure in services trade was EUR 221 million (USD 261 million). Total investment by Luxembourg in India stood at USD 2.845 million from April 2000 to June 2019, making it the 16th most important investor in India.

**The Netherlands**

**High-level political exchanges**

EAM and Stef Blok, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands had telephonic conversations in June and November 2020. Commerce and Industry Ministry spoke to his counterpart Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands in May 2020.

**Covid-19 cooperation**

India and the Netherlands facilitated airline operations for the repatriation and also granted extension of visas for the stranded nationals of each other. More than 2000 Indian nationals who were stranded in the Netherlands were repatriated. Over 350 thousand packs of HCQ tablets were exported to the Netherlands after the ban on exports was lifted which was appreciated by the Netherlands government. An Air Bubble Arrangement with the Netherlands was effectuated from 1 November 2020.

**Economic cooperation**

The 2nd Joint Working Group meeting between the Ministry of Jal Shakti and Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management under the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the field of Water Management took place in a virtual format on 22 October 2020.

**Multilateral cooperation**

India and the Netherlands continued to cooperate and support each other in global initiatives and multilateral organizations. In May 2020 the Netherlands ratified the revised Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). The Netherlands extended support for India’s candidate for the non-permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. The Netherlands has also agreed to join the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

At the invitation of the Dutch Prime Minister, Prime Minister addressed the Climate Adaptation Summit hosted by the Netherlands on 25 January 2021.

**Italy**

India stood in solidarity with the people and the Government of Italy at the peak of its Covid19 pandemic. India gifted 40,000 surgical masks, 100,000 hand gloves, 20,000 headcovers and 20,000 shoe covers to Italy in March 2020, which was highly appreciated by the Italian Government. Foreign Minister Di Maio tweeted his government’s gratitude on arrival of the shipment and the Italian foreign ministry said, “we are grateful for the friendship and generosity in this time of need”.

**High-level political exchanges**

India-Italy relations received a fresh impetus with the telephonic conversation between Prime Minister and Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on 08 May 2020. This momentum was carried forward with the virtual Bilateral Summit between India and Italy held on 6 November 2020 to comprehensively review the broad framework of the bilateral relationship and also strengthen cooperation against common global challenges, including the Covid-19 pandemic. Both nations adopted the Action Plan for an enhanced Partnership between India and Italy (2020-2024). 15 MoUs/Agreements in various sectors such as energy, fisheries, ship building, design etc. were signed coinciding with the Summit.
EAM had a virtual meeting with his Italian counterpart Luigi Di Maio, on 11 December 2020 to follow up on the Virtual Summit level outcomes and review progress in bilateral ties including the possibilities of cooperation in the post-Covid scenario.

Economic relations

In the run up to the VVIP Summit in November, a number of meetings were held including a meeting with European Business and Technology Centre on 07 October; a high-level meeting on the emerging opportunities in the fisheries sector on 14 October; with SNAM on 26 October; with Indian-Italian health ministers on 27 October; India-Italy High-level Dialogue on Economics Relation on 28 October; with Chairman of Fincantieri on 29 October; and with representatives of the Indian companies based in Italy on 30 October.

On 24 November 2020, the second edition of Fast Track mechanism meeting took place.

Labour and migrant worker issues

A large number of workers seek employment in Italy. They are subject to exploitation. Italy is taking various measures to tackle exploitation, including setting up of an inter-ministerial body and adopting a three-year action plan for 2020-2022 to combat exploitation of migrant workers. The Ministry is also extending support for providing integration services to migrant workers. Under this activity, a pre-departure facilitation was provided in Jalandhar in 2019, which benefitted around 50 Indian workers. Both sides agreed on proper dissemination of information on various measures that have been taken by the Italian side to tackle exploitation of migrant workers. A Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement is under discussion and when concluded will help those seeking employment.

San Marino

Relations with San Marino remained cordial and friendly. Both the countries have established a fruitful cooperation, particularly within international fora, but also at a bilateral level on issues of common interest.

San Marino has extended support to India’s candidature in UN-ESCO Executive Board, International Maritime Organization and also supported India’s initiative on Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

Bilateral trade between the two countries stood at USD 0.40 million, reflecting an increase of 29% in 2019-20 over 2018-19. India’s exports to San Marino increased by 62.65% and stood at USD 0.25 million while imports from San Marino decreased by 5.11% reaching USD 0.15 million.

Spain

Spain and India maintain close ties. Prime Minister spoke to President Pedro Sanchez on 04 April 2020. EAM met Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez Laya on the side-lines of the Munich Security Conference on 16 February 2020. EAM spoke with the Spanish Foreign Minister twice during the early phase of the pandemic. Spanish Foreign Minister thanked India for sending Hydroxychloroquine and other medicines to Spain at the peak of the crisis.

EAM had a virtual meeting with his Spanish counterpart on 23 December 2020. Both leaders undertook a detailed review of bilateral ties and appreciated the upward trajectory in the bilateral ties witnessed in the recent years. They agreed to maintain the momentum particularly in new areas of cooperation such as mobility, defence cooperation, and energy. The leaders also discussed India - EU relations and agreed to work closely in the context of the forthcoming India-EU Leaders Summit proposed to be held in Portugal in May 2021.

The 6th India-Spain Foreign Office Consultations were held virtually on 21 July co-chaired by Secretary (West) and the Spanish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ibero-America and the Caribbean Cristina Gallach. Both sides exchanged views on the response to Covid-19 and post-Covid recovery priorities and opportunities for enhancing bilateral economic cooperation. The two sides reviewed agreements under consideration and ways to strengthen economic, business, cultural, scientific, educational and people-level cooperation.

Covid-19 cooperation

Spain was one of the countries worst hit by Covid-19, during which there was close high-level cooperation. India exported 2500 kgs of HCQ (API) to Spain to meet its needs.

Economic cooperation

Andorra

Relations between India and the Principality of Andorra remain cordial and friendly. The first ever Republic Day celebrations in Andorra were held on 27 January 2020 and were graced by the Andorran Foreign Minister, Maria Ubach Font as the Chief Guest. Secretary (West), met the Andorran Foreign Minister on 24 February in Geneva on the side-lines of the UN Human Rights Council High-Level Segment. Madhu Jethani, a PIO, was appointed as our Honorary Consul on 07 September 2020.

The European Union

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Covid-19 cooperation

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Recent high-level political exchanges
The 15th India-EU summit was held in virtual mode due to Covid-19 pandemic. Prime Minister represented the Indian side while European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula Von Der Leyen represented the EU. The summit mainly covered joint response to the Covid-19 pandemic, strengthening India-EU Strategic Partnership and its various dimensions, as well as convergences and collaboration on the global arena covering multilateralism, international organizations and contemporary developments. The Summit helped to consolidate the partnership with the European Union and provided a new roadmap up to 2025 to upgrade the relationship in all areas including by establishing new dialogue mechanisms such as high-level dialogue on bilateral trade and investment and one on maritime security.

The leaders adopted a Joint Statement, the India-EU Strategic Partnership. Further, an Agreement for Research and Development Cooperation in the field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy was signed and an Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation was renewed for another 5 years.

A virtual meeting was held between Speaker of the Lok Sabha, and the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli on 13 January 2021. On 28 May 2020, EAM held a telephone conversation with EU High Representative/Vice President, Josep Borrell.

To take stock of the implementation of the decisions taken during the Summit, the 7th round of Foreign Policy and Security Consultations between India and the European Union was held on 22 October 2020 in virtual mode. Indian side was led by Secretary (West), while the EU side by Deputy Secretary-General for Political Affairs, European External Action Service.

Economic relations
During the 15th India-EU Summit, it was agreed by both sides to establish a High-Level Dialogue at ministerial level to provide political guidance to the bilateral trade and investment relationship. The first meeting of the Dialogue was held on 22 January 2021 and co-chaired by Commerce and Industries Minister, and European Commissioner for Trade, Valdis Dombrovskis.

In addition to the above, the annual meeting of India-EU Financial Services Dialogue (10 June 2020); 3rd Project Advisory Committee of Technical Project under India-EU Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility (02 July 2020); 13th Joint Working Group (JWG) on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures/Technical Barriers to Trade (09 July 2020); JWG on Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology and Medical Devices (15 October 2020); JWG on Renewables (13 November 2020); 11th JWG on Agriculture and Marine Products (9 December 2020); JWG on Energy Efficiency, Smart Grids, and Electricity Markets (4 December 2020); JWG on Energy Security (14 January 2021); and the 1st India-EU Intellectual Property Rights Dialogue (14 January 2021) were held.

The total bilateral trade in goods between India and EU-27 from January to July 2020 was EUR 36.11 billion (USD 40.09 billion) which is a decline of 22.5% compared to the same trading period in 2019 (EUR 36.11 billion compared to EUR 46.62 billion). The total bilateral trade in services between India and EU-27 is EUR 29.6bn (USD 33.15 billion). At 17.31% of the total FDI flows to India, the EU is India’s largest source of FDI.

Security Cooperation
India and the EU have 4 dialogue mechanisms to discuss security cooperation. Meetings of all the dialogues—12th Counter Terrorism Dialogue (19 November 2020); 6th consultations on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (23 November 2020); 6th Cyber Dialogue (14 December 2020); and 1st Maritime Security Dialogue (20 January 2021)—were conducted in virtual format.

High-level Interactions
On 04 April 2020, Prime Minister and Former President Trump exchanged views telephonically on the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the global well-being and economy and agreed to deploy the full strength of the India-US partnership to resolutely and effectively combat Covid-19. The two leaders also spoke on 2 June 2020 and exchanged views on topical issues including the Covid-19 pandemic. Former President Trump also extended an invitation to Prime Minister to attend the next G-7 Summit to be held in the US (which was subsequently postponed).


The Former President of the US conferred the highest decoration, the Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander, to Prime Minister on 21 December 2020 in recognition of the Prime Minister’s steadfast leadership and vision for India’s emergence as a global power, and exemplary contribution made by him for advancement of the India-US strategic partnership and promoting global peace and prosperity. The Legion of Merit, in the highest degree of the Chief Commander, is a prestigious award conferred typically upon Heads of State or Heads of Government.

Prime Minister congratulated President Joseph R. Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on social media on their election. On 17 November, 2020 Prime Minister had a warm and friendly telephone conversation with President Biden. They agreed to work closely to further advance the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and discussed their priorities, including containing the Covid-19 pandemic, promoting access to affordable vaccines, tackling climate change, and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Region.
India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue

The third annual India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue took place in New Delhi on 27 October 2020 led by Raksha Mantri, and EAM on our side, with the U.S. side led by Former Secretary of Defense Mark T. Esper and Former Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo. They reviewed bilateral relations in defence, strategic and security domains as well as important regional and global issues. Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Esper also held separate bilateral meetings with Raksha Mantri and EAM respectively. During the visit, Secretary Pompeo and Secretary Esper jointly called on Prime Minister. The two former Secretaries also held a meeting with the National Security Advisor. A Joint Statement was issued on the conclusion of the Dialogue.

MoUs/Agreements Signed


MoU for Technical Cooperation in Earth Observations and Earth Sciences between the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the US.

Arrangement extending the duration of the MoU concerning cooperation with the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership, India.

Agreement for the Electronic Exchange of Customs Data between the Postal Operators.

Letter of Intent between the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences, Ministry of AYUSH and the Department of Health and Human Services, for cooperation in the field of Ayurveda and Cancer Research.

Ministerial-level Engagements

On 14 July 2020, the India-US CEO Forum was held in virtual format. Following the virtual Forum, Minister of Commerce and Industry, and former U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross held a telephone conversation and discussed bilateral issues of mutual interest.

On 17 July 2020, the India-US Strategic Energy Partnership Ministerial Meeting was held in virtual mode. The meeting was co-chaired by Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and former US Secretary of Energy Dan Brouillette. An MoU between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and US Department of Energy was signed on co-operation in Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs).

Minister of Commerce and Industry, held telephonic conversations with former US Trade Representative, Robert E. Lighthizer on 02 July 2020, 26 August 2020 and 9 January 2021. Apart from regular telephone calls with his then counterpart Secretary Pompeo, EAM had a bilateral meeting with Secretary Pompeo on the side-lines of the 2nd Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Australia, India, Japan and US on 06 October 2020 in Tokyo.

Former US Deputy Secretary of State, Stephen Biegun visited India from 12-14 October 2020 for a bilateral meeting with Foreign Secretary and reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations. They also reviewed regional and global issues of shared interest. Deputy Secretary Biegun met EAM and National Security Advisor. He also participated in the inaugural session of the 4th India-US Forum held in virtual format on 12 October 2020.

Foreign Secretary had a virtual interaction with the Board Members of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) on 19 November 2020. Foreign Secretary also had a telephone conversation to bid farewell to then US Deputy Secretary of State, Stephen E. Biegun on 7 January 2020.

Other Major Engagements

Vice Chief of Army Staff visited US Army Pacific Command in Hawaii from 16 – 19 October 2020. US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad visited India in May and September 2020 and met EAM and National Security Advisor.

Cooperation in combating Covid-19 pandemic

India and the US are working together to facilitate the evacuation of Indian nationals in each other’s countries, strengthen supply chains of essential items such as medicines, exchange best practices on Covid-19 management, and expand cooperation on development of therapeutics and vaccines to counter Covid-19.

India responded to the US request for pharmaceuticals (hydroxychloroquine, paracetamol and APIs), PPEs, masks and other essential medical supplies. The US Government donated 200 ventilators to Indian Red Cross Society through the US agency for International Development.

Under the Vande Bharat Mission, the Indian Embassy and Consulates facilitated repatriation of over 80,000 stranded Indian nationals from the US through over 325 VBM flights till end-October 2020. A special bilateral travel arrangement (air transport bubble) was established by the Ministry of Civil Aviation of India for 24 countries including the U.S.

Consultations/Dialogues

Despite restrictions posed by Covid-19 pandemic, bilateral engagement continued unabated, albeit in virtual format.

Defence Cooperation: Defence relationship continued its positive trajectory with intensification in defence trade, joint exercises, personnel exchanges, and cooperation in maritime security and counter-piracy. The following meetings were held:

• Inaugural meeting between Indian Defence Innovation Organization (DIO-iDEX) and US Defence Innovation Unit on 22 July 2020.
• The 10th meeting of the India-US Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) was held virtually on 15 September 2020. The meeting reviewed the ongoing cooperation in defence technology cooperation.
• The first meeting of the India-US Defence Cyber Dialogue was held virtually on 17 September 2020.

Military Exercises: The Malabar Naval Exercise, was held in the Indian Ocean with the participation of Naval forces of India, US, Japan and Australia in two phases from 3-6 November 2020 and 17-20 November 2020 respectively.

Economic and Commercial Relations: Bilateral economic and commercial relations remained robust with a sustained increase in the bilateral trade over the last few years. The US is India’s largest trading partner (goods and services combined). According to US official statistics, bilateral trade increased by 4.3% to reach USD 148.8 billion in 2019. In 2020, bilateral trade in goods reached USD 26.55 billion during April-August 2020.

The US is India’s 5th largest source of FDI. According to US official statistics, the US FDI in India reached USD 45.9 billion in 2019, an increase of 8% from 2018 level of USD 42 billion. Investments are growing in both directions. Indian companies
have a cumulative investment of USD 16.7 billion in the US and have generated about 125,000 jobs in the US.

A MoU between Department for Promotion of Industry and In-ternal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Gov-ernment of India and US-Patent and Trademark Office, Depart-ment of Commerce of the US was signed on 2 December 2020.

Science & Technology and Space Cooperation
India-US cooperation in Science and Technology is multi-fac-eted and has been growing steadily under the framework of the India-US Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement signed in October 2005, which was renewed for a period of ten years in September 2019. The Indo-US Science and Technolo-gy Forum(IUSSTF), a bi-national autonomous organization estab-lished to promote cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation has continued to play an important role in strengthen-ing cooperation in this field.

After the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, both India and the US are focusing on collaboration particularly in health and medical research. The IUSSTF has granted awards to 8 virtual research centres and 11 start-ups. At least 4 Indian companies have been collaborating with US based agencies to develop and mass produce Covid-19 vaccine, which are at different stages of clinical development and assessment.

India and the US have a long history of cooperation in the civil space area that includes cooperation in earth observa-tion, satellite navigation, space launch and space science and exploration. A virtual meeting between, Scientific Secretary, Indian Space Research Organisation and Thomas Zurbuchen, Associate Administrator, U.S. National Aeronautical and Space Administration was held on 28 September to review the ongo-ing ISRO – NSA joint activities.

ISRO and NASA are working together to realise a joint micro-wave remote sensing satellite for Earth observation, named NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR). This joint mission is targeted to be launched by 2022. The NISAR Joint Steering Group meeting was held virtually on 18 August 2020.

Canada
High Level engagements
Prime Minister spoke twice to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on the telephone on 28 April 2020 and 16 June 2020 and discussed regional and global issues. On 08 October, Prime Minister delivered an inaugural address at the virtual Invest India 2020 Conference organised by Fairfax Financial Holdings Ltd.

EAM spoke with the Canadian Foreign Minister Fran-cois-Philippe Champagne regularly about Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition, an MoU between Nanaj Deshmukh Veterinary Science University, Jabalpur and Cornell University, New York on Cooperation in Assessment of Impact of Health on Wildlife Conservation in India was signed on 5 November 2020.

International Day of Yoga
The Indian Embassy and the Consulates organised the 6th In-ternational Day of Yoga on 21 June 2020 virtually on the theme ‘Ghar Ghar Se Yoga-Yoga at Home’. A large number of yoga en-thusiasts from all over the US joined the virtual celebration of the Yoga Day.

Gandhi@150
The Indian Embassy and Consulates held several events high-lighting Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy, ideals and teachings as part of the two-wave celebration of 150th birth an-niversary of Mahatma Gandhi, culminating in commemorative Gandhi@150 events organised on 02 October 2020.

Think-Tank Exchanges
The vibrant interaction and exchange of ideas between think tanks in India and the US. on various aspects of India-US re-lations continued in the virtual format. The Ministry, in associ-ation with the Ananta Centre, organised the Fourth India-US Forum on 12 October 2020 virtually bringing together eminent persons from the government, politics, think-tanks, industry and media for extensive discussions on India-US relations.

People-to-People Ties
Ties: People to people linkages have been one of the key driv-ers of the India-US partnership. The 4 million strong Indian diaspora in the US has played an important role in bringing the countries closer. The Indian skilled professionals have con-tributed to the growth and development of the US economy and provided an enduring foundation for the growth and de-velopment of the India-US strategic partnership. The US con-tinues to remain an important destination for Indian students with over 200,000 Indian students currently enrolled in various courses in US institutions.

Management, evacuation of stranded citizens and regional and global issues of mutual interest. EAM participated in the meet-ing of the Ministerial Group of Foreign Ministers for coordina-tion on Covid-19 Response on 3 November 2020, convened by the Canadian Foreign Minister.

Commerce and Industry Minister spoke with Canadian Minister for Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade, Mary Ng on several occasions and discussed issues pertaining to mainte-nance of global supply chains; pharmaceuticals products availability; G-20 cooperation and matters related to bilateral trade.

Finance, Trade and Industry
Bilateral trade was worth USD 2.17 billion from 01 April to 31 August 2020. India’s exports to Canada during this period were USD 1.006 billion and imports from Canada were USD 1.174 billion. Canadian Pension Funds have pledged to invest over USD 50 billion in India. India and Canada are discussing the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BI-PPA). Virtual meetings on CEPA, and BIPPA between India and Canada were held on 22 June 2020 and on 27 October 2020.

In order to enhance India-Canada bilateral trade and attract Canadian investments into India, several conferences and buy-ers-sellers meetings with Ministerial participation from both sides were organised virtually between Canadian and Indian businesses in association with industry associations and cham-bers of commerce.

Science and Technology
Under the India-Canada Centre for Innovative Multidisci-plinary Partnership to Accelerate Community Transformation and Sustainability (IC-IMPACTS) program between Depart-ment of Science and Technology (DST) and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Canada (NSERC) Canada, 10 projects are under implementation in the areas of Safe and Sustainable Infrastructure, Energy conservation and Integrated Water Management. DST has been also supporting Industrial R&D projects with Canada which have an potential for applica-tion. The virtual Annual Conference of IC-IMPACTS was held from 6-7 August 2020.

An MoU between Zoological Survey of India and International Polar Knowledge Canada was signed on 26 February 2020.

An MoU for Cooperation between the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research under Ministry of Earth Sciences and the Canadian High Arctic Research Stations operated by POLAR Knowledge Canada was signed on 26 February 2020.

An MoU on S&T Cooperation between the Department of S&T, Department of Biotechnology, India and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada is also likely to be renewed in the first quarter of 2021.

Education
India has now become the top source of foreign students with 238,000 Indian students studying in Canada. 69 reputed Cana-dian faculty members have visited India, so far under the Global Initiative of Academic Works programme for teaching assign-ments in Indian institutions. Canada is one of the 28 countries covered under the Scheme for promotion of Academic and Re-search Collaboration, an initiative aims to improve research ecosystems in India’s higher education institutions. So far, 19 projects under Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Re-search Collaboration (SPARC) and 106 under Global. Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) have been awarded to Canadian Faculties.

Security Cooperation
The Joint Working Group on counter-terrorism discussed the India-Canada Counter-Terrorism Action Plan on 26 August 2020 and reviewed threats posed by terrorist groups world-wide and in their respective countries. They also discussed ac-tions undertaken to counter terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization to violence.

Cultural Exchanges

On the occasion of Vaisakhi, Puthandu and Navratri festivals, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau extended greetings to those people celebrating these festivals. The Provinces of Al-berta and Saskatchewan declared the month of August 2020 as the “The Hindu Heritage Month”. A 3-day Great India Festival was organised virtually in Canada by the High Commission of India. The 6th International Day of Yoga was celebrated with more than 50 virtual events.

India-Canada Track 1.5 Dialogue
The 2nd India-Canada Track 1.5 dialogue was held in Mumbai on 22 November 2019 between Gateway House, Mumbai and Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Canada. The 3rd meeting of India-Canada Track 1.5 dialogue was held virtually on 17 November 2020. EAM and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Francois-Philippe Champagne inaugurated the dialogue.

Mutual support during Covid-19
Government of India allowed export of medical supplies in-cluding Personal Protective Equipment, oxygen concentrators, oxy-hydrochloroquine, Favipiravir, Remdesivir, tocilizumab, paracetamol tablets, Hydroxychloroquine tablets, Hy-dropyrochloroquine Sulfate USP (API) and PPEs to Canada. India has facilitated special charter flights operated by the Canadia-n High Commission to evacuate stranded Canadian national-als from India. Under the air bubble arrangement, Air Canada has operated 51 flights (as on 06 November 2020). Since May 2020, Vande Bharat Mission flights have operated from Cana-dia with 142 flights evacuating 24107 passengers to India (as on 6 November 2020).
Latin America and the Caribbean

India’s bilateral cooperation with Argentina was marked by increased interactions, including through various bilateral dialogue mechanisms as well as in various multilateral fora such as G-20, WTO and the UN. On 05 May 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Felipe Solá, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina and discussed the current situation, economic recovery, multi-lateral cooperation and global issues. This was the first high level interaction with the new government in Argentina. On 10 September 2019, the 5th India–Argentina Foreign Office Consultations were held via video conferencing, led by Secretary (East) on the Indian side and Deputy Foreign Minister on the Argentine side. The two sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral cooperation within the framework of the Strategic Partnership, exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest as well as experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic and agreed to enhance cooperation in the multilateral arena.

From January-June 2020, the trend of increasing bilateral trade continued with a growth of 22.74% (notably, India’s bilateral trade with Argentina reached a record figure of USD 3.09 billion in FY 2019-2020). The bilateral trade during the period was valued at USD 1.57 billion (with Indian exports worth USD 401 million and Indian imports valued at USD 1.17 billion). The 3rd meeting of the Joint Trade Committee between India and Argentina was held on 20 October 2020 via videoconferencing, after a gap of almost three decades. The two sides held a comprehensive review of bilateral trade and investment cooperation and discussed the way ahead. The first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Agriculture was held on 01 July 2020 via videoconferencing where discussions were held on granting reciprocal market access for items of interest on both sides as well as the implementation of Work Plans (signed in 2019).

In March 2020, Argentina joined the Coalition for Disaster Re-silient Infrastructure (CDRI) as a Founding Member. In a significant development in the field of mining, MoUs were signed between KAILB (PSU under the Ministry of Mines) and two public sector companies in Argentina viz: VYP (the Argentine state energy company) and JEMSE (a public sector undertaking of the Province of Jujuy) on 10 July 2020 and 10 September 2020 respectively. The MoUs established a framework for institutional cooperation for exploration, identification and exploitation of lithium as well as joint development of projects.

The two countries also cooperated in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. India granted exemptions to Argentina, allowing for export of hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol from India. Argentina granted exemption for export of ventilators to India.

On 14 October 2020, a bilateral business chamber, “India-Argentina Business Council” was formally launched by Ambas-ador of India and Minister of Productive Development of Argentina, Matías Kulfas. The Council is conceptualised as a non-profit organization comprising leading Indian companies based in Argentina and Argentine companies having business interest in India.

Foreign Minister of Argentina Felipe Solá also participated in the commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. The Embassy of India organised a virtual commemoration of the International Day of Yoga through a specially created website under the slogan “Yoga at home”. Several top Indian celebrities also shared their experience and the ben-efits of yoga in times of quarantine and the website received almost 40,000 visitors.

The Embassy of India in Buenos Aires organised, coordinated and participated in several video conferences aimed at boost-ing bilateral trade with the three countries, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. These include “India and the World” seminar by Confederation of Indian Industries, Buyer-Seller Meet between Electronics and Software Council of India and CEISS (Argentine Chamber of Software Exports); seminar by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry titled “India-Argentina Business Promo- tion, Challenges and Opportunities – Post Covid-19”; webinar by Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) on India-Argen-tina commercial relations; LAC Regional Council session by FICCI on “The Future of India Argentina Business Relations”; vir-tual apparatus; and webinar organised by UPL, Argentina on agri-cultural cooperation and screening of films that highlighted the importance of the Indian community in Bolivia. It included talks and screening of films that highlighted the importance of the Constitution of India. It also marked the conclusion of a year-long activities and “my duties” campaign that were aimed at enhancing awareness about the Constitution and Fundamental Duties.

Brazil

India and Brazil deepened their strategic partnership with contin-uing high level interactions and cooperation in the multilateral fora such as BRICS, BASIC, G-20, G-4, IBIA, Biofuture Platform as well as in the UN framework. Prime Minister and President Bolsonaro had a telephonic discussion on 04 April 2020 where they discussed the global situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. On President Bolsonaro’s request, India granted ex-emption to Brazil and allowed import of hydroxychloroquine from Brazil. President Bolsonaro in his national address on 08 April 2020 thanked Prime Minister and the people of India for this goodwill gesture. India sent 2 million Covishield vaccines in January 2021 to Brazil.

On 23 April 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Ernesto Araújo, Foreign Minister of Brazil wherein they re-viewed bilateral cooperation in a follow up to the State visit of President Bolsonaro in January 2020 and exchanged views on global issues including the coronavirus pandemic. Interactions were also held under the multilateral framework such as BRICS (04 September 2020), IBIA (17 September 2020), G-4 (23 Sep-tember 2020) and also during EAM’s interactions with Foreign Ministers of select seven countries on 4 November 2020. An MoU was signed between the Society of Indian Defence Man-ufacturers and the Brazilian Association of Defence and Secu-rity Materials Industries for collaboration in defence industry partnership on 25 May 2020. EAM held virtual bilateral discus-sions with FM Araújo on bilateral cooperation and global de-velopments. Both sides agreed to work closely in multilateral forums including BRICS and IBIA.

Committee on Cooperation in Outer Space was held virtually between representatives of Indian Space Research Organiza-tion(ISRO) and Argentine National Space Activities Commis-sion on 02 December 2020. An MoU between CAMYEN, a PSU of the Province of Catamarca, Argentina, and KABIL was signed in December 2020 for cooperation in the field of min-ing, with focus on lithium.
Bilateral relations between India and Chile continued to grow and strengthen with continued interactions and cooperation in multilateral fora. On 16 October 2020, the first India-Chile Joint Commission Meeting was held in virtual mode with EAM and Andrés Allamand, Foreign Minister of Chile as co-chairs. A new dimension was added to the bilateral ties with India’s acceptance of a proposal by Chile to open a Consulate in Mumbai.

The procurement of a naval ship from Larsen and Toubro by Chile, opened yet another avenue of cooperation between the two countries. Virtual screenings of Gandhi Film Festival and a Festival of Indian Patriotic Films, as well as the launch of a series of locally-produced videos in Spanish on the Vlog Veda on the Indian Embassy’s YouTube channel were the highlights in bilateral cultural cooperation.

The anticipated events by March 2021 include the 7th round of Foreign Office Consultations between India and Chile, reaching of an agreement on the 2nd expansion of the India-Chile Preferential Trade Agreement, and release of a book by Luis Bates, a lawyer and former Chilean Justice Minister on Gandhi’s career as a lawyer and how that affected the rest of his life.

**India**

India’s bilateral relations with Colombia remained warm and cordial. On 29 April 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Claudia Blum de Barberi, Foreign Minister of Colombia and reviewed cooperation on trade and energy development partnership, as well as in the fight against pandemic. Bilateral trade between India and Colombia maintained a steady trajectory during the period and was valued at USD 710 million for the period April-August 2020.

Under development partnership, health professionals from Colombia participated in the e-ITEC programmes on Covid Management Strategies. During the Covid-19 pandemic, India granted exemptions to Colombia to allow for export of hydroxychloroquine and paracetamol from India.

In January 2021, the 4th round of India – Colombia Joint Committee for Business Development Cooperation was held. Discussions focused on reciprocal market access, liberalised trade regime including negotiations for a partial scope trade agreement, mining, renewable energy, civil aviation, health and pharmaceutical, information technology, among others. On 27 November 2020, a virtual round table on Indian investment in the Information Technology (IT) sector of Colombia was organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Pro Colombia (an organisation in Colombia that supports inward investment into Colombia) in collaboration with the Embassy. The Embassy of India in Bogota participated in the event and approximately 76 representatives from Indian and Colombian IT companies based out of Colombia participated in the round table.

**Colombia**

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**Cuba**

India and Cuba continued to maintain warm and cordial relations. In 2020, the two countries celebrated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to Cuba, including 300,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. The return of 10 Cuban nationals who were in different institutes in India attending courses as part of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation program at the time of Covid-19 pandemic was also facilitated.

The 1st anniversary of the Ayurveda center at La Pradera in Havana was celebrated along with Ayurveda day on Dhanvantri Divas on 13 November 2020. Mission handed over India’s donation of medicines and protective gear to First Vice Minister Ana Teresita Gonzalez Fraga at a ceremony hosted by the Government of Cuba on 12 November 2020.

**Ecuador**

India and Ecuador continued their friendly bilateral relationship. On 12 October, EAM had a telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of Ecuador and reviewed bilateral cooperation in health, trade and development partnership. Discussions were also held on consular issues as well as strengthening of multilateral cooperation.

There was progress in cooperation in the field of space, and discussions were held between Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Geographical Institute of Military of Ecuador on 12 August 2020 on the first manned spaceflight programme of India, Gaganyaan. India sent a medical aid package to Ecuador including 400,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment and protective gear.

**Mexico**

Bilateral relations between India and Mexico continued to strengthen in 2020, which marked the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The 8th Joint Commission Meeting, co-chaired by EAM and the Foreign Minister of Mexico Marcelo Ebrard Casaubón, was held via video conference on 29 October 2020. The meeting reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and discussed cooperation in areas such as commerce, outer space, innovation, science and technology, health and pharmaceuticals, education, culture and people-to-people contacts. EAM spoke to Marcelo Ebrard, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico in May 2020 and August 2020 where discussions were held on the Covid-19 pandemic and economic recovery and cooperation in multilateral fora. In 2020, India and Mexico also started an active dialogue on mutual priorities in the UN Security Council for their shared tenure in 2021-2022.

India remained the 9th largest trading partner of Mexico globally. During April-August 2020, the bilateral trade was valued at USD 1.98 billion. The 5th meeting of the India-Mexico Bilateral High Level Group on Trade, Investment and Economic Cooperation was held on 09 October 2020 through a video conference. The meeting was co-chaired by the Commerce Secretary of India and the Vice-Minister for Foreign Trade of Mexico, Luz María de la Mora. Discussions were held on a range of issues such as measures to boost trade and investment and increased market access for agriculture products of mutual interest.

A number of agreements were signed for promoting trade and investment ties between India and Mexico such as MoUs between Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council of India and the Mexican Chamber of Electronics, Telecommunications and Information Technologies, and another between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Mexican Business Council of Foreign Trade, Investment and Technology.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, India granted exemption to Mexico to allow for export of hydroxychloroquine from India.

The 2nd Consular Dialogue between India and Mexico was held on 12 November, 2020 during which consular issues of concern for both sides were discussed. The Trade Promotion Council of India and the India Mexico Business Chamber organised a virtual Buyer-Seller Meet on Ceramics on 14 December 2020. The Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade of Mexico participated as a Speaker in the CII Partnership Summit held from 15-18 December 2020.

**Paraguay**

Bilateral relationship between India and Paraguay continued to strengthen. On 30 April 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Antonio Rivas Palacios, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay on the coronavirus situation and the economic recovery. Under development partnership, India sent a medical aid package to Paraguay including 200,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment to Paraguay.
India and Peru continued to maintain warm and cordial relations. On 29 April 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Peru, Dr. Teodoro Luque, to discuss cooperation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. On 21 July 2020, Indian Ambassador in Argentina, Mr. Abhishek Kumar, participated in a video conference hosted by Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) to discuss commercial, economic challenges and opportunities. ALADI is the largest Latin American Association in Uruguay on “India at the International Concert and Development”, a webinar was held by CONIDA on 9 November 2020. A state-facilitation webinar was also held on 26 November 2020 in association with Government of Telangana, Telangana Chamber of Commerce and Industry and local chambers with a focus on pharmaceutical sector. 9 Peruvian nationals participated in the courses offered on the teachings of Buddha, Vipassana and its applications to research and mental health.

**Peru**

India continued to maintain close bilateral ties with Peru. On 29 April 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Peru, Dr. Francisco Eguiguren, to discuss cooperation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Under development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to Peru including 740,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment to Paraguay. A virtual pharmaceutical B2B/G2B with Indian and Peruvian pharmaceutical companies was held on 09 November 2020 with the support of FICCI. 2 candidates from Peru will undergo a PhD course under ICCR Scholarship Programme.

**Venezuela**

India’s bilateral ties with Venezuela remain warm and cordial. Bilateral trade from August-September 2020 was valued at USD 382.21 million. Mineral fuels and pharmaceuticals comprised the majority of the imports from India. There is a significant increase in the amount of tea exported to Venezuela and it is worth USD 120,000 (12,000 kgs) in the period August-September 2020. Under development partnership, India sent a medical aid package to Venezuela including 740,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment to Paraguay. A virtual pharmaceutical B2B/G2B with Indian and Venezuelan pharmaceutical companies was held on 09 November 2020 with the support of FICCI. 2 candidates from Venezuela attended courses under IITEC. Venezuelan student will undergo a PhD course under ICCR Scholarship Programme.

**El Salvador**

India’s bilateral relationship with El Salvador continued to grow and evolve. Bilateral trade saw a cumulative growth of 7% over the last three years and was valued at USD 82.55 million in 2019-20, with the balance of trade in India’s favour. India sent a medical aid package to El Salvador including 200,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. There was also robust cooperation in the multilateral fora with El Salvador extending support for India’s candidatures such as for the non-permanent seat of the UNSC for 2021-22 and Ad- visory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. Several key buyers from El Salvador participated in the Buy- er-Seller Meet organised by the Indian Embassy on 20 Novem- ber 2020, in collaboration with Engineering Export Promotion to showcase India’s state-of-the-art engineering products in- cluding Agro Machinery, Auto components, industrial boilers, medical equipment, and electric applications, among others.

**Guatemala**

India continued to maintain close bilateral ties with Guatemala. On 30 April 2020, EAM had a telephonic call with Pedro Bro- lo Vila, Foreign Minister of Guatemala and held discussions on expanding bilateral trade and cooperation in international fora. India’s trade with Guatemala saw a cumulative growth of 8% over the last 3 years, with a balance of trade in India’s favour. Under development partnership programme, India sent a med- ical aid package to Guatemala including 500,000 hydroxychlo- roquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. India and Guatemala continued to cooperate in multilateral fora, including by extending support for candidatures.

**Nicaragua**

India’s bilateral ties with Nicaragua remained warm and cordial. On 05 June 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Denis Ronaldo Moncada Colindres and discussed collaboration in health, energy and investment and multilateral cooperation. The bilateral trade was valued at USD 32.86 million in April-August 2020. India’s exports were worth USD 30.30 million and imports were worth USD 2.56 million during this period. Under development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to Nicaragua including 170,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. Several key buyers from El Salvador participated in the Buy-er-Seller Meet organised by the Indian Embassy on 20 Novem- ber, 2020, in collaboration with Engineering Export Promotion to showcase India’s state-of-the-art engineering products in- cluding Agro Machinery, Auto components, industrial boilers, medical equipment, and electric applications, among others.

**Costa Rica**

India and Costa Rica continued to maintain friendly bilateral ties. Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to Costa Rica including 140,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. 3 candidates from Costa Rica attended the e-ITEC Covid Management and Hepatology courses. In March 2020, the bilateral MoU on Exemption from Visa requirement for holders of DIP- lomatic, Official and Service passports came into force. Gustavo Segura, Minister of Tourism of Costa Rica and Adri- ana Bolanos Argueta, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica addressed a special event facilitated by the Embassy of India to create new business and investment opportunities between India and Costa Rica, on 9 December 2020.

**Belize**

India and Belize continued to have a friendly bilateral relationship. During April-August 2020, bilateral trade was worth USD 3.02 million, with exports valued at USD 2.74 million and im- ports amounting to USD 0.28 million. Under development partnership, India successfully completed the setting up of a Centre of Engineering in the Belmopan campus of the University of Belize in March 2020. India sent a med- ical aid package to Belize including 20,000 hydroxychloroquine tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. Ambassador inaugurated the Center of Engineering, set up under a Government of India grant at the University of Belize in Belmopan, in January 2021.

**Panama**

India continued to maintain friendly bilateral ties with Panama. On 28 April 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Alejandro Mazariegos Echeverri, Foreign Minister of Panama and assured him of India’s help in fighting the Covid-19 pan- demic. Bilateral trade with Panama was valued at USD 66.16 million in April-August 2020 with Indian exports amounting to USD 46.53 million and imports worth USD 19.63 million. Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to Panama including 1,10,000 hydroxy-
CARIBBEAN COUNTRIES

Antigua and Barbuda

India and Antigua and Barbuda continued to share warm and friendly relations. On 5 June 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with E.P. Chet Greene, Foreign Minister of Antigua and Barbuda and discussed economic recovery post Covid-19 as well as cooperation in education, health, capacity building and friendly relations. On 29 April 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with E.P. Chet Greene, Foreign Minister of Antigua and Barbuda extending support for India's candidatures for a non-permanent seat of UNSC (2021-22) and ACABQ.

Dominica

India continued to enjoy friendly and cordial relations with the Commonwealth of Dominica. On 30 April 2020 EAM held a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister Kenneth Darroux and discussed cooperation in IT and distance education.

Barbados

India and Barbados continued to enjoy close and cordial relations as well as extensive cooperation in the UN, the Commonwealth and NAM. On 05 June 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Jerome Walcott, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Trade and International Business in the context of Covid-19 and friendly relations. On 29 April 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Barbados to discuss cooperation in the multilateral fora and friendly. On 3 December 2020, the two leaders discussed cooperation in the multilateral fora.

Dominican Republic

India and Dominican Republic continue to strengthen their bilateral relations in various fields. On 29 April 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Dominican Republic and discussed cooperation in education, health, capacity building and friendly relations. On 29 April 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Dominican Republic.

The Bahamas

India’s bilateral relations with the Bahamas continued to remain warm and cordial. On 27 October 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Darren Henfield, Foreign Minister of the Bahamas and held discussions on ongoing development partnership, cooperation in the context of Covid-19 as well as cooperation in education, health, capacity building and friendly relations. On 24 November 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of the Bahamas extending support for India’s candidatures for a non-permanent seat of UNSC (2021-22) and ACABQ.

Guyana

India and Guyana continued to maintain friendly bilateral ties. India continued to support Guyana in its fight against Covid-19 with medicines and medical equipment. On 30 July 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Guyana and discussed cooperation in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and cooperation in the multilateral fora.

Haiti

India continued to maintain close cooperation with Haiti. On 30 July 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Claude Joseph, Foreign Minister of Haiti where discussions were held on cooperation in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and cooperation in the multilateral fora. India was among the first international responders to assist Haiti in its fight against Covid-19, when it sent a medical aid package to Haiti, including 30,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment.

Jamaica

India’s bilateral relationship with Jamaica continued to grow and strengthen. In the General Elections held in Jamaica on 3 September 2020, the incumbent Prime Minister Andrew Holness of Jamaica Labour Party scored a decisive victory over the Opposition Peoples' National Party with a massive mandate of 49 seats in the 63-member House of Representatives. On 29 April 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Jamaica.

The Americas

Grenada

The bilateral ties between India and Grenada remained cordial and friendly. On 29 April 2020, EAM held a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of Grenada, Peter David and discussed cooperation in health and development partnership. Under development partnership, India sent a medical aid package to Grenada, including 10,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment.

Honduras

India’s bilateral relations with Honduras continued to remain warm and cordial. Bilateral trade saw a considerable growth over the last three years. In 2019-20, the bilateral trade was worth USD 204.66 million, with a balance of trade in India’s favour. On behalf of President Jovenel Moïse, Foreign Minister Claude Joseph while receiving India’s donation of Covid-19 medical aid thanked the Government of India for its support to Haiti in its attempt to control the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

Jamaica

India’s bilateral relationship with Jamaica continued to grow and strengthen. In the General Elections held in Jamaica on 03 September 2020, the incumbent Prime Minister Andrew Holness of Jamaica Labour Party scored a decisive victory over the Opposition Peoples’ National Party with a massive mandate of 49 seats in the 63-member House of Representatives. On 29 April 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with his colleague.
counterpart Kamina Johnson Smith, Foreign Minister of Jamaica, and exchanged views on the challenge posed by Covid-19, Jamaica has appointed their first resident High Commissioner to India viz. Jason Keats Hall, who is a career diplomat.

Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to Jamaica including 80,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. This was in addition to an earlier donation of 40,000 HCQ tablets. India also granted exemptions to Jamaica for Indian exports of hydroxy-

drug. The two countries also cooperate extensively in regional and multilateral fora.

In observance of the International Day for the elimination of Violence against Women (25 November 2020) and the AIDS Day (1 December 2020), the High Commission participated in an online panel discussion on IDA/EVAW, hosted by the British High Commission and co-hosted by the Indian, EU, Canadian and US Missions in Jamaica.

Saint Kitts and Nevis

India and St. Kitts and Nevis continued to maintain warm and cordial relations. The two countries also cooperated in the multilateral fora with St. Kitts and Nevis extending support for India’s candidacy for non-permanent seat of UNSC. Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to St. Kitts and Nevis including 10,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment.

St. Lucia

India continued to maintain close cooperation with St. Lucia. On 01 May 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Sarah Flood-Beaubrun, Foreign Minister of St. Lucia and exchanged views on the situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenge of economic recovery and India’s engagement with the CARICOM region.

Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to St. Lucia including 10,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

India and St. Vincent and the Grenadines continued to share close and cordial relations in the bilateral and multilateral fora. On 30 April 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Foreign Minister of St. Vincent and Grenadines Luis Straker and exchanged views on economic recovery and community development projects.

Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to St. Vincent and Grenadines including 10,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. Several Quick Impact community development projects are also under implementation.

Three community development-related projects under MoU on Quick Impact Project with grant from India are in progress. The first meeting of the Steering Committee on Arrowroot Industry Development project under India-UNDP Fund was held in November, 2020.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

The bilateral relations between India and Suriname have scaled new heights in recent years. Election of Chandrikapersad Santokhi, a PIO (only the second PIO to hold that position) as the President of the Republic of Suriname was the highlight of this year, which also found mention in Prime Minister’s Mann ki Baat, where he referred to the chanting of vedic mantra during the oath ceremony of the President. On 27 October 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Albert Ramdin, Foreign Minister of Suriname and discussed the long standing historical, cultural and friendly ties, health cooperation and emphasized India’s commitment as a development partner.

Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to Suriname including 20,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. There is considerable progress in development partnership projects under the new heights in recent years. Election of Chandrikapersad Santokhi, a PIO (only the second PIO to hold that position) as the President of the Republic of Suriname was the highlight of this year, which also found mention in Prime Minister’s Mann ki Baat, where he referred to the chanting of vedic mantra during the oath ceremony of the President. On 27 October 2020, EAM had a telephonic conversation with Albert Ramdin, Foreign Minister of Suriname and discussed the long standing historical, cultural and friendly ties, health cooperation and emphasized India’s commitment as a development partner.

Under the development partnership programme, India sent a medical aid package to Suriname including 20,000 HCQ tablets, essential medicines and medical equipment. There is considerable progress in development partnership projects under the newly constructed MGICC center with Leader of the Main Opposition party, the United National Congress, MPS and representatives of Indian Diaspora community taking part in the event. Mission handed over the medical aid consignment to the people and Government of Trinidad and Tobago on November 23, 2020, which was received by Amery Browne, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs received the consignments at a virtual ceremony. Mission in collaboration with the MGICC and Hindi Foundation of Trinidad and Tobago Inc conducted World Hindi Day 2021 on 16 January 2021 with MPs and bureaucrats from the T and T Government and the Indian diaspora in attendance. The newly constructed MGICC center with Leader of the Main Opposition party, the United National Congress, MPS and representatives of Indian Diaspora community taking part in the event. Mission handed over the medical aid consignment to the people and Government of Trinidad and Tobago on November 23, 2020, which was received by Amery Browne, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs received the consignments at a virtual ceremony. Mission in collaboration with the MGICC and Hindi Foundation of Trinidad and Tobago Inc conducted World Hindi Day 2021 on 16 January 2021 with MPs and bureaucrats from the T and T Government and the Indian diaspora in attendance.

CARICOM

India’s bilateral ties with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) continued to be warm and friendly. In the context of Covid-19 pandemic, India sent medical aid comprising essential medicines, medical equipment and protective gear to all CARICOM countries. Under the India-CARICOM Leaders’ Projec-

te, medicines and medical supplies including ventilators were sent to Antigua and Barbuda and Guyana. Projects submitted by Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, Dominica and Haiti are under implementation.

Pacific Alliance

India is an Observer State in the Pacific Alliance which is a regional group of countries bordering the Pacific Ocean with Chile, Colombia, Peru and Mexico as its members. Chile is the current pro-tem President of the Alliance.

Under the pro-tem Presidentry of Chile, the 2nd Coopera-
ization project with Indian mission in the opening session, wherein India’s commitment in engaging actively with the countries of Pacific Alliance for mutually beneficial cooperation was reaffirmed.

The 7th Joint Commission Meeting between India and Surina-
me took place virtually on 02 December 2020, co-chaired by Minister of State for External Affairs 

The annual Informal Meeting of the SAARC Council of Ministers held on the sidelines of UNGA was held in virtual mode on 24 September 2020. EAM participated in the meeting which primarily reviewed regional efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, participants appreciated the leadership of the Prime Minister in convening a video conference of SAARC Leaders in March 2020. EAM reiterated that India remains steadfast in its commitment to building a connected, integrated, secure and prosperous South Asia. On the issue of consideration of dates for the 19th SAARC Summit and its preceding meetings, EAM drew attention to the lack of consensus among the member states. He said that the issues of cross border terrorism, the blocking of connectivity initiatives and the reluctance to progress on trade pacts need to be sincerely addressed if summit level engagement is to be meaningful or productive. He added that the current priority for all member states was to deal with the Covid-19 challenge and taking of the next summit at this juncture was premature.

The inaugural meetings of SAARC Planning Ministers preceded by the Meeting of SAARC Planning Secretaries were held in virtual format on 23 and 25 November 2020 respectively. CEO, Niti Aayog led the Indian delegation at the Planning Ministers meeting.

The 58th Session of the Programming Committee of SAARC was held in virtual mode on 15 December 2020. Joint Secretary (BSN), Ministry of External Affairs led the Indian delegation. India continued to extend support for construction of permanent campus of the South Asian University in New Delhi, which notwithstanding the disruptions caused by Covid-19 pandemic, made satisfactory physical progress.
BIMSTEC

The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is a unique regional organization linking South Asia with South East Asia while focusing on India’s core concerns in the region thus fulfilling India’s key foreign policy priorities of ‘Neighbourhood First’ and ‘Act East’. India is currently leading BIMSTEC cooperation in four out of a total 14 priority sectors, namely, counter terrorism and trans-national crime; transport and communication; tourism; and environment and disaster management.

The BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers approved, by circulation, the nomination of Tenzin Lekphell (Bhutan) as the 3rd Secretary General of BIMSTEC for a period of three years as per alphabetical rotation. Lekphell assumed the charge on 6 November 2020. A Webinar on ‘Revisiting Economic Cooperation in BIMSTEC in Post-Covid-19 Era’ was hosted by Research and Information System for Developing Countries on 30 June 2020. Minister of State gave the inaugural address in which he reiterated India’s commitment towards enhanced cooperation in the BIMSTEC region.

The 21st BIMSTEC Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM) was held in Colombo virtually on 02 September 2020. The Meeting endorsed the final text of the BIMSTEC Charter for approval by the 17th BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting. SOM also endorsed the following instruments to be signed at the next BIMSTEC Summit upon approval by the Ministerial meeting: (i) BIMSTEC Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters; (ii) Memorandum of Association on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility in Colombo, Sri Lanka; and (iii) MoU on Mutual Cooperation between Diplomatic Academies/Training Institutions of BIMSTEC Member States. The Meeting also considered and finalized a Template of the Memorandum of Association on Establishment of the BIMSTEC Centres/ Entities. SOM was preceded by the 4th meeting of the BIMSTEC Permanent Working Committee on 31 August 2020.

The 20th SOM was held on 03 March 2020 in Colombo recommending the rationalization of Sectors and Sub-sectors of cooperation to bring focus in the work of BIMSTEC, which will be placed before the Seventeenth BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting for approval.

The draft BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity received ‘in principle’ concurrence of all Member States was finalized by the Member States at the 3rd BIMSTEC Working Group Meeting on Transport Connectivity chaired by India in virtual format on 8 December 2020. The 5th Meeting of BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks was hosted by Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RISI) in virtual format on 21-22 December 2020. A BIMSTEC Start-up Conclave was held in New Delhi in virtual format on 15-16 January 2021 as part of Start-up India International Summit. Ministers, Senior Officials, Start-ups and Investors from BIMSTEC countries participated in the event.

Action is underway on a number of unilateral initiatives announced by Prime Minister at the last BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu in 2018 in diverse sectors of security, disaster management, trade, blue economy, agriculture, health, digital connectivity, etc.

Nalanda University

The Nalanda University Act 2010 established the University and the teaching began in 2014. The University has made steady progress both in terms of physical infrastructure as well as academic programmes. Over 70% of University campus construction has been completed. The University was awarded the 5 Star Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment, Large Development (GRIHA LD-5 Star) by the GRIHA Council on 09 October 2020 for Net Zero Energy Campus. Also, the University received ‘in principle’ concurrence of all Member States was finalized by the Member States at the 3rd BIMSTEC Working Group Meeting on Transport Connectivity chaired by India in virtual format on 8 December 2020. A BIMSTEC Start-up Conclave was held in New Delhi in virtual format on 15-16 January 2021 as part of Start-up India International Summit. Ministers, Senior Officials, Start-ups and Investors from BIMSTEC countries participated in the event.

The University is in the process of setting up three Global Network of Universities and work out a roadmap for linkages aimed at collaborative activities.

Association of South East Asian Nations

ASEAN centrality has been, and will remain, an important aspect of India’s ‘Act East’ policy which is a central element in India’s Foreign Policy. This year the Chairmanship of ASEAN is held by Vietnam and Thailand holds the position of country coordinator between India and ASEAN.

The 22nd ASEAN-India Senior Officials’ Meeting was held through a Video Conference on 16 July 2020. Senior Officials from all ten ASEAN countries and India discussed and deliberated upon ASEAN-India Cooperation and its future directions. The two sides discussed the current situation of Covid-19 pandemic and the need for a cohesive, coordinated and multilateral response to it. They also discussed issues of regional and global concern.

EAM participated in the ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held through Video Conference on 12 September 2020. The Meeting reviewed the status of ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership in several areas including maritime cooperation, connectivity, education and capacity building and People-to-People contacts. The new ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2021-2025) was adopted at the Meeting. The Ministers discussed ways to strengthen cooperation to fight Covid-19 pandemic and exchanged views on important international developments.

The Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean together constitute an important geographical space that is home to more than 64% of global population and contributes over 60% of global GDP. About half of the global trade happens through the maritime trade routes in this region. Over the years, this region has seen strong and sustained economic growth spreading across the Pacific rim, Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Gulf region and the East and Southern Coast of Africa. While this economic dynamism has led to increased connectivity, regional integration and greater economic opportunities, it has also brought common threats and challenges. These challenges have naturally attracted greater global attention and articulation of the concept of Indo-Pacific. In view of the importance of this region, the Prime Minister of India, articulated India’s vision of the Indo-Pacific in June 2018 by providing substantive policy elements and programmes. The Ministry established an Indo-Pacific Division in April 2019 to bring greater focus and organisational synergy to our Indo-Pacific vision and its implementation.

During 2020-21, despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, India continued to intensify its engagement with various Indo-Pacific frameworks: ASEAN, East Asia Summit (EAS), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS), and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).
The 17th ASEAN-India Summit, which was held virtually on 12 November 2020 was co-chaired by Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Vietnam Nguyen Xuan Phuc in his capacity as ASEAN Chair. All the 18 EAS countries participated in the virtual Summit. EAM, in his remarks, reaffirmed the importance of EAS as the leaders-led forum to exchange views on strategic issues. He spoke of the importance of adhering to international law, respecting territorial integrity and sovereignty, and promoting a rules-based global order. The Leaders underlined the importance of cooperation in ensuring safe, effective and affordable access to Covid-19 vaccines. They called for greater cooperation in keeping the global supply chains open for an expeditious and sustainable economic recovery. Regional and international issues such as the South China Sea, the situation in Korean peninsula and Rakhine state were also discussed. Besides the Ha Noi Declaration, the Summit also adopted four other Leaders’ Statements on Marine Sustainability; Epidemics Prevention and Response; Women, Peace and Security; and Steady Growth of Regional Economy.

India also participated in various meetings hosted by IORA Member States on priority areas – 6th Advisory Committee Meeting hosted by IORA Secretariat, Workshop to review non-payment of dues by IORA Member States, 1st Meeting of IORA Core Group on Tourism hosted by UAE in August 2020; Webinar on Blue Carbon Initiatives in IORA, Webinar on Women’s Economic Empowerment in Fisheries hosted by Indonesia, Webinar on Advancing Sustainable Fisheries Management hosted by Indonesia, Covid-19 Research and Innovation programs and Projects implemented by IORA Member States and Dialogue Partners hosted by South Africa in September 2020; 5th Meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum hosted by UAE; Workshop to review the progress of IORA Action Plan and Preparation of new plan hosted by UAE and Bangladesh, Italy; IORA Webinar on Sustainable Cruise Tourism hosted by Italy and 1st IORA-RoK Partnership Seminar hosted by Republic of Korea in October 2020.

India invited IORA Member States for two capacity building courses hosted online by ITDCO, INCOIS in the field of Marine Ecology [Understanding Sea Level] and Fisheries [Fishery Oceanography] in October and November 2020, respectively.

On 17 December 2020, Minister of State called for greater cooperation in the field of traditional medicine and wellness tourism among IORA Member States. As India’s contribution to further strengthening IORA, Minister of State announced India’s initiatives in the form of -
pлементation of e-Office system and setting up of Mahatma Gandhi Library at the IORA Secretariat. India also supported France’s IORA membership bid, which became the 23rd member of IORA at this COM. The COM was preceded by the 22nd Meeting of IORA Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) on 15-16 December 2020.

Asia - Europe Meeting (ASEM)

The ASEM Senior Officials’ Meeting (SOM) was held virtually on 02 and 03 July 2020. Connectivity and the Covid-19 pandemic were the 2 main issues on which deliberations took place between the SOM leaders. The ASEM statement on Covid-19 was adopted on 07 September 2020. The meeting prepared the ground for the 2020 ASEM Foreign Ministers meeting with Cambodia being the ASEM Chair for 2020. The ASEM Summit was postponed till 2021.

India participated in the Asia-Europe Forum on “Combating Substandard and Falsified Medicines” which was organised virtually by Cambodia on 29 and 30 September 2020. India also participated in the 14th ASEM Finance Ministers Meeting held virtually on 6th November 2020 organised by Bangladesh.

Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC)

This year marks the 20th Anniversary of the Mekong Ganga Cooperation which was established in 2000 and is one of the oldest initiatives in the Mekong region. To commemorate this milestone, a host of celebratory activities were planned to be held during the course of the year. However, due to Covid-19, some of these activities have been postponed. Nevertheless, several virtual events have been organised to mark two decades of MGC, including webinars in May and November 2020 in collaboration with AIC, RSIS and ICWA, focusing on the progress made over the past twenty years and the future course of action.

12th MGC Senior Officials’ Meeting (12th MGC SOM) was held virtually on 03 September 2020 where Senior Officials from India, Cambodia, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam reviewed the progress made in various initiatives under the MGC Plan of Action (2019-22) adopted during the 10th MGC Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok on 01 August 2019.

Quick Impact Project (QIP) Scheme has been one of the major mainstays of MGC. These are short-term, low-cost, community-oriented projects for development of social infrastructure in the region. India and Myanmar signed a QIP Umbrella Agreement during the visit of the President of Myanmar to India in February 2020. India already has such agreements with Cambodia, Laos PDR, and Vietnam. In the year 2020, a total of twenty-three projects have been sanctioned under QIP schemes which include 12 projects for Vietnam, 8 for Cambodia and 3 for Laos PDR. Water Resource Management was added as a new area of cooperation under the QIP scheme under which 7 projects have been sanctioned to Vietnam for infrastructure development for efficient water management in its drought prone areas.

India has also established a Project Development Fund to promote trade and investments by the Indian private sector in the Mekong countries.

Ayeawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS)

India joined ACMECS as a Development Partner in July 2019 along with Australia, China, Japan, Republic of Korea and USA. India looks forward to identifying suitable projects from ACMECS. Priority Projects drawing on the USD 1 billion Line of Credit announced by the Prime Minister at the ASEM-India Summit in November 2015 for connectivity and digital infrastructure in the ASEAN region. Under this initiative, India is currently considering extending a line of credit to the tune of USD 167 million to Laos PDR for the eastward extension of the IMT trilateral highway.

Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative

India’s vision for the Indian Ocean Region as articulated by the Prime Minister in March 2015 during his visit to Mauritius and encapsulated in the Hindi word for Ocean, “SAGAR” i.e. “Security and Growth for All in the Region” has been the genesis of our broader articulation of the Indo-Pacific. It was further elaborated in the Prime Minister’s keynote address at the Shangri La Dialogue in June 2018. India’s approach is based on cooperation and collaboration. ASEM is at the centre of this maritime space. In the Western Indian Ocean, India is a member of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). India seeks to cooperate for an architecture in the region that ensures peace and security of the Indo-Pacific, leading to stability and prosperity of the region as a whole.

India’s Indo-Pacific Vision envisages a free, open, inclusive region, which embraces all in a common pursuit of progress and prosperity. It believes that our common prosperity and security require evolution, through a common rules-based order for the region with respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, consultation, good governance, transparency, viability and sustainability.

As a natural progression of India’s vision of Indo-Pacific and to give it concrete shape, Prime Minister announced the Indo-Pacific Oceans’ Initiative (IPOI) at the East Asia Summit held in Bangkok in November 2019. The IPOI is focused on finding cooperative solutions to global challenges in an open, inclusive and cooperative manner. As an open global initiative, it draws on existing regional cooperation architecture and mechanisms to focus on the seven central pillars conceived around Maritime Security; Maritime Ecology; Maritime Resources; Capacity Building and Resource Sharing; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation; Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport. Taking the lead on pillars of Maritime Security and Disaster Risk Reduction, India has invited interested countries to come on board on one or more pillars of IPOI.

The theme for the 75th UNGA General Debate was “The Future We Want; The UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism.” In his intervention, Prime Minister highlighted the need for a reformed multilateralism that reflects today’s realities, gives voice to all stakeholders, embraces contemporary challenges and focuses on human welfare.

The 75th Session of the General Assembly

On 21 September 2020, Prime Minister addressed the high-level meeting of the Assembly to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. He said: “The United Nations and International Organisations

India released a postage stamp on 23 October 2020 to mark the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations. Speaking at the event, EAM said that India, as a founding member of the United Nations, is invested with its heart and soul right from the craft-
and work with vigour and dedication to bring the goals and objectives of the UN closer to the aspirations of its member states, and more importantly to the aspirations of their people.

Security Council

During 2020-21, India participated in several open debates of the UN Security Council. India also co-sponsored the UN Security Council Resolution 2538 of 2020 which calls upon member states, the United Nations Secretariat, and regional organizations to strengthen their collective efforts to promote the full, effective, and meaningful participation of uniformed civilian women in peacekeeping operations at all levels and in all positions, including in senior leadership positions. India also participated in Aria Formula meetings of the Security Council on the topics of Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Yemen. India took the seat as an Elected Member of the UN Security Council for the period 2021-22.

Reform of the UN Security Council

In 2020-21, India continued its efforts to move forward the process of UN Security Council Reforms, through its active engagement with reform-oriented groupings like the G-4 and L-69. The Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) process during the 74th UNGA session was cut short by the Covid-19 related restrictions on in-person meetings. In the two IGN meetings held during the year, there was growing support from member states for the Common African Position, as well as increasing calls for improved working methods of the IGN.

In the 75th UNGA session, India worked with like-minded delegations to ensure concrete progress, including through immediate commencement of text-based negotiations on Security Council reform.

G-77 Event

The Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations participated in the virtual Flagship G-77 Ministerial Meeting on the theme “Maintaining a Low Carbon Development Path towards the 2030 Agenda in the Era of Covid-19” on 29 October 2020. He also participated in the G-77 Annual Foreign Ministers Meeting on 12 November 2020. The theme of the meeting was “Global response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the obstacles it poses to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achievement of the SDGs”.

India and Peacekeeping

India continued to be the largest cumulative contributor of UN Peacekeeping troops, having provided around 253,000 since the 1950s. As of 31 October 2020, India is the 5th largest contributor with 5,353 personnel deployed in 8 peacekeeping missions. As on date, 175 Indian Peacekeepers have sacrificed their lives while serving in UN missions. Female police officers constitute 44% (12 out of 27) of the police personnel deployed by India in the UN Peacekeeping operations.

At the deliberations in UN, India continues to stress the need for serious and institutionalized consultations with Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) in mandate formulation; need for prioritization of mandates and allocation of adequate resources for implementation; necessity to remove all national caveats as they hinder performance; need for dedicated counter-IED measures; need for enhancing security of camps; appropriate caution on the issue of ‘robust mandates’; and legal safeguards for troops in robust offensive operations.

Security Council Elections

Elections for non-permanent seats in the UN Security Council for the term 2021-22 were held on 17 June 2020. India was the endorsed candidate of the Asia-Pacific Group and was on a clean slate. Out of the 192 votes cast, India secured 184 votes, and took its seat in the Security Council on 1 January 2021. This is the 8th time that India is serving in the Security Council. In the run-up to the elections, India listed five priorities for its Security Council tenure under the overarching theme of NORMS: New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System. These include inter alia new opportunities for progress, effective response to international terrorism, reforming multilateral systems, comprehensive approach to international peace and security, and technology with a human touch.

ECOSOC Elections

India was also elected as a Member of three ECOSOC bodies - Commission on Status of Women, Commission on Population and Development, and Committee for Programme and Coordination in the elections held on 14 September 2020.

Inter Parliamentary Union

The 206th Session of Governing Council of Inter-Parliamentary Union was held virtually from 01-04 November 2020. Lok Sabha Speaker attended the Session. India was elected as a Member of the Commission on Status of Women in elections held in September, India, Afghanistan, and China contested for two seats in the Asia-Pacific Group with India and Afghanistan emerging as winners. India was also elected to the Committee for Programme and Coordination on Population and Development.

Non-Aligned Movement

Prime Minister participated in the online Summit of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Contact Group on Covid-19 held on 04 May 2020 to discuss response to the Covid-19 pandemic, along with over 30 other Heads of State and Government. The online NAM Contact Group Summit on the theme of “United against Covid-19” was convened by the Chair of NAM, President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan, in order to promote international solidarity in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic and to mobilize efforts of States and international organizations to address the pandemic. The event also commemorated the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace.
Prime Minister’s participation underlined India’s longstanding commitment to the principles and values of NAM as one of its leading founding-member. In his intervention, Prime Minister emphasized the importance of a coordinated, inclusive and equitable response by the world to this crisis, outlining the steps India had taken domestically and internationally. Prime Minister also emphasized the importance of a continued effort by the world against other viruses, in particular terrorism and fake news.

**Alliance for Multilateralism**

On 26 June 2020, Alliance for Multilateralism held a virtual ministerial meeting to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. In his pre-recorded video message, EAM, underlined that today the world faced both a pandemic and an infodemic and that a dynamic multilateral order was the need of the hour in order to face these challenges.

On 25 September 2020, another virtual Ministerial meeting was held on issues like climate change, cyberspace, gender, and health. EAM, participated and spoke about India’s contributions to build back the world economy by creating new capacities in the fields of fintech platforms, renewable energy, and vaccines.

The Commonwealth: Commonwealth Virtual Leaders Meeting on Covid-19 and the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers’ Meeting were held in virtual format on 24 June 2020 and 14 October 2020, respectively. Secretary (West) attended both meetings. India contributed USD 9.46 million to the India-UN Development Fund to fund projects in small island developing states, including in the Caribbean and Oceania.

**Democracy Initiatives**

Community of Democracies is a global intergovernmental coalition of States to bring together governments, civil society and the private sector in the pursuit of a common goal: supporting democratic rules and strengthening democratic norms and institutions around the world. It celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Warsaw Declaration virtually on 26 June 2020. Minister of State made a statement at the event through a recorded message.

To mark the 25th Anniversary of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IIDEA), a virtual global anniversary conference was arranged titled ‘Democracy Now and Next’ on 19-20 November 2020. Minister of State recorded a congratulatory video message for the event underlining the importance of democracy and the contributions of IIDEA in advancing democracy around the world.

India also contributed USD 150,000 in FY 2020-21 to the United Nations Democracy Fund to support democracy initiatives around the world including through community activism, electoral processes, gender equality, media and freedom of information, rule of law and human rights, strengthening civil society interaction with government, tools for knowledge and youth engagement.

**UN General Assembly side event on Tuberculosis**

Minister for Health and Family Welfare delivered a pre-recorded statement at the event held on 23 September 2020 under the theme “Progress and Multi-sectoral Action towards achieving global targets to end TB” co-organised by WHO and the Russian Federation. The side event marked two years of the 2018 UN High Level Meeting on TB.

**Ministerial Meeting on Universal Health Coverage**

Minister for Health and Family Welfare delivered a statement (pre-recorded) at the high-level event held on 08 October 2020 under the theme “One Year Commemoration of the High-Level Meeting: Measuring Progress, Challenges and Opportunities in the Context of Covid-19”.

**High-level Event on the Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-Accelerator)**

Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India participated virtually in a high-level event held on 30 September 2020 under the theme “Tackling Covid-19 together through the ACT-Accelerator”.

**High-level side-event on "Responding to Infodemic – Sharing Best Practices"**

The objective of the event organised by India, Latvia, Australia, Indonesia, and France on 02 December 2020 was to share best practices and policies employed by member states to counter the Covid-19 related misinformation and disinformation. The President of the General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, delivered the opening remarks followed by remarks from Foreign Ministers of Latvia and Australia. Additional Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, represented India at the event.

**High-Level Segment of United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)**

Prime Minister delivered the keynote address at the High-Level Segment of the ECOSOC on 17 July 2020. The theme of the session was “Multilateralism after Covid 19: What kind of UN do we need at the 75th anniversary ?” PM in his remarks touched upon several subjects such as India’s commitment to achieve the SDGs and actions taken to combat Covid-19 pandemic. PM highlighted the importance of reformed multilateralism and human-centric globalization.

**India’s 2nd Voluntary National Review**

As part of follow-up and review to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, member states conduct regular reviews of progress made towards the achievement of the 17 SDGs. These Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) are presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), held under the auspices of ECOSOC every year in the month of July. India presented its first VNR at the 2017 HLPF and presented its second VNR virtually at the 2020 HLPF held on 13 July 2020. Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog, presented India’s VNR. In our second VNR, we made a paradigm shift to a “whole-of-society” approach by engaging sub-national and local governments, civil society organizations, local communities, people in vulnerable situations and the private sector. India’s commitment to the SDGs was presented by highlighting our national development agenda as reflected in the motto of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas.

**UN Human Rights Council**

This year was the second year of India’s three-year membership of the UN Human Rights Council (2019-2021). India continued its engagement and participation in, inter-alia, sessions of the Human Rights Council (HRC), annual forum meetings, inter-governmental working group proceedings, and Human Rights Treaty Bodies reporting process. During the 44th (June 2020) and the 45th (September 2020) Sessions of the HRC, India continued to highlight its support on promotion and protection of human rights, technical assistance and cooperation and capacity building of the UN Member States. India co-sponsored 4 resolutions, namely, the resolutions on ‘Elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members’, ‘Human Rights and Climate Change’, ‘Independence and impartiality of the judiciary, jurors and assessors, and the independence of lawyers’, ‘Technical cooperation and capacity building for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Philippines’. On behalf of NAM, India was the main sponsor for resolutions on ‘Enhancement of International Cooperation in the field of Human Rights’, ‘Human Rights and Unilateral Coercive Measure’ and the ‘Right to Development’. India also aligned itself with Joint Statements on various human rights issues particularly on ‘the Convention on the Rights of Child’, ‘Climate change’, ‘Rights of intersex people’ and ‘Technical assistance and capacity building’ among others as well as those delivered by NAM. India continued its participation in the ongoing Third Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review Process pertaining to 28 Member States, which were subjected to review in 2020. At the 45th Session, Indian candidate was re-elected as a member of the Advisory Committee by the HRC.

**International Labour Organisation**

Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment has been elected as the Chairperson of the Governing Body (GB) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for the period October 2020 to June 2021. India chaired the proceedings of the 340th Session of the GB of the ILO that was organised in a virtual mode from 02-14 November 2020. Minister for Labour and Employment participated in the High-Level Virtual Summit organised by the ILO on 08-09 July 2020.
World Health Organization

The 73rd World Health Assembly (WHA) session took place in Geneva in a virtual format due to the coronavirus pandemic on 18-19 May 2020 and 09-14 November 2020. Indian Delegation was led by Minister for Health and Family Welfare. The WHA Session on 18-19 May 2020 adopted a resolution on Covid 19, which was co-sponsored by India. The resolution led to the formation of an Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response to conduct an independent and comprehensive evaluation of the WHO led international response to Covid-19 pandemic. Former Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, has been selected as a member of the Independent Panel. India presented an Approach Paper on WHO reforms to the Independent Panel in December 2020. India was elected to the Executive Board (EB) of the WHO for a period of 3 years from May 2020. Minister for Health and Family Welfare was elected as the Chair of the EB of the WHO on 21 May 2020 for a period of one year. India actively participated in the Special Session of the EB held on 05-06 October 2020 and the regular session of the EB held on 16 November 2020. India also actively participated in various consultations and coordination meetings organised by agencies like GAVI, Global Fund etc. On the occasion of Ayurveda Day 2020, WHO announced the setting up of WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in India. The Centre will aim to strengthen the evidence, research, training and awareness about traditional and complementary medicine. The Centre will also support WHO’s efforts to implement WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014 to 2023.

Climate Change

The 26th meeting of Conference of Parties (COP-26), the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) set to take place in Glasgow, UK in November 2020 was postponed due to Covid-19 and now will be in November 2021.

Prime Minister addressed a G20 Summit side event ‘Safe-guarding the Planet - The Circular Carbon Economy Approach’ on 22 November 2020. He said that India will meet the goal of 175 GWs of renewable energy well before the target year of 2022 and will seek to achieve 450 GWs by 2030.

UK along with the United Nations, France, in partnership with Italy and Chile co-convoked the virtual Climate Ambition Summit commemorating the 5th anniversary of the Paris Agreement on 12 December 2020. Paris Agreement of UNFCCC on climate change takes effect from 01 January 2021. Prime Minister addressed the Summit. He said that India is not only on track to achieve its Paris Agreement targets, but to exceed them beyond expectations. India has reduced emission intensity by 21% over 2005 levels. India has also succeeded in expanding forest cover and safeguarding biodiversity. Prime Minister mentioned two major global initiatives - International Solar Alliance (ISA), and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). Prime Minister said that India will celebrate 100 years as a modern, independent nation in 2047 and pledged that centennial India will not only meet its own targets, but will also exceed expectations.

Prime Minister participated in the virtual Climate Adaptation Summit on 25 January 2021 organised by the Government of Netherlands and Global Commission for Adaptation (GCA). India is one of the co-convener of GCA.

World Intellectual Property Organisation

India’s relations with the World Intellectual Property Organisa-
tion (WIPO) continued to progress further in 2020. Minister for Commerce and Industries participated in the launch of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) continued to progress further in 2020. Minister for Commerce and Industries participated in the launch of the WIPO Global Innovation Index (GII), a flagship event of the WIPO. India’s global ranking further improved in the GII from 45 in 2019 to 48 this year, a jump of 33 places since 2015. WIPO's Global Design Database and Global Brand Database added India’s national collections of 2 million trademark concepts and more than 58000 design models.

Refugees and Migrants

India actively participated in various meetings organised by the UNHCR as a member of its Executive and Standing Committees. India also participated at the meetings organised by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), most notably the 5th Special Session held in October 2020 that amended the IOM Constitution.

South Centre

The ongoing cooperation mechanism between India and the South Centre continued to grow in 2020. In April 2020, Shri Mohandas Pai was appointed as a member of the Governing Board of the South Centre.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

India continued to participate actively and constructively in all UNCTAD meetings in 2020. India was among the top 10 FDI inflow destinations in 2019, as per the UNCTAD Investment Report 2020.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Secretary, Department of Telecommunications participated in the High-Level Policy Session of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum, which was held virtually in Geneva, from 22 June to 10 September 2020. The theme of the event was “Fostering digital transformation and global partnerships: WSIS Action Lines for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”. India, in partnership with the ITU, has proposed to host the World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTSA-21) in February-March 2022, in Hyderabad, Telangana. It was earlier scheduled to be held in No-

Biodiversity Summit

The first UN Summit on Biodiversity was held virtually during the high-level week on 30 September 2020 on the theme “Urgent Action on Biodiversity for Sustainable Development”. The summit saw virtual participation from more than 140 member states. Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change conveyed India’s contributions to the work of the Arctic Council’s Working Groups and its projects. India also committed to step up scientific cooperation with Arctic states and expand the research themes with wider geographic coverage.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Indian Mission participated in the 150th & 151st meetings of Committee of Permanent Representatives of UNEP, held virtually, on 30 April 2020 and 14 September 2020, respectively.

UN-Habitat

First session of 2020 of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat was held online on 29 June 2020. India is a member of the 36 member Executive board. Indian Mission also participated in the Second session of 2020 Executive Board of UN-Habitat which was held online from 27 to 29 October 2020.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

A delegation from the Indian Meteorological Department participated in the WMO Data Conference held from 16-19 November 2020.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

India continues to participate in FAO as a member of the FAO Council. It also continues to serve as a member of various committees of FAO. India has been elected as Chair of Committee on Agriculture (COAG) for a 2-year term starting October 2020.

United Nations and International Organisations
till 2022. The Committee on Agriculture is one of the FAO’s important governing bodies providing overall policy and regulatory guidelines on issues related to agriculture, livestock, food safety, nutrition, rural development and natural resources management. This is for the second time that India has been elected as the Chair of COAG.

India continues to be a member of Committee on World Food Security as a Bureau Member from Asia. India has also been elected as a member of International Steering Committee on International Year of Fruits and Vegetables to be celebrated in 2021.

On 16 October 2020, Prime Minister released a commemorative 75 Rupee coin on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of FAO.

Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare participated in the 35th Asia Pacific Regional Conference virtually organised by Bhutan from 01-04 September 2020. India is the Vice Chair of Asia Regional Group of FAO and took over as a Chair of Asia Regional group from January 2021.

India is actively engaged in the Food System Summit to be held in 2021 through discussion in different action tracks especially in Action Track 4 on livelihood. India continues to be the member of the International Steering Committee on United Nations Decade of Family Farming.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The activities and programmes of UNESCO were adversely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, UNESCO organised the 6th Special Session from 08-09 June 2020 to deliberate on the way ahead for the functioning of the organization.

The 209th Session of the Executive Board was held from 02-10 July 2020. India’s National Statement at the Session highlighted the achievements of the Government in the field of education, culture and science. India contested the elections for the 21 member Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, but could not get elected.

High-level Meeting to Celebrate 25th Anniversary of Beijing Women’s Conference

Minister for Women and Child Development delivered a statement pre-recorded at the high-level meeting held on 01 October 2020 under the theme “Accelerating the Realization of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls”.

International Day of Non-Violence

On 02 October 2020, the Permanent Mission of India to the UN hosted a virtual commemoration to mark the International Day of Non-Violence and the culmination of celebration of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, addressed the special event which was organised under the theme “Gandhi@150: A non-violent approach to peace and development”. The event also saw special messages from Permanent Representatives of over 20 delegations to the United Nations. In their messages, speakers highlighted the continuing relevance of Gandhian principles for the United Nations and its objectives.

International Day of Yoga Celebrations

On 21 June 2020, the Permanent Mission of India to the UN organised a virtual celebration on the theme of “Yoga for Health-Yoga from Home” through UN platforms in the form of a pre-recorded video. President of the United Nations General Assembly Tijjani Muhammad-Bande participated in the celebrations and delivered a speech underlining the importance of Yoga, especially in the context of prevailing pandemic situation.

The Permanent Missions of India, Nigeria and Singapore to the UN supported by WHO, UNICEF and UN-Water organised the World Toilet Day on 19 November 2020. This year the theme was “Sustainable Sanitation and Climate Change”.

Hindi in the United Nations

Usage of Hindi in UN public communications (UN news, weekly audio bulletins on UN radio and UN social media) began in March 2018 following the first MoU signed by the UN with any country. Since then we have witnessed a steady increase in volume and frequency of Hindi content on both the Hindi website of the UN and its social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The MoU with the UN on usage of Hindi has been extended by five more years till 2025.

World Food Programme

During the World Food day celebrated on 16 October 2020, Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare participated in the High-level panel discussion. At the World Food Programme (WFP), India continues to be a member of the Executive Board starting from 01 January 2020 to 31 December 2021. India has been elected as WFP Executive Board Bureau Member and List B convener of 54 countries.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

India is an active member of the Executive Board of IFAD. India contributed USD 60 million on the replenishment cycle and actively participated in the 12th Replenishment discussions. India continues to be the member of Evaluation Committee of IFAD, and is the Chair of the Emoluments Committee of the IFAD.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

The 76th Commission Session of UNESCAP was held through video conference on 21 May 2020 under the theme ‘Promoting economic, social and environmental cooperation on oceans for sustainable development’. Election of Governing Council of Asia Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) was held during the session where India was re-elected as the host country. Ambassador and PR of India to UNESCAP led the Indian delegation at the 7th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development held through video conference on 20 May 2020.

3rd session of the UNESCAP Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation was held on 19-20 August 2020. The 7th session of the Committee on Statistics of UNESCAP was held during 26-28 August 2020 in a hybrid format. India was elected as the Vice Chair of the Bureau of the Committee. 6th Session of the UNESCAP Committee on Social Development was held on 20-21 October 2020. The 6th Session of the UNESCAP Committee on Transport was held on 12-13 November 2020. India participated in all these events.

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Minister for Women and Child Development delivered a statement pre-recorded at the high-level meeting held on 01 October 2020 under the theme “Accelerating the Realization of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Gender Equality and the Empowerment of All Women and Girls”.

International Day of Non-Violence

On 02 October 2020, the Permanent Mission of India to the UN hosted a virtual commemoration to mark the International Day of Non-Violence and the culmination of celebration of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, addressed the special event which was organised under the theme “Gandhi@150: A non-violent approach to peace and development”. The event also saw special messages from Permanent Representatives of over 20 delegations to the United Nations. In their messages, speakers highlighted the continuing relevance of Gandhian principles for the United Nations and its objectives.

International Day of Yoga Celebrations

On 21 June 2020, the Permanent Mission of India to the UN organised a virtual celebration on the theme of “Yoga for Health-Yoga from Home” through UN platforms in the form of a pre-recorded video. President of the United Nations General Assembly Tijjani Muhammad-Bande participated in the celebrations and delivered a speech underlining the importance of Yoga, especially in the context of prevailing pandemic situation.

The Permanent Missions of India, Nigeria and Singapore to the UN supported by WHO, UNICEF and UN-Water organised the World Toilet Day on 19 November 2020. This year the theme was “Sustainable Sanitation and Climate Change”.

Hindi in the United Nations

Usage of Hindi in UN public communications (UN news, weekly audio bulletins on UN radio and UN social media) began in March 2018 following the first MoU signed by the UN with any country. Since then we have witnessed a steady increase in volume and frequency of Hindi content on both the Hindi website of the UN and its social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The MoU with the UN on usage of Hindi has been extended by five more years till 2025.
At the G20 this year, our efforts were focused towards ensuring that the global response to Covid-19 pandemic is human-centered, inclusive, and sustainable. Prime Minister participated in the Extraordinary Virtual G20 Leaders’ Summit convened on 26 March 2020, with Saudi Presidency, to discuss challenges posed by the outbreak of the pandemic and to forge a global coordinated response. At the Summit, Leaders committed to inject over USD 5 trillion into the global economy to counter the social and economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic. Debt Service Suspension Initiative offering temporary suspension of Government to Government debt to low income countries was also announced and is being implemented.

Prime Minister also participated virtually in the 15th G20 Summit convened by Saudi Arabia, from 21-22 November 2020. The Summit was centered on the theme “Realizing Opportunities of 21st Century for All”. A Leaders’ Declaration, that contained elements calling for building a resilient and inclusive recovery for building a sustainable future, was also adopted at the end of the Summit.

EAM represented India at the G20 Foreign Ministers’ Extraordinary Meeting convened by G20 Chair Saudi Arabia on 03 September 2020. EAM proposed development of voluntary ‘G20 Principles on Coordinated Cross-Border Movement of People’ with standardization of testing & quarantine procedures and ‘movement and transit’ protocols.

India’s G20 Sherpa, also attended G20 Sherpa meetings in Khobar, Saudi Arabia on 11-12 March 2020 and virtual G20 Sherpa meetings on 25 March 2020, 29-30 September and 27-29 October, 2020. A joint G20 Finance and Health Ministers meeting was held on 17 September 2020, in which a Joint Statement was adopted calling for strengthening economic resilience and growth in overcoming the current crisis.

Prime Minister addressed the Leaders’ Side-Event on Safeguarding the Planet at G20 Summit on 22 November 2020.

Prime Minister participated at the 12th BRICS Summit on 17 November 2020. The Summit was convened virtually by Russia under the theme “Global Stability, Shared Security and Innovative Growth.” Leaders discussed intra-BRICS cooperation and key issues in the global context, including reform of the multilateral system, measures to mitigate the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, cooperation in counterrorism, trade, health, energy and people to people exchanges. The Moscow Declaration was adopted at the end of the Summit. India took over the Chairship of BRICS from Russia on 01 January 2021, and will be hosting the 13th BRICS Summit in 2021.

At the BRICS Virtual Foreign Ministers’ Meeting convened by BRICS Chair, Russia, EAM highlighted the various steps undertaken by India in the wake of the pandemic such as launching of Aarogya Setu Citizen App, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package and India’s supply of drugs and healthcare products to nearly 85 nations. The 2nd virtual meeting of BRICS Foreign Ministers was held on 09 September 2020.
Ministers was held on 4 September 2020, where discussions centred around overview of global situation and the threats and challenges to international peace and security. The 10th meeting of the BRICS NSA’s was held on 17 September 2020, wherein threats to global, national and regional security were discussed.

**IBSA**

EAM chaired IBSA Foreign Ministers’ Meeting through video conference on 16 September 2020. At the meeting, IBSA Ministers exchanged views on furthering IBSA cooperation and discussed various issues of global significance including counterterrorism, climate change, sustainable development, multilateral trading system, disarmament, non-proliferation issues and South-South Cooperation. They also shared their experience on Covid-19 situation in their respective countries. They appreciated the work done by the IBSA Fund for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger. On this occasion, the Ministers also adopted and released the IBSA Joint Ministerial Statement on the Reform of the UN Security Council as a common endeavour of Global South.

The Development Partnership Administration (DPA) was created in January 2012 to effectively handle India’s development aid projects through the stages of conception, launch, execution and completion. The DPA functions in close coordination with the Territorial Divisions in the Ministry, which continue to be the principal interlocutors with partner countries in identifying their developmental needs and priorities. The DPA is progressively developing the expertise required to handle projects in varied sectors and regions through the stages of project formulation, appraisal, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

**Lines of Credit**

A key aspect of India’s development assistance in the past few years has been the extension of Lines of Credits (LoCs) or loans on concessional terms to other developing countries. Over the years, 308 LoCs aggregating more than USD 31.6 billion have been extended to countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific and Latin America. These Line of Credit facilities have been provided to 39 countries, including all BRICS countries, African Development Bank countries, SAARC countries, and other developing countries of South Asia and the Pacific. These LoCs have facilitated projects in sectors such as agriculture, power, irrigation, urban infrastructure, drinking water, health, education, and other social sectors. The DPA is working towards further strengthening its role in the implementation of these projects.
Objective of LoCs

Through LoCs, India can help the partner countries throughout various stages of project implementation such as project formulation, technical studies, and identifying suitable project management consultants and execution companies. Under LoCs, the partner countries have a benefit of lower interest rates, long moratorium period of 5 years and extended repayment period of 20-25 years. The partner countries have great flexibility in identifying sectors and choosing the projects, based on their national priorities. Further, since substantial part of any development project under LoC is carried out with local sub-contractors utilizing local material, it helps the local industry and the economy in the partner countries.

Overseas promotion of Lines of Credit

Government of India is strongly promoting the development partnership initiatives through Lines of Credit across the world through Social Media, Monthly newsletters etc. Under new digital outreach initiatives, a dashboard has also been developed on the website of the Ministry for regular updates on LoCs. Our missions are also promoting the significant occasions and milestones like signing of LoC Agreements, foundation stone laying and commencement ceremonies, inauguration ceremonies etc. on various socio-media platforms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>New LoCs Sanctioned</th>
<th>Amount (USD Million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>Construction and upgrade of Regional Hospitals in Kankan and Nzerereko</td>
<td>20.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Power Transmission Lines, Substations and associated infrastructure</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Two Solar Projects: (i) 50 MW power plant in Bauchi, (USD 66.60 mn), (ii) Solar PV renewable Energy Micro Utility (REMU) in six political zones of Nigeria (USD 8.36 mn)</td>
<td>74.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>Rehabilitation of existing potable water facilities in four communities</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eswatini</td>
<td>Construction of a new Parliament Building</td>
<td>108.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>Greater Male Connectivity Project</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Solar Projects</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Tshedren Thermal Power Project, Two new LoC tranches of USD 100 million and USD 40 million</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>Social infrastructure and other development projects</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>4 Offshore Patrol Vessels</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>High Speed Guard Boats</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>10 units of submarine batteries</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Upgradation of Anti-Submarine Warships 159A and 159 AE (Peyta Class ships)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Development Partnerships: Neighbourhood First

Afghanistan

India has been a steadfast partner in reconstruction and development efforts in Afghanistan despite serious security challenges. The principal focus of India’s development assistance to Afghanistan has been to build capacities of Afghan nationals and its institutions for governance and delivery of public service, develop socio-economic infrastructure, secure lives and promote livelihood. Some of the key Indian projects in Afghanistan are the new Parliament Building in Kabul (2015), and the Afghan India Friendship Dam, earlier known as Salma Dam (2016) which underlines India’s commitment to the rebuilding of a united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan. Both countries launched the ‘New Development Partnership’ in September 2017 to further enhance India’s development assistance to Afghanistan. India has agreed to undertake the Shatoot Dam project which will provide drinking water to residents of Kabul besides rehabilitating existing irrigation and drainage network and necessary tests and surveys for the project are being carried out.

India is supporting High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPS) spread across all the 34 provinces of Afghanistan by extending grants assistance. Since 2005, 4 phases of community-based projects funded by Indian grants and covering areas like agriculture, education, labour, rural development and public health have been implemented by the Afghan government agencies thus building local capacity towards project management. Under Phase I and II implemented during 2005-2009, USD 20 million was provided for undertaking 116 projects. Under the Phase III launched in 2012, funding of USD 100 million was provided for 420 projects of which 336 have been completed.

Support for education and capacity building programmes is an important aspect of India’s development partnership with Afghanistan. Under the Special Scholarship Scheme for Afghan Nationals (SSSAN) administered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), 1000-annual scholarship slots are provided to Afghan students for studying in universities and institutes across India. Since 2006, more than 10,000 Afghan students have been trained under this scheme. In addition, another 500 scholarship slots are provided for children/descendants of martyrs of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and 614 fellowships for Agricultural studies, administered through the Department of Agricultural Research and Education and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. India is also supporting the establishment of the Afghanistan National Agriculture Sciences and Technology University (ANASTU) in Kandahar which is the first university of its kind in Afghanistan.

India, during April – September 2020, India supplied 75,000 MT of wheat to the Government of Afghanistan as grant assistance despite the challenges of Covid-19.
Maldives: India and Maldives have a growing development partnership involving both grant and LoC assistance. The projects completed in 2019 include installation of streetlights in Male, launch of RuPay card, gifting of CGS Kamiyaab and MoUs on setting of fish processing plants in Addu Atoll. India is assisting in construction of a new Ministry of Defence building for Maldives. The construction work of the Institute for Security and Law Enforcement Studies is in final stages. India provided grants for construction of additional facilities at the Composite Training Centre at Mazihaafushi Island built up with India’s assistance. During 2020, Maldives has been the largest recipient of India’s Covid related assistance. India has also announced support for the Greater Malé Connectivity Project through a grant of USD 100 million and a LoC of USD 400 million.

Mauritius: The first phase of Metro Express Project in Port Louis built under the India-Mauritius Development Partnership and operationalized in 2020 proved to be a major success with a record number of ridership reached in the first year. The new Supreme Court building in Port Louis with grant assistance of USD 28.12 million from India was jointly inaugurated by Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Mauritius on 30 July 2020. Other significant infrastructure and capacity building projects undertaken in Mauritius are building an ENT Hospital, Social Housing Project in Port Louis and the E-Tablet project to provide teaching aids for primary schools in Mauritius. India also provided grant assistance for construction of a Civil Services College in Port Louis. In the wake of the catastrophic oil spill off the coast of Mauritius in August 2020, India dispatched 30 tonnes of technical equipment and material to assist in the oil-slick containment operations.

LoC in the Neighborhood: The focus of LoCs has been on development initiatives undertaken in the borrowing countries, particularly in our neighborhood of India based on GoI’s Neighborhood First Policy:

Bangladesh: The portfolio of LoC extended by the Government of India is highest in the case of Bangladesh. India has extended 4 LoCs amounting to USD 7.862 billion to the Government of Bangladesh which includes USD 500 mn LoC for cooperation in defence sector too. 46 Projects have been covered under these LoCs out of which 14 Projects have been completed.

Maldive: Maldives: Gol has extended 4 LoCs worth US$ 1.28 bn to Maldives. The Greater Male Connectivity project, the largest infra project in Maldives was announced this year.

Greater Male Connectivity Project in Maldives: The project involves construction of a 6.7 km long combination of bridge, causeway and road to connect the Male, Villingili, Gulhifalhu, and Thilafushi islands. It is one of the longest connectivity projects in the country and is expected to become the new economic lifeline for Maldives.

Development Projects with Grant Assistance: The development projects being undertaken with GoI grant assistance in neighbouring countries cover a range of sectors from infrastructure development, including construction, roads & bridges, waterways and transmission lines as also power generation, agriculture, capacity building, educa-tion, health, rural development etc.

Sri Lanka: India’s development partnership with Sri Lanka is based on a consultative approach, factoring in the priorities of the Government of Sri Lanka. The ongoing housing project involving construction of 50,000 houses for resettlement of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sri Lanka is progressing well. The construction and repair of 46,000 houses for under an owner-driven process Internally Displaced Persons in the Northern and Eastern provinces has been completed.

Development Partnership with the Central Asia Region: EAM announced an Indian LoC offer/availability of USD 1 billion for 5 Central Asian Countries viz. Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, for priority developmental projects in fields such as connectivity, energy, IT, healthcare, educa-tion, agriculture etc. during the Second Meeting of India-Central Asia Dialogue held on 28 October 2020. India’s partnership with Africa is based on a consultative mod-el of cooperation and sharing of development experiences, and is focused on addressing the priorities and needs of the African countries. The engagement with African countries

Myanmar: India is providing support for three major road connectivity projects in Myanmar which aim to strengthen regional connectivity by building the road network between Myanmar and the North-Eastern states of India. Under the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Corridor (KMMTTC) Project, an international port has been built at Sittwe in Myanmar. The stretch of Kaladan river connecting Sittwe Port with Paletwa has been developed for navigation and a well-resourced Inland Water terminal has beenestablished at Paletwa. Work is also going on to build a road between Paletwa and Zorinpui on the India-Myanmar border. India has supported implementation of two projects in Myanmar related to India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway, namely, re-construction of 69 bridges and their approaches in the Tamu-Kygone-Kalaw road section (150 kms) and upgradation of the Kalewa-Yangon road section (120 kms). Once completed, the Trilateral Highway will provide seamless connectivity for the North Eastern states of India with Myanmar, Thailand and other ASEAN countries and facilitate movement of goods and traffic.

India also provided support for capacity building projects in Myanmar, namely establishment of the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology (MIIT) in Mandalay and the Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE) near Naypyidaw.

Nepal: India-Nepal developmental partnership extends to a wide spectrum of projects, including infrastructure projects in areas of railways, road, electricity transmission lines, police training and vocational training. India is undertaking development of rail links with Nepal for enhancing the ease of movement of people and goods. Under the first phase, Jayanagar-Bardibas Rail Link (18 kms) and Jughari- Biratnagar Rail Link (38.60 kms) are being developed at an estimated cost of around Rs. 950 crores. Preparatory work for construction of a new electrified rail line connecting Raauli to Kathmandu is being carried out by Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL) of India.

India has completed construction of two Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at Birgunj and Biratnagar in Nepal along the India-Nepal Border to facilitate trade and movement of goods and traffic. These were handed over to the Government of Nepal in 2018 and 2020 respectively. Work has started at two more ICPs planned at Nepalgunj and Bhirahawa. Under the ambit of India’s assistance for development projects, the Nepal-Bharat Mahtir Polytechnic is being built at Hetauda. India is also assisting Nepal in constructing Nepal Police Academy at Panauti.

Sri Lanka: A modern state-of-the-art Cultural Centre has been constructed at Jaffna under India-Sri Lanka development partnership. The Cultural Centre includes a 2-storied museum, 12-storied learning tower, an auditorium block, a public square and a float-

Afghanistan-bound consignment of wheat from India being shipped via the Chabahar Port in Iran
through various development partnership initiatives has wit-nessed a marked increase in the last decade. The three In-dia-Africa Forum Summits (JAFS I, II & III) in 2008, 2011 and 2015 have further reinforced the development partnership with the continent.

A total of 211 LoCs amounting to USD 12.87 billion have been extended by the GoI to African countries in varied sectors such as power plants, hydroelectricity, power transmission & distribu-tion networks, dams, roads, railways, ports, agriculture & ir-rigation, industrial units, skills development, civil construction etc. New sectors such as Telecommunication, Defence and So-lar power have also been included under the GoI LoCs to Africa.

Grant Projects in Other Developing States

As part of India’s commitment towards South-South Cooper-a-tion, it is extending developmental assistance by way of taking up grant assistance projects aimed at economic cooperation and capacity building keeping in view the local requirements. In this context, a Business Incubator Centre at Malawi has been established and Indo-Belize Centre of Engineering at Belize and a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) at Zanzibar are being established under Indian grant assistance. DPA II also continued to implement the Ministry’s commit-ments to the UN World Food Programme by executing pro-curement and supply of USD 1 million worth of anti-TB drugs and another USD 1 million worth of wheat to DPRK. India also responded to Iran’s request for assistance in combating locust attacks by providing 20,000 liters of Malathion. As part of our continuing engagements with conflict-stricken countries in the WANA region, DPA II executed procurement and supplies of anti-cancer drugs to Palestine, food support to South Sudan and Djibouti; a comprehensive package of medical and food aid to Comoros is currently being executed.

Revamping of IDEAS Guidelines

The Government of India has been extending LoCs to devel-oping countries since 2005-06, under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS). The IDEAS Scheme has been extended twice for 5-year periods in 2010 and 2015 with the approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Af-fairs (CCEA). The extant IDEAS Guidelines for LoCs were issued in 2015. Keeping in view the significance and strategic impor-tance of the scheme, an extension of the IDEAS Scheme has been proposed for the next 5-year period i.e. 2020-2025. Ex-tensive consultations were undertaken between MEA, Ministry of Finance and Exim Bank of India, and suggestions received from other Ministries/Departments were also considered. It was decided to undertake a review and revamping exercise for the extant IDEAS Guidelines issued in December 2015.

In connection with the proposed extension of the Indian Devel-opment and Economic Assistance (IDEAS) Scheme for the next 5-year period from 2020-2025, NITI Aayog has been entrusted with carrying out a detailed review of the IDEAS Scheme.

G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative

Due to the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 on the poorest countries, the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Gover-nors, at a meeting held on 15 April 2020, agreed on the issue of suspension of debt service payment by official bilateral credi-tors for the poorest countries that request forbearance. In ac-cordance with this G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (G20 DSSI), the debt service suspension relief is to be made available to the GoI-supported LoC Borrowers, who are IDA/LDC eligible countries, on receiving such requests from the Borrower Gov-ernments as per the standard template of G20 DSSI.

Accordingly, Government has approved the request for debt service suspension relief to 13 borrowing Governments as per the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative namely Cameroon, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Republic of Congo, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia, Togo and Mal-dives. Requests received from other LoC-recipient countries will also be taken up accordingly.

Some large iconic projects in India in Africa include construc-tion of Parliament building, Convention Centres etc. People-oriented projects in the arena of Drinking Water and sanitation and Rural Electrification are also being undertaken in African countries. The GoI has also set up first ever manufacturing in-dustry like Cement Plants, Tractor Manufacturing Units, Food Processing Plants, Solar Module Manufacturing Units etc. in various countries of Africa. The GoI is also undertaking several grant-in-aid projects such as supply of 27 Midi Buses (30+1) Seater to Somalia, 10 Ambulances to Tanzania, 5 Ambulances to Mali and medical equipment & CT scan machine to Liberia.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)

As the flagship capacity building programme of the Govern-ment of India, the ITEC programme has a footprint in 150 coun-tries and has contributed to the capacity enhancement of more than 2,000,000 professionals since its inception in 1964. Apart from being a powerful tool of India’s soft power diplomacy, the ITEC programme has also assumed the mantle of leadership in capacity building initiatives in South-South Cooperation.

ITEC not only provides capacity building training programmes in the traditional areas of governance, but has also been ex-panded to include emerging areas like AI, Nanotechnology, forensics and cyber security. ITEC now enables participating professionals to access programmes and registrations using a dedicated online portal and provides its training content through reputed partner institutions like IITs, IIMs, NLU and Indian Institute of Science in the public sector as well as reput-ed institutions in the private sector. Apart from being a pow-erful tool of India’s soft power diplomacy, the ITEC programme has also assumed the mantle of leadership in capacity building initiatives in South-South Cooperation.

CIVILIAN TRAINING UNDER ITEC

As of date, ITEC content is provided through nearly 12000 training slots in 383 courses across 99 institutions in India for civilian professionals in developing partner countries under various ITEC programmes. Apart from these regular courses, country specific special courses are also conducted from time to time based on requests received from foreign governments. These courses are for specific capacity building requirements like English Language (for various Gulf, Central Asian and LAC countries), Yoga Trainers, Forensic Investigation and Police training (for Seychelles). Proficiency-cum-Professional Development (P2P) courses (Babbelshala; Maldives) have been introduced to reach to Mid-Career Training Programme for civil servants in Bangladesh and Myanmar, Hospitality and Tourism management (Cambodia), etc. Apart from the physical/in-India training, ITEC content for civil-lans is also delivered through three other broad channels. The e-ITEC channel provides online, real-time training delivered by In-dian Institutes to professionals located in partner countries. The ITEC Ondemand channel provides customized content to our partner countries by shifting the training to the country itself by deputing training professionals for short duration. The content for these programmes focus on the requirements of our partner countries in sector-specific trainings like Fertilizer Technology, Fisheries Technology, Agriculture and allied sectors; Teachers’ Training and Research; Open Education Resources; Securities Markets; Wind Energy; Rural Electrification; South-South Cooperation etc. The ITEC Executive is the third channel, which is an exclusive pro-gramme for senior level functionaries and policy makers in our partner countries. This channel delivers content through the me-dium of conferences, workshops and study/exposure visits which provide an understanding of practices and systems in India.

In FY 2020-21, none of the scheduled regular physical/in-India courses under ITEC were conducted, as the programme could be conducted due to Covid-19. Howev-er, the Division kept up a regular calendar of e-ITEC training programmes. Responding to the Prime Minister’s outreach to SAARC countries at the onset of the outbreak, the Division promptly organised 12 e-ITEC courses focusing on public health and Covid-19 management. These courses were deliv-ered in partnership with premier institutions like the AIIMS and PGI, Chandigarh. Responding to the request of Bangladesh, train-ing programmes were also organised in Bangla language. Apart from public health, e-ITEC courses were also organised on a wide range of subjects like gender inclusive governance, electoral sys-tems, traditional medicine/Ayurveda and Vipasauna meditation.

Defence training under ITEC

During 2020-21, 1351 defence training slots were allotted to partner countries. These cover courses on security and strate-gic studies, defence management, electronics, mechanical en-gineering, marine hydrography, counterinsurgency and jungle warfare, Maritime Law and Ops course by Coast Guard head-quarters, as also foundation courses for young officers in three services at premier Indian institutions like NDC, New Delhi and Defence Services Staff College, Wellington. In FY 2020- 21, the first defence e-ITEC course was conducted with the help of Armed Forces Medical Services for medical officers of Cambodia, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Vietnam on the subject of management and prevention of Covid-19.
Deputation of ITEC experts

As of date, 37 experts in various fields are on deputation to partner countries in areas of health, Agriculture, Disaster response, Archaeology, Ayurveda, Legal experts, and English teachers etc. Several Defence training teams have also been deputed to Tanzania, Vietnam, Myanmar, Seychelles, Namibia, Lao PDR. GSLs have been issued for the replacement of the existing IMTT team in Uganda.

Cultural Diplomacy and Development Partnerships

Cultural Diplomacy has been a longstanding integral part of India’s Soft Power Diplomacy across the world. India has been involved in cultural and heritage conservation projects in various partner countries. Ministry created a dedicated Division for heritage conservation in January 2020 within the DPA. Current Cultural and Heritage Conservation activities of Government of India range from excavations, restoration of temples and other heritage/religious sites such as mosques and dzongs to mural preservations, museology related works, iconographic survey, etc. Restoration of the My Son Temple complex in Vietnam, Ta Prohm and Phnom Vilhear temples in Cambodia, and Wat Phou Temple in Lao PDR are some of the key ongoing projects being implemented by the Division.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Activities

DPA II Division is the nodal division for coordination and implementation of HA/DR efforts of the Ministry. Over the years, the Division has acquired institutional expertise in the execution of HA/DR efforts in partnership with various nodal agencies of the Government of India like the NDRF, FCI, NAFED and the Armed Forces.

FY 2020-21 saw the unfortunate occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic and its ensuing global lockdowns. In keeping with India’s reputation as a responsible player in HA/DR activities, the Ministry responded to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic by reaching out to our developing partner countries with much needed medical aid in the form of medicines, Covid protection gear pharmaceutical products and medical expertise. MEA provided Covid-related medical support in the form of free drugs, testing kits and Covid protection gear to 82 countries in the neighbourhood of the Government of India like the NDRF, FCI, NAFED and the Armed Forces.

As part of our continuing engagements with conflict-stricken countries in the WANA region, DPA II executed procurement and supplies of anti-cancer drugs to Palestine, food support to South Sudan and Djibouti; a comprehensive package of medical and food aid to Comoros is currently being executed.

T he Economic Diplomacy Division (ED), as part of its efforts to give a focused direction to the economic diplomacy dimension of the country’s foreign policy undertook a number of initiatives during 2020-21.

3rd General Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)

The Division in coordination with the nodal Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), helped organise the Third General Assembly of the ISA which was held on 14 October 2020 on a customized virtual platform. More than 53 member countries attended the meeting from across the world. The ED Division conducted extensive outreach through Missions and Posts abroad for the re-election of India as the President of the ISA Assembly for another term, and consequently, during the Third General Assembly, the ISA Member countries unanimously elected India as the President of the ISA Assembly for another term, i.e. up to the year 2022.

As on date, 88 countries have signed the Framework Agreement of the ISA, while 70 of these countries have also ratified the Framework Agreement. During the First General Assembly of the ISA, held on 03 October 2018, the Assembly of the ISA considered and adopted the proposal made by India for an amendment to the Framework Agreement for opening up of ISA membership to all Member countries of the UN. As on date, 38 countries have accepted/ratified the amended Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance.

Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

The ED Division coordinates the functioning of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). The first Governing Council meeting of CDRI was held on 20 March 2020 in New Delhi under the Co-Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, United Kingdom. The first Executive Council meeting of CDRI was held on 20 March 2020 in New Delhi under the Co-Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, United Kingdom. The first Executive Council meeting of CDRI was held on 20 March 2020 in New Delhi under the Co-Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, United Kingdom. The first Executive Council meeting of CDRI was held on 20 March 2020 in New Delhi under the Co-Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, United Kingdom. The first Executive Council meeting of CDRI was held on 20 March 2020 in New Delhi under the Co-Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, United Kingdom. The first Executive Council meeting of CDRI was held on 20 March 2020 in New Delhi under the Co-Chairmanship of the Principal Secretary to Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, United Kingdom.
Committee meeting of CDRI was held on 29 June 2020, in which many important projects including projects in airport, civil aviation and infrastructure sector have been approved. At present, 22 members, consisting of 18 national governments and 4 multilateral organizations have joined CDRI. Third International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI 2021) will be held virtually from 17-19 March 2021. CDRI has identified seven countries as target countries for its membership—Netherlands, Indonesia, Russia, Canada, Mexico, Bangladesh and South Africa. Ministry is closely coordinating with CDRI for membership of these countries, including by taking up with the host governments.

53rd Session of UN Commission on International Trade Law

The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) is the core legal body of the United Nations system in the field of international trade law. A legal body with universal membership specializing in commercial law reform worldwide for over 50 years, UNCITRAL’s business is the modernization and harmonization of rules on international business. UNCITRAL was established by the General Assembly in 1966 (Resolution 2205 of 17 December 1966). In establishing the Commission, the General Assembly recognized that disparities in national laws governing international trade created obstacles to the flow of trade, and it regarded the Commission as the vehicle by which the United Nations could play a more active role in reducing or removing these obstacles. UNCITRAL carries out its work through the six Working Groups which are assigned specific topics to work on from time to time. The ED Division participated at the 53rd Session of UNCITRAL in September, 2020 and its inter-session working groups. The session aimed at the harmonization and modernization of the law of international trade by preparing and promoting the use and adoption of legislative and non-legislative instruments in a number of key areas of commercial law. Officials from the Division also attended a two day workshop jointly conducted by the Korean Ministry of Justice and the UNCITRAL Regional Centre for Asia Pacific. The Division was also coordinating efforts to host a two day conference in New Delhi which could not go ahead due to the pandemic.

India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave

The Central Europe Division, in collaboration with the Economic Diplomacy Division, and CLI organized the 1st India-Nordic-Baltic conclave on 05 November 2020. EAM was the keynote speaker at the inaugural session which also saw Ministerial level participation from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland and Latvia.

India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave

EAM at the India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave on 05 November 2020

Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs)

Bilateral Investment Treaties (BIT) and Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) Arbitration Cases involving GOI: ED Division actively participates in investment treaty negotiations and has been involved in coordinating these negotiations and providing requisite inputs from a policy/political perspective and from an international law perspective. India is in the process of concluding its old generation investment treaties and actively engaged with over 30 countries in negotiating bilateral investment treaties based on the new model BIT of 2015. Matters pertaining to Investment treaties involve origin countries/foreign relations and also issues pertaining to international law. The MEA is an integral part of BIT negotiations and also provides requisite inputs. Correspondence about BIT with other countries is routed through the Ministry by means of Note Verbales, etc., through the ED Division which is the nodal division in Ministry for Investment Treaty or such matters.

India has been faced with over 30 investment treaty claims with the cumulative sums in claim amounting to over USD 100 Billion. The cases are at various stages including some cases where awards have been rendered. The Division as a part of the Inter-Ministerial Group of the Government of India is actively involved at every stage of the dispute by providing necessary inputs, facilitating the hearings and also facilitating and coordinating other related actions in these cases in foreign jurisdicctions.

These cases are before international tribunals seated abroad and involve questions of international law where the advice of the Ministry is sought. The Division had also attended the Parliamentary Standing Committee meetings on the subject “India and Bilateral Investment Treaties” where the issues pertaining to India and its investment treaties including the disputes under these treaties was discussed.

So far, there have been 35 dispute notices by investors against India, of which India has won 04 arbitrations, lost 04 arbitrations, 02 disputes have been resolved amicably and in 04 disputes, the investors withdrew their claim. 14 disputes are still active at different stages of arbitration and in another 07 disputes, the claims did not pursue the matter after the initial request under BIPA. The ongoing disputes include CC/Devas, Vodafone, Khaitan Holdings, Maxis communication among others.

Permanent Court of Arbitration: The Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), an inter-governmental organisation, of which India has been a member since 1950, has signed a host country agreement with India in 2008 to set up a permanent facility in India. While this is still a work in progress, the PCA has been conducting the PCA-India Conferences and workshops under the ambit of the Host Country agreement which is being facilitated by this Division. Further, most of India’s investment treaty cases are administered by the PCA and the Division, through the Mission in the Hague, coordinates with the PCA in such cases.
Market Expansion Activities
To enable our Missions/Posts abroad to effectively respond to the growing demands of Indian industry and business, the Division has a Headed a Budget entitled "Market Expansion Activities". Funds are allocated under the Budget Head to Missions and Posts abroad on the volume of bilateral trade handled by them (discounting of imports). The budget enables our Commercial wings to respond effectively and in a time bound manner to the expectations of Indian private sector in not only handling of routine trade and investment enquiries, providing information on economic and business climate in the countries of their accreditation but more importantly in identifying new business opportunities by undertaking promotional activities such as market surveys, seminars, workshops, outreach activities, targeting Chambers of Commerce, Industry Associations etc. The Expenditure by Missions/Posts under the head is governed by "Expenditure Guidelines for Market Expansion Budget". This year the Division has allocated Rs. 10 crores to various Indian Missions/Posts abroad.

Website and Global Mapping of Resources
The ED Division revamped its website, which is a one-stop source of all information on Indian economy and business environment in India for foreign enterprises, as well as Indian businesses going abroad and for Indian Missions and Posts. A section of the website is dedicated to the Resources Platform which would provide detailed information on World Resource Endowments and Opportunities in three areas:
(a) Mineral resources: The platform will serve as a global atlas for locating global reserves of minerals strategic to India.
(b) Opportunities for agri-exports: The platform will map the Indian-agriculture in the centres of their demand in countries across the world, thus, helping exporters to identify potential opportunities for agri-exports.
(c) Overseas employment opportunities for our citizens: Keeping in view India's growing demographic dividend, the platform will help identify employment opportunities available for skilled/semi-skilled labour in countries abroad.

Strategy for Boosting India's Agricultural exports
The ED Division has been working with the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW) and the Department of Commerce towards boosting Agri exports. Towards this it has been involved in the drafting of the strategy for boosting India's Agri exports and its implementation through an action plan that includes inter alia country-specific strategies for export promotion. In this regard it has been able to link up with the Missions and Posts abroad to facilitate exports to Gulf countries for Agri-commodities with time lines and the creation of dedicated nodal points for Agri trade in identified Missions. The Division is working in close collaboration with the concerned line ministries for expanding our agri-exports to identified focus countries. For this country-specific export strategies have been developed based on the inputs received from the Missions in the focus countries, as well as the recommendations made by the concerned Ministries and Departments. These strategies focus on potential areas of increasing exports to identified countries, challenges faced by our exporters and steps and way forward. Enhancing Agri-exports and food-processing will be one of our primary areas of focus in the near future, in line with the Govt's vision to double our farmer's income by the year 2022. The identified target countries include: Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, UAE, Ukraine, USA, and Vietnam.

Industrial Outreach and Investment Promotion and Publicity
• India-Canada Agri-tech: The ED Division, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare, the Indo-Canadian Business Chamber and the CII, helped organise the India-Canada Agri-tech Virtual Summit from 06-07 October 2020. It was inaugurated jointly by India's Minister for Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare and Food Processing, and Canada's Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food. The event was organised with a range of stakeholders from India and Canada to discuss solutions that can enhance productivity, bring efficiency in the supply chain, optimize processing, focus on plant-protein and Agri-management systems.
• World Solar Technology Summit: The ED Division, in collaboration with the ISA Secretariat and FICCI helped organise the World Solar Technology Summit on a virtual platform, with a focus on new Technologies and Innovations in the field of Solar, on 08 September 2020.
• India Myanmar Virtual Business Meet 2020: The Division, in collaboration with the CII & concerned Territorial Division, helped to conduct the India Myanmar Virtual Business Meet on 22 April 2020.
• India Thailand Digital Conference, 2020: The Division, in collaboration with the CII & concerned Territorial Division, helped to conduct the India Thailand Digital Conference & Virtual Business Meet on Pharma and Healthcare Sectors, Auto and Auto Components, on 11 June 2020.
• Doing Business with Bangladesh: On 29 June 2020, in collaboration with CII, the Division helped in the organization of Digital Conference on Doing Business with Bangladesh.
• 1st INDO ASEAN Oceanic Business Summit & Expo: On 04 August 2020, the Division in collaboration with the CII and concerned Territorial Division, helped organise the 1st INDO-ASEAN Oceanic Business Summit & Expo.
• Global Ayurveda Summit 2020: On 15 September 2020, the ED Division, in collaboration with the Ministry of AYUSH, CII, and our Missions and Posts abroad, helped organise the Global Ayurveda Summit with the theme 'Ayurveda for Immunity' on a virtual platform. The event was inaugurated by the Vice President of India.
• Ayurveda Day 2020: The Division also coordinated with the Missions and Posts for successful celebration of Ayurveda Day on 13 November 2020, including dissemination of Prime Minister’s message on the occasion.
• India-Philippines Bilateral Economic and Trade Relationship: On 25 September 2020, Division along with CII coordinated the conduct of a virtual summit on India-Philippines Bilateral Economic and Trade Relationship.

Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGOS)
The ED Division has been supporting Secretary (East) and Secretary (ER) who represent MEA in the Sectoral Group of Secretaries (SGOS) Groups 3 and 7 on Resources and Economy, respectively. The broad mandate of the group is to improve regional connectivity initiatives, construction of connectivity, competitive approvals, investor friendly policies, doing business with Bangladesh, and other digital tools. The group is working to devise effective marketing and promotion strategies which can be carried out digitally. Organising virtual B2B and B2C meetings between Indian trade chambers and local trade bodies is also a part of the agenda.

Dissemination of Business and Economic Outreach Products: The ED Division supports the Missions/Posts abroad in economic and business outreach activities by providing them with the relevant promotional, publicity and knowledge/information material on India’s policy environment, policy decisions, investment opportunities, trade-related matters, among others.

Virtual Global Investor Roundtable: The ED Division in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) helped organise the Virtual Global Investor Roundtable, held on 05 November 2020. The event was chaired by Prime Minister, and attended by Finance Minister, Union Minister of State for Finance, RBI Governor, and other dignitaries. The roundtable witnessed participation from 20 of the world’s largest pension and sovereign wealth funds with a total assets under management of about USD 6 trillion.

Virtual Diplomacy: The ED Division has been participating in several digital webinars that have been hosted by the business chambers, academic circles, think-tanks, etc, including the likes of PHDCCI, NASSCOM, CII, FICCI, AS-SOCHAM, IC4L, among others. The digital world is being used effectively to ensure that India’s diplomatic efforts do not lose steam. In view of the fact that the Covid pandemic will bring the possibilities of a physical conduct of trade fairs and buyer-seller meets to a halt, our Missions are working to devise effective marketing and promotion strategies which can be carried out digitally. Organising virtual B2B and B2C meetings between Indian trade chambers and local trade bodies is also a part of the agenda.

Coordination on Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Initiative
As a part of the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Initiative, the ED Division has been working in collaboration with Missions to chalk out a detailed strategy to increase exports of India’s goods and services in other countries. The Division is working to identify the areas and countries where our manufacturers have the potential to emerge as the lowest cost preferred alternative for imports. The Missions have been working to promote India’s image as a safe and re-
The ED Division is working with the Missions to build on India’s image as the pharmacy of the world, which has lately been strengthened by the efforts to provide paracetamol and Hydroxychloroquine to several countries under the Covid crisis. The Division is working in close coordination with the Missions who are also being encouraged to make use of the available digital platforms such as the India Trade Portal (managed by FIEO) to disseminate real-time information on export opportunities to the exporters and manufacturers in India.

In order to identify and plug in the immediate gaps in the global supply chains, the Missions, in collaboration with the ED Division in MEA and the DPIIT, are already in the process of exploring sourcing and export opportunities in various countries and to guide our exporters by putting potential suppliers and buyers in touch with our EPCs and Industry and also facilitate B2B meetings for them. The EPC/Industry bodies have also been requested to get in touch with our missions directly and seek B2B meetings both to hedge the risks of supplies disruptions and whenever possible to fill in the supply gaps. Support for industry is also being sought as the administrative department for certain product groups, in expeditiously reaching out to their industry stakeholders and ramping up production in areas where we need to fill in supply gaps both in new markets and existing ones.

Inputs to Various Boards/Committees

AS (ER) is a member of the several Boards/Committees such as Export Promotion Council for EODs & SEDs (EPCES) (Ministry of Commerce & Industry), Project Exports Promotion Council (PEPC), India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO), Invest India, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), Engineering Export Promotion Council (EPEPC), WAPCOS, Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC). Other officers of ED Division also represent MEA on Committees such as Fisheries subsidies, Coal Preparation Society of India (CPSI), Grains Board (GB) constituted on Car-telisation/hoarding of pulses, Market Access Initiative (MAI). As part of these Boards/Committees ED Division regularly participates in their meetings and provide the necessary inputs and guidance of MEA.

Energy

The ED Division coordinates India’s joint association with the International Energy Agency (IEA). ED Division has contributed to the biennial work programs developed between India and the IEA, including the Joint Statement and the Schedule of Joint Action (JSA) for 2015-17, the Statement of Intent (SOI) between NITI Aayog and the IEA, as well as the Joint Program of Work 2018-2021 between the IEA and the Government of India. ED Division is also the primary coordinating agency facilitating Indian energy ministries’ engagements with the IEA. The Division is working closely with the IEA, and other line ministries to work out a framework/Strategic Partnership, for strengthening of institutional ties including potential paths for IEA Membership for India. Besides facilitating India’s energy engagements at the multilateral forum, ED Division is also a part of the group of line ministries, involved in pursuing the bilateral-energy dialogues with various countries.

Amidst the Covid outbreak, several countries were threatened by the infestation of Desert Locusts. Ministry offered supplies of 200000 litres of pesticide Malathion 96% UV to Iran so as to help it contain locust infestation in its Sistan Baluchistan and Hormozgan provinces. This proposal was welcomed by Iran. Accordingly, the Ministry placed an order with HIL to manufacture and supply 25 tonne of Malathion 95% UV to Iran.

Registration of bidders procuring supply from land border countries for public procurements in India under GFR, 2017 Rule 144 (xi):

In line with the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance (Public Procurement Division)’s amendment of Rule 144 of the GFRs, 2017, on restricting/screening of procurement from other countries, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has constituted the Registration Committee (RC) with members from MEA, MHA and sectoral Ministry. MEA is being represented in this Committee by the ED Division. The Registration Committee is the competent authority to decide the cases of registration. MEA has participated in all 5 meetings of RC held so far. MEA has examined the whole process of the registration in its intent and objectives and has provided substantive detailed inputs to the DPIIT which has been well received by the multi-ministry Registration Committee. These inputs have become part of pro forma to seek detailed information from the applicants and for Administrative ministries’ meaningful due diligence process. As most of these applicants are directly or indirectly procuring supply from Chinese entities, these provisions as listed below assume significance. So far, the Ministry has received 40 applications from the DPIIT for views which are at various stages of examination, while inputs in one case have already been sent to the DPIIT.

Regulation of FDI from land border countries

GOI has amended FDI guidelines vide Press Note 3 issued on 17.04.2020, mandating all FDI proposals to undergo government approval route process. DPIIT as a nodal ministry for FDI policy has constituted an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to look into the issues and devise guidelines for processing of such FDI applications. MEA, MHA, DPIIT and Administrative ministries (AMs) are members of the IMC. MEA has given inputs to the DPIIT including the following information which are extremely important in order to examine the FDI proposals especially from China and its territories, including: desirability of the investment; impact on local competitiveness; value addition in terms of number of employment generation and...
enhancement of technical/technological competitiveness. So far, Ministry has received about 150 applications of FDI from land border countries. Some of these have been disposed off, whereas others are at various stages of examination in a time bound manner.

Covid Response

- Vande Bharat Mission: As part of VBM, AS (ER) oversaw the evacuation of 132,963 persons to the State of Telangana in 976 flights and 38,191 persons to the State of Andhra Pradesh in 284 flights until 19 November, 2020. All requisite details/ clearances / issues etc. were timely dealt with, coordinated and shared with the concerned states. This helped in the seamless evacuation/movement of Indian passengers coming from various flights from different countries into the respective states.

- Regular Covid Reports to Cabinet Secretariat: In March 2020, AS (ER) presented to the Committee of Secretaries, headed by Cabinet Secretary, a presentation on the Economic Impact of the Covid Pandemic, based on the inputs received from our Missions and Posts abroad. In continuation of this effort, the ED Division was compiling weekly reports on the situation of Covid across the world, based on inputs received from our Missions. These reports were forwarded to the Cabinet Secretariat on weekly basis and contained inputs on the economic impact of Covid pandemic on the countries’ economies, the impact on various sectors, and the country-specific economic and other relief measures announced by the various Governments, to keep updated on the Covid scenario unfolding across the world.

- Empowered Group 6 on Covid Response: AS (ER) was a part of the Empowered Group 6 constituted to devise an effective Covid response in close collaboration with the line ministries, industry representatives, NGOs, CSOs, International Organizations, UN and allied organizations, among others. The Division, in coordination with the Missions, identified potential opportunities for enhancing product exports in view of the globally disrupted supply chains.

States Division facilitated external economic engagement of States through the network of Indian Missions and Posts abroad and Branch Secretariats/Regional Passport Offices in India. The States Division pursued its mandate proactively and held events like the 3rd edition of Deccan Dialogue (16 November, 2020 at ISB Hyderabad), which was attended virtually in 2020, to facilitate Diplomatic Outreach of States and promote economic diplomacy dialogue at the state level, using State Facilitation and Knowledge Support Funds. Liaising with State and UT governments through regular interactions with their Resident Commissioners continued. Several MoUs between state governments and cities with their foreign counterparts to establish sister-state and city partnerships were facilitated by the Division.

Facilitating Diplomatic Outreach By States

The States Division actively participated in the India – Vietnam Business Forum held on 20 October 2020, co-organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The event was chaired by Secretary(East), in the Ministry.

The Division facilitated the participation of Haryana in the 1st Forum of SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) Member States’ Heads of Regions (administrative-territorial units) held on 29 October 2020, Chaired by Chelyabinsk Region Governor. The Chief Secretary, Government of Haryana represented India at Heads of Regions’ Forum.

Deccan Dialogue: 3rd edition of the Deccan Dialogue, under the theme, “Crisis and Cooperation: In the Times of Pandemic and Beyond”, was organised in collaboration with Indian School of Business, Hyderabad on 16 November 2020. EAM addressed the inaugural session. Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs (I/C); Civil Aviation (I/C); & Minister of State, Commerce & Industry, along with several Ambassadors, business leaders, opinion makers and other dignitaries participated in the event. It witnessed enlightening and enthusiastic discussions, especially on the way forward, the economic realities as well as on the opportunities, in context of India and the world battling an unprecedented crisis.

To promote inbound tourism, the States Division facilitated a Virtual Conference with tour operators, travel agents, media representatives and opinion makers from Brazil which was organised with the participation of the States of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Kerala in December 2020.

A policy decision has been taken to launch North Eastern Dialogue, as part of the government’s para diplomacy initiative.
The States Division will organise this Dialogue, scheduled to be held early this year. Drawing from the success of the December Dialogue initiative, this Dialogue will also be an exercise in bringing together multiple stakeholders on a common platform to facilitate external engagement and economic development of the strategically important North East Region, in partnership with educational institutions and think tanks focusing on the region.

### State Facilitation Abroad By Missions/ Posts

States Division organised State facilitation activities through Indian Missions and posts abroad, to promote investments and tourism were conducted through Indian Missions and Posts from their country of accreditation to States and UTs. Funds made available by the Division, under the budget head, 'State Facilitation Abroad' were utilised for these activities.

Overcoming the challenges posed by the Covid Pandemic, virtual events, promotions, contests, etc. were organised to facilitate State promotion, for e.g.:  
- The Embassy of India in Bhutan conducted a virtual conference on organic farming between stakeholders from Bhutan and Sikkim on 08 December 2020.  
- CGI, Johannesburg organised Onam Festival.  
- CGI, New York held an event showcasing the weaving tradition of Himachal weavers.

### Liaising With State and UT Governments

States Division served as a bridge connecting MEA with State and UT governments, by facilitating, among others, coordination of incoming and outgoing visits of high-level trade delegations.

- The State Division participated on behalf of MEA in inter-ministerial consultations on issues of North-Eastern States through several webinars, held in the context of North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) in November-December 2020.  
- The Division also facilitated the appointment of Nodal Officers, to act as points of contact between MEA and the State/UT governments.  
- In a major initiative, the States Division conceived and organised a week long Special Program for Training Senior Officers from States at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service during 04-08 December 2020. The program was launched to equip the States and Union Territories in international engagement and is aimed to promote team spirit, making States an integral part of Team India in engaging the world. The specially designed training program encompassed topics such as 'India’s Foreign Policy', 'Common Areas of Interest, including Para-Diplomacy', 'Connectivity Issues: Air, Water & Land, Attracting Foreign Tourists To India', 'Managing Covid Pandemic-Role of States & UTs: India’s Success Story', 'Consular & Diaspora Issues, Issues Faced By Foreign Businesses In States & UTs' And 'Protocol Matters- Incoming & Outgoing Visits By Foreign Diplomates'.

- The States Division is for the first time facilitating familiarisation visits for foreign media in the year 2021-22. This gives States/UTs an opportunity to showcase the possibilities for collaboration and highlight the socio-economic development that States have been registering, which quite often goes under-reported. Nagaland, Gujarat and Maharashtra are likely to be covered in the first round.  
- The Division commenced its role as primary buyer on GeM Portal to facilitate procurement by Branch Secretariats.

### Facilitation of MoUs With Foreign City/States

During the year 2019-20, States Division has facilitated signing of the following MoUs, some are under process currently, with foreign entities, such as cities and state Governments:

#### i) Sister-city/Sister state Partnerships

- Agreement on Twinning Relationship between the Municipality of Sines (Portugal) and the Kozhikode Municipal Corporation, State of Kerala (India). (Cleared by EW Division)
- Sister Port City Agreement Between Port Blair And Sambhal (Indonesia).
- Sister City Arrangement Between Saas Fee (Valais Switzerland) And Almora (Uttarakhand).
- Agreement on the establishment of Cooperation and Friendly Relations between Mumbai, India and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
- MoU on the Establishment of Sister State relations between Chiang Mai Province, Thailand and Assam, India.
- Sister State And Sister City Partnership. Agreements Between Tamil Nadu/Chennai, India And Fujian / Guangzhou City (China).

#### ii) Other agreements

- MoU between Urban Development Department, Government of Karnataka, of the Republic of India and Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development & Finance Corporation and Innovation Centre Denmark, Bengaluru.  
- MoU between the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, Ontario, Canada and Department of Industries, Government of Maharashtra, India.  
- MoU between Punjab Bureau of Investment Promotion, Government of Punjab and American Chamber of Commerce in India For Promotion of Investment and Ease of Doing Business in Punjab for US Member Companies of AMCHAM India.  
- Agreement between the GIZ [Geellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit] and the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry.  
- Agreement on MoU between Invest UP and American Mega Trade Fair 2019-20 to promote Jharkhand's foreign trade.

### State Facilitation Abroad Fund To Missions/ Posts

The Division after taking into account the demands from various Missions/Posts abroad and the availability of funds under the head – 'State Facilitation Abroad' in financial year 2020-21, issued sanctions amounting to Rs. 4.42 crores to 131 Indian Missions/Posts abroad on 25 June 2020 and subsequent sanctions amounting to Rs. 1,419,200 to several more Missions/Posts during September-October 2020.

### State Facilitation And Knowledge Support Fund

- Several activities, such as business seminars with leading trade bodies like FICCI/ASSOCHAM, a series of seminars under the title, 'Connect to reconnect' etc. were organised through Branch Secretariat, Kolkata. These include Bihar and Bhutan etc.
- The Division supported the Regional Passport Office, Rainichik for participation in the event, India International Mega Trade Fair 2019-20 to promote Jharkhand's foreign trade.
- The Division organised a day long programme on West Bengal’s Global Reach through Art and Artistry through Branch Secretariat, Kolkata.
Clearances To State Projects, Funded By External Agencies

During the period April 2020 to March 2021, the Division facilitated MEA’s approval of 38 Externally Aided Projects to be undertaken in North Eastern States, funded by multilateral and bilateral agencies such as WB-IBRD, ADB, JICA, etc. Several more projects are currently under process for approval.

1st Committee Of The United Nations General Assembly

At the 75th session, the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in New York from 06 October–10 November 2020, India contributed to the debate on disarmament and international security and reiterated its commitment to the goal of global, non-discriminatory and verifiable nuclear disarmament. Foreign Secretary delivered a video message on the occasion of the United Nations General Assembly’s High-level plenary meeting to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

India’s traditional resolution titled “Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction”, was again adopted by the First Committee in 2020 without a vote. The resolution calls upon UN Member States to take measures aimed at preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction and to support international efforts in this regard. India’s two other resolutions on:

(a) Convention on prohibition of use of nuclear weapons, which reiterates the call to the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on an International Convention for prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances; and (b) Reducing Nuclear Danger, which highlights the need for a review nuclear doctrines and immediate steps to reduce the risk of intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons, including through their de-alerting and detargeting, were also adopted by broad support of the UN member States.

Another India-sponsored resolution on the “Role of Science and Technology in the context of International Security and Disarmament” was adopted by consensus. The Resolution encourages outreach events at the national, regional and international levels to facilitate multilateral dialogue concurrent developments in science and technology and the potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts. The UNSG’s Report, mandated by the 2019 Resolution, reviewed scientific developments and their potential impact.
**Conference On Disarmament**

India participated actively in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), pursuing nuclear disarmament, pre-

vention of an arms race in outer space, new types of weapons of mass destruction, and transparency in armaments, at its sessions from January-September 2020. Despite lack of con-

vensus on CD’s programme of work, there were deliberations where India presented its perspective on the four core issues on the CD’s Agenda, including nuclear disarmament, Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) and Negative Security Assurances (NSA). India called for adoption of a Programme of Work by the CD in order to resume Substantive Negotiations. India also expressed its support for the commencement of negotiations in the CD on a non-discriminatory and internationally verifiable FMCT in line with India’s commitment to global disarmament.

Further, in line with its support for efforts towards nuclear disarmament, India continued to participate in the meetings on the initiative of Creating an Environment for Nuclear Dis-

armament (CEND). India was selected to participate in the 25-member Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) On Nuclear Disarmament Verification (NDV), which would commence its session in 2021.

**United Nations Security Council**

India coordinated with the United Nations Security Coun-

cil (UNSC) Committee, established pursuant to UNSC Reso-

lution 1540 (2004) which obliges States, inter alia, to refrain from supporting non-State actors from developing, acquiring, manufacturing, possessing, transporting, transferring or using nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery sys-

tems, by any means. India submitted its latest National Report to the United Nations, highlighting the measures and activities undertaken in the area of export controls and implementation of UNSCR 1540.

As a part of the 2021 Comprehensive Review, UNSCR 1540 Committee reviewed India’s matrix to the 1540 Committee to be published by the 1540 committee in 2020. The matrix assesses national-level implementation of UNSCR 1540 pro-

visions in terms of legal compliance (both regulatory and en-

forcement) of prohibitions, measures and controls related to weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and relat-

ed materials, equipment and technologies.

After joining the UNSC as a member in January 2021, India participated in deliberations affecting international security af-

fairs. India also engaged with relevant committees of the UN on specific matters relating to the measures on non-prolifer-

ation of weapons of mass destruction decided by the UNSC.

**UNSG’s Advisory Board On Disarmament Matters (ABDM)**

India’s representative participated in the 73rd and 74th Ses-

sions of the UNSG’s ABDM held in Geneva from 29-31 January 2020 and virtually on 15, 19, 24 and 25 June 2020 respective-

ly, which published its report on disarmament affairs to the UN Secretary General.

**Chemical Weapons Convention**

As a member of the Executive Council (EC) of the Organisa-

tion for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), India was an active participant on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), encompassing chemical weapon destruction, industry verification, national implementation and international cooperation and assistance. India engaged with OPCW States Parties on implementation issues during various sessions of EC during the year. India has filed its initial Declara-

tion to the OPCW in September 2020 for creation of a Single Small Scale Facility in India, apart from annual submissions on various matters under the CWC.

Pursuant to the decision of the 24th Conference of States Par-

ties adding chemicals to Schedule 1 of the annex on chemicals to the CWC, a Gazette notification (dated 12 May 2020) under the CWC Act, 2000 adopted changes in the Schedule 1 list in the Annex on Chemicals to the Convention. The first part of the 25th Conference of State Parties (CSP) was held from 30 November to 01 December 2020 which adopted the OPCW budget for the year 2021.

**Biological & Toxin Weapons Convention**

Biological & Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) deliberations were limited to activities conducted via virtual mode owing to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the context of the upcoming 9th Review Conference of the Convention planned in 2021, In-

dia has reiterated its call for institutional strengthening of the Convention, including negotiation of a comprehensive and le-

gally binding Protocol, providing for an effective, universal and non-discriminatory verification mechanism to strengthen the implementation of the Convention by States Parties. The An-

nual Meeting of Experts and Meeting of States Parties for the year 2020 has been postponed to the next year. India contin-

ued to consult with States Parties to establish an Article VII database to facilitate provision of assistance to countries by matching specific offers and requests for assistance.

**Convention On Certain Conventional Weapons**

The Convention on certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) meetings were conducted in a hybrid format during 2020 with very limited physical participation and virtual contribution by the experts from the capitals. India participated in the meeting of Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) On Lethal Autono-

mous Weapon Systems from 21-25 September 2020, the Pro-

tocol V On Explosive Remnants of War Meeting of Experts (28 September-2 October 2020) and the Group of Experts (29-30 September 2020). Other meetings of High Contract-

ing Parties to CCW scheduled in November 2020 had to be postponed to 2021 due to worsening Covid-19 situation in Geneva.

India participated as an Observer at the 38th meeting of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention held in a virtual format from 16-20 November 2020. In the context of anti-personnel mines and CCW Ammunitions, Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restri-
tions on the Use of Mines, Mines- and Minelayer-Trap and Other Devic-
es, India respects the provisions of international humanitarian law.

**Small Arms And Light Weapons**

India submitted its annual national report for the year 2020 under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPoA) which provides a compe-

hensive set of national, regional and global measures. India also remained engaged on submissions and implementation of the UNPoA and the International Tracing Instrument.

**Export Control Regimes**

India participated in multilateral export control regimes to-

wards contributing to the goals of non-proliferation through guidelines for export controls and lists of specific goods and technologies of concern. India became a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in June 2016, Wassenaar Arrangement (WAA) in December 2017 and the Australia Group (AG) in January 2018.

Multi-agency delegation from India participated at the AG In-

ter-Sessional meeting in February 2020 and AG Sub-group virtual meetings in October and November 2020. Due to the Covid-19 situation, meetings of MTCR and WA scheduled in 2020 were postponed or cancelled, but exchanges under these regimes were held digitally.

During the year, India’s export control list of Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies (SCOMET) was updated on 11 June 2020 (effective from 10 July 2020), to harmonise it with the 2019 guidelines and control lists of the relevant multilateral export control regimes and changes to Schedule 1 of the Annex on Chemicals to Chemical Weapons Convention.

The Ministry continued to contribute to the Inter-Ministerial Working Group (IMWG), chaired by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), for the licensing of dual-use items under SCOMET. Similarly, the Ministry worked togeth-

er with the Department of Defence Production (DDP) on au-

thorization for export of Class 6 (Munitions List) items of SCOMET. The Ministry also contributed to the national en-

forcement mechanisms pursuant to the export control system. The Ministry worked together with its partners, including DGFT and CBIC for outreach activities as an integral part of the implementation of the export control system. The Minis-

try partnered with Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), for a workshop for industry and other stakeholders on Export Con-

trols in the Eastern region of India, in March 2020 at Kolkata and for the Southern, Western and Northern regions of India in June, July and September 2020, respectively. An outreach event in the form of three webinar sessions on Strategic Trade Authorization (STA)-1, Updates on India’s SCOMET list and ex-

port control system, was organised in July 2020 with U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) and Society Of Indian Defence Manu-

facturers (Sidm).

**International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)**

India participated in the 64th session of the IAEA General Conference (GC) held in Vienna from 21-25 September 2020, as well as in the various meetings of the Board of Gov-

ernors held in March, June and September 2020. India an-
nounced placing of three more facilities under IAEA safeguards since the 63rd GC, bringing the total number of Indian facilities under IAEA safeguards to 29. It also announced that the first independently built 700MWt Pressurized Heavy Water Reactor at Kakrapar achieved first criticality on 22 July 2021. The Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) served as an institutional structure on peaceful use of nuclear energy. India also contributed to activities in support of various applications of radiation technologies, such as in healthcare, agriculture, etc.

India participated in the sessions of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) Council, the Finance Committee and Scientific Policy Committee during the year, as an Associate Member of CERN since 2012.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation

An Agreement between Government of India and European Atomic Energy Community for Research and Development Cooperation in the field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy was concluded on 15 July 2020. An Arrangement extending the duration of the MoU between the Government of India and the Government of United States of America concerning cooperation with the Global Center for Nuclear Energy Partnership, India was announced on 27 October 2020. An MoU between India’s Atomic Energy Regulatory Board and Vietnam Agency for Radiation and Nuclear Safety was signed on 21 December 2020.

Outer Space

Apart from meetings on outer space in the Conference on Disarmament, India participated in the meetings of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in Vienna and its subsidiary bodies, wherein India presented its technological capabilities and perspectives with regard to the peaceful uses of outer space. Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Legal Subcommittee (LSC) and COPUOS took decisions via written procedures in order to continue the activities of its subsidiary bodies. India also continued to collaborate bilaterally with various countries on the peaceful uses of outer space through multilateral activities and provision of space services. As a participant in the Hague Code of Conduct (HCoC) since June 2016, India continued to observe its provisions on transparency and confidence building measures, including pre-launch notifications of India’s ballistic missile and space launch. India participated in the 19th Annual Regular Meeting of HCoC, which was held in Vienna on 12 October 2020. India also submitted its annual declaration under the arrangement.

European Organisation For Nuclear Research (CERN)

India continued to participate in the sessions of the CERN Council, the Finance Committee and Scientific Policy Committee during the year, as an Associate Member of CERN since 2017.

Maritime Security Affairs

India has significant interests in collaboration for enhancing maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region and globally. In this direction, India continued active engagement with various partner countries bilaterally, plurilaterally and through regional entities. The Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) has steadily grown as an important platform for maritime domain awareness collectively. Efforts progressed for expanding the cooperation with other countries, including White Shipping agreements with 22 countries.

India joined the Djibouti Code of Conduct-Jeddah Amendment (DCOC-JA), as an observer, following the high level meeting of the DCOC-JA held virtually on 26 August 2020. The DCOC-JA is aimed at cooperation for repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the western Indian Ocean Region, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. India has also participated in the working level meetings of the Friends of Gulf of Guinea (FGoG), since August 2020, towards consultation with the participating countries on maritime matters in the region.

India participated in the meeting of the Friends of the Chair on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPSC) held on 23 September 2020 and the plenary meeting of the CGPCS from 17-18 December 2020, both in virtual format. India has been an active member of Co-operative Mechanism setup in 2007 on the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) under the International Maritime Organization’s (IMO) “Protection of Vital Shipping Lanes” initiative. India has been contributing to and participating in the meetings of Aids to Navigation Fund (ANF) Committee in the region.

The Hague Code Of Conduct

As a participant in the Hague Code of Conduct (HCoC) since June 2016, India continued to observe its provisions on transparency and confidence building measures, and regularly issued pre-launch notifications of India’s Ballistic Missiles and space launches. India participated in the 19th Annual Regular Meeting of HCoC, which was held in Vienna on 12 October 2020. India also submitted its annual declaration for the year ending 31 March 2020.

Conference On Interaction And Confidence Building Measures In Asia (CICA)

A Special Ministerial Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the CICA States held virtually on 24 September 2020 was attended by EAM. The meeting discussed the vision of the new CICA chairmanship of Kazakhstan and deliberated on ideas to respond to Covid-19 pandemic. EAM highlighted India’s contribution to partner countries in CICA and beyond and our perspectives on Covid-19 response and developments in the region. India actively participated in CICA events during the year, including an Online Roundtable Discussion on ‘Digital Economy and its role in the development of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in CICA Countries’ on 20 October 2020.

Asean Regional Forum (ARF) And ADMM+

Pursuant to India’s ‘Act East’ policy, India participated in the Inter-Sessional Meetings (ISMs) and the Senior Officials Meetings (SOMs) held under the aegis of the ARF. Minister of State attended the 27th ARF Ministerial meeting held virtually on 12 September 2020 which discussed regional global developments of wider interests. The meeting adopted the List of ARF Track I Activities for Inter-Sessional Year 2020-2021 wherein India will co-chair the ARF event on International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code), and a workshop on Implementing UNCLOS with ARF partner countries.

The ASEAN Defence Minister Meeting Plus (ADMM Plus) was attended by Raksha Mantri on 10 December 2020 in a virtual format. India and Indonesia are the present co-Chairs of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus Experts’ Working Group (EWG) on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), for sharing experiences and holding exercises among participating countries.

Disarmament Education And Fellowship

As part of India’s commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, and recognizing the role of education and understanding in the field of disarmament, India engaged with the wider community in India and abroad. This includes the Annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship Programme for foreign diplomats in January 2020. India’s initiative also embraces the mandate of UNGA Resolution 71/57 “United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education” and is in line with the focus on ‘Disarmament Education’ in UNSG’s Disarmament Agenda ‘to Secure our World and our Future’.
The Sixth Committee (Legal) of the United Nations General Assembly is responsible for handling all legal and treaty-related matters. In the previous year, India signed 120 agreements with over 52 countries/organizations; ratified 15 agreements; and processed full powers for 10 undertakings. (Details regarding the above mentioned may be found on Indian Treaties Database maintained by the L&T Division and as part of Annexure-I).

United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL)

The Legal and Treaties Division participated in the following Working Groups constituted under the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL):

- The Working Group II on Arbitration and Conciliation / Dispute Settlement
- The Working Group IV on Electronic Commerce.

The Working Group II on Arbitration and Conciliation / Dispute Settlement

The Working Group, while noting that it had yet to determine the final presentation of the expedited arbitration provisions (EAPs) the Working Group had agreed to fully explore the various legal and practical issues, which would appear as an appendix to the UNCITRAL Arbitration Rules (UARs) and to discuss the form and presentation at a later stage of its deliberations. It was generally felt that it would be useful to prepare an accompanying guidance material or explanatory note to the EAPs (hereinafter, “guidance document”). It was stated that while the EAPs themselves needed to be clear and easily understandable, such a guidance document could assist the users of the EAPs, particularly those not familiar with such procedure. During the discussion, it was mentioned that the work of the Working Group should avoid any overlap with the work of other working groups, in particular that of Working Group III (ISDS Reform).

LEGAL AND TREATIES DIVISION
to adopt its report during the forty fourth session. It was
reminded of the decision adopted by the States members of
UNCITRAL on 19 April 2020 according to which the Chair
and the Rapporteur would prepare a draft summary reflecting
the deliberations and any conclusions reached during the
session. Having reviewed the draft summary circulated by
the Chair and the Rapporteur, the Working Group agreed to
adopt it for transmission to the Commission as its own report.

The Working Group also agreed to possibly hold informal
consultations to discuss topics included in the provisional
agenda for this session that were not discussed.

International Dispute Adjudication Involving India

a. Enrica Lexie case (Italy and India):
The Arbitral Tribunal constituted under Annex-VII of the
its Award on 21st May, 2020. The award The Arbitration was
instituted by Italy on 26th June, 2015 in respect of the dispute
concerning the Enrica Lexie incident. In accordance with the provisions
of the UNCLOS and Rules of Procedure agreed by the parties, the Award has been pronounced. Following are the highlights:
- The Tribunal upheld the conduct of the Indian authorities
  with respect to the incident under the provisions of the
  UNCLOS. It held that the actions of the Italian military
  officers and, consequently, Italy breached India’s freedom
  of navigation under UNCLOS Article 87(1)(a) and 90.
- The Tribunal observed that India and Italy had concurrent
  jurisdiction over the incident and a valid legal basis to
  institute criminal proceedings against the Marines.
- The Tribunal rejected Italy’s claim to compensation for
  the detention of the Marines. However, it found that the
  immunities enjoyed by the Marines as State officials
  operate as an exception to the jurisdiction of the Indian
  courts and, hence, preclude them to judge the Marines.
- The Tribunal took note of the commitment expressed by
  Italy to resume its criminal investigation into the events of
  15 February 2012.
- The Tribunal decided that India is entitled to payment of
  compensation in connection with loss of life, physical/harm,
  material damage to property and moral harm suffered by
  the captain and other crew members of “St. Antony.” The
  Tribunal also held that the Parties are invited to consult
  with each other with a view to reaching agreement on the
  amount of compensation due to India. The Tribunal also
decided that it shall retain jurisdiction should either Party
or both Parties wish to apply for a ruling from the Arbitral
Tribunal in respect of the quantification of compensation
due to India.

b. Investment related Arbitration Cases:
The various Arbitral Tribunals constituted under the auspices of
Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) ruled on the following
treaty disputes brought against the Republic of India.
- Deutsche Telekom case, under the India-Germany
  bilateral investment treaty: Deutsche Telekom were an
  investor in Devas Multimedia Ltd. The claims against
  Government of India arose out of cancellation of a
  contract between Antrix and Devas on National Security
  Grounds. The arbitral tribunal after hearing its award on
  merits earlier, rendered its award on the quantum this
  year.
- CC Devas under the India - Mauritius bilateral
  investment treaty: CC Devas was one of the investors in
  Devas Multimedia Ltd who had entered into a contract
  with Antrix. The claim arose out of the cancellation of the
  Antrix-Devas contract on grounds of National Security.
  After the award on merits earlier, the tribunal rendered
  its award on the quantum this year. However, proceedings
  on challenging the award on merits is pending before the
  Delhi High Court.
- Antrix-Devas contract on grounds of National Security.
  An arbitral tribunal was also constituted
  with regard to the case. The tribunal also rendered its award on
  merits earlier, rendered its award on the quantum this
  year.
- Vodafone Case: The arbitral tribunal constituted in the
  dispute between Vodafone and India under the India-
  Netherlands bilateral investment treaty rendered its
  Award in September 2020, holding India liable of violation
  of the Fair and Equitable Treatment provision of the treaty.
- Nissan Motor Co. Ltd Case: The dispute between Nissan
  and India-Japan CEPA was settled amicably by the parties
  and the arbitration proceedings thus came to a close.
- Khaitan Case: In the dispute between Khaitan Holdings
  Mauritius Limited v. Republic of India, dispute under the India-
  Mauritius BITA, the hearing on jurisdiction was held
  virtually in August 2020 and the award on jurisdiction is
  awaited.
- GPIX Case: An arbitral tribunal was also constituted
  under the India-Mauritius bilateral investment treaty
  in a dispute brought by GPIX against India. The case is
  currently administered by the PCA.

Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH)

Seventh meeting of the, the Experts’ Group on the Parentage/ Surrogacy Project met via video conference from 12 to 16 October 2020. It was attended by 26 Experts, 3 Observers and members of the Permanent Bureau (PB) of the HCCH. The

Experts represented 23 Member States from various regions. The discussion focused on potential provisions for inclusion in both a general private international law instrument on legal

Treaty Negotiations

Legal & Treaties Division actively participated in bilateral and multilateral negotiations pertaining to various subject matters of national and global importance. Most notable multilateral negotiations among them are:
- The Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on
  Developments in the field of Information and
  Communications Technologies in the Context of
  International Security and the Group of Governmental
  Experts on Advancing State Responsibility in the field of
  ICKs in the context of international security were held
  informally through online platforms from time to time
  since June, 2020.

Online Treaty Database

Indian Treaties Database maintained by the Legal & Treaties
Division of the Ministry of External Affairs adds a great value to
the Government authorities as well as the general public in
providing with the information relating to Treaties/Agreements
concluded by India. The online treaties database is being
constantly updated to reflect the latest treaty information.
The Treaty database can be accessed in the following web link:
https:/ /www.mea.gov.in/TreatyList.htm?1. It comprises of the
treaties covering the period from 1950 till 2020. Currently
there are more than 3,300 such treaties.

Examination/Vetting of Legal Documents

Legal & Treaties Division has examined a number of international
law instruments including MoUs, treaties/agreements as well
as Cabinet notes and rendered legal opinion. The Division, inter
alia examined and provided its views on treaties, agreements,
MoUs in the areas including defence co-operation, agriculture,
railways, SAARC, Health, bio-technology, outer space, science
and technology, BRICS (conglomeration of Brazil, Russia, India,
China and South Africa) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-
Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC),
Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), agreements
relating to international terrorism, transnational organized
crime and drug trafficking; narcotics; also agreements on
confidentiality; sharing of hydrological data; gas and energy;
bilateral agreements on cultural cooperation, audio visual
cooperation, road transport, trade and investment, projects
be implemented in foreign countries, education, tourism,
climate change, protection of natural resources; water
resources; bio-diversity; solar alliance; Ozone depleting
substances; hydography; twinning/sister city or sister state
agreements and customs cooperation agreements, etc.

List of Treaties

India has signed/ratified a number of multilateral/bilateral
 treaties/agreements with foreign countries and International Organizations during the year 2020. A comprehensive list
of such Agreements/Treaties is placed at Annex-I. The list of
Instruments of Ratification/Accession issued during the year
2020 is at Annex-II; and the list of Instrument of Full Powers
issued during the year 2020 is at Annex-III.

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21 LEGAL AND TREATIES DIVISION
The Policy Planning and Research Division is the nodal division of the Ministry for policy planning and organising public diplomacy initiatives with the strategic and academic community. It undertakes flagship conference initiatives with Indian and international think-tanks and research institutions and conducts in-house policy analysis for the Ministry on a regular basis. The division also leads the Ministry’s efforts in cross-cutting initiatives especially those which involve coordination with other ministries in the Government of India.

The PP&R Division is the administrative division for matters pertaining to ICWA and RIS - two autonomous bodies which function under the Ministry. It is also administratively in-charge of the MEA Library and the Boundary Cell.

Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the PP&R Division added high momentum to its mandate. The core functional framework of the division, viz. holding Policy Planning Dialogues, public diplomacy initiatives with think-tanks through conferences and Track 1.5/2 Dialogues, providing research and policy inputs on parliamentary matters, engagement with domain experts, specialised inter-agency matters, preparation of reports for the Ministry on a regular basis. The division also undertook several key policy analysis assignments in niche areas of health diplomacy, climate change action, counter-terrorism, global supply chains, reformed multilateralism, maritime connectivity, regulating Big Tech and other emerging technologies.

On 25 December 2020, the division organised the 1st Atal Bihari Vajpayee Annual Memorial Lecture. The lecture was delivered by Nisha Desai Biswal, President of the U.S.-India Business Council and Senior Vice President for South Asia at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. EAM delivered the opening remarks on the occasion.

**Policy Planning Dialogues**

Annual Policy Planning Dialogues constitute one of the core mandates of the PP&R Division. The Dialogues are held with our bilateral and multilateral diplomatic partners to develop a commonality of understanding on important regional and global issues. In 2020-21, the Division engaged robustly with the policy planning units of foreign countries and held a total 11 Policy Planning Dialogues. Due to Covid pandemic, all of these dialogues were held via virtual platform, often through multiple rounds. The new adaptation to virtual mode facilitated the policy planners to have frank and in-depth exchange of bilateral views.

In 2020-21, Policy Dialogues were held with Australia, Denmark, Germany, Israel, Poland, Turkey, Vietnam, UK, USA, the EU and the BRICS. These dialogues enabled rich exchange of perspectives on emerging geopolitical and geoeconomics trends. The strategic import of these dialogues will have significant bearing on the Ministry’s long-term foreign policy planning.

**Public Diplomacy Outreach**

During 2020-21, the Division considerably enhanced the Ministry’s engagement with the strategic community by institutionalizing interaction with high functionaries. It organised a high-level interaction between Foreign Secretary and select heads of Delhi-based think-tanks on 28 August 2020. In the succeeding months of September-November 2020, the Division organised multiple rounds of interaction of senior ministry officials with select domain experts and academics.

In 2020-21, the Division facilitated Track 1.5 Dialogues with Canada, EU, Japan, South Korea and the US, by partnering with Indian and international think-tanks.

As part of its mandate, the PP&R Division continued to organise flagship conferences both in India and abroad in partnership with prominent think tanks and academic institutions. These conferences focus on the themes of geo-politics, geo-economics and public policy pertaining to emerging technologies, and are structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral conclaves which engage decision-makers at the level of Ministers and high-level government officials as well as policy practitioners; leading personalities from business and industry; and members of the strategic community, media and academia.

The Global Technology Summit was held in December 2020 via virtual platform. The Raisina Dialogue, Asian Economic Dialogue and Indian Ocean Conference are scheduled to be held later in 2021, intensifying the Ministry’s engagement with wider policy community. New public diplomacy events in the North-East involving BIMSTEC/BBIN sub-regions are also in the pipeline.

During the year, the division expanded its support to Universities in undertaking research projects on a case-to-case basis. It provided financial assistance to academic seminars on international relations and foreign policy issues in partnership with research institutions.
Among developing countries on global and regional economic development, trade, investment, and technology. RIS specialises in issues related to international governance of RIS. RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas. RIS promotes South-South Cooperation and collaborates with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. Through its intensive network of think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues and the development partnership canvas.

Indian Council of World Affairs

The ICWA was accorded the status of an autonomous body with an independent status and a grant-in-aid for ICWA as well as for administrative matters pertaining to the governance of ICWA. The Council continued the process of translating its academic reports, which were published on the ICWA website. In order to reach out to a wider audience, ICWA continued to disseminate its output in Hindi, which have been regularly posted on its website.

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)

RIS specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment, and technology. It fosters effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic developments in foreign policy and international affairs. The research outputs were published in the form of Issue Briefs, Viewpoints, Special Reports, and Sapru House Papers. During the period from 1 April - 30 October 2020, the Council published 124 web articles written by research faculty which include 48 Issue Briefs, 74 Viewpoints, and 4 Special reports. Out of these 44 web articles (31 Issue Briefs and 13 Viewpoints) were specifically related to tracking the impact of Covid-19 in different regions across the globe. The Research faculty also published various articles in the media and other academic journals.

During 2020-21, ICWA Fellows undertook study and research on subjects of all major political, security, and economic trends in different regions across the globe. The Research faculty also published various articles in the media and other academic journals. Significant improvements in the expansion of library activities. Significant improvements in the procurement of books and journals and subscriptions to international newspapers and databases were achieved during 2020-21.

During 2020-21, RIS organized a number of policy dialogues focused on Covid-19 pandemic. These included, among others, prospects and perspectives on India-Vietnam S&T cooperation, BIMSTEC in post-Covid era, Indonesia’s Covid-19 exit plan and potential for bilateral and regional cooperation, expanding South-South Cooperation in the interdependent world, strengthening cooperation initiatives between India and Côte d’Ivoire, STI for SDGs, multilateral response to Covid-19 from South Asia, need for South Asian Cooperation for accelerating recovery from Covid-19, strengthening ASEAN-India partnership and the 5th meeting of the BIMSTEC Network of Policy Think Tanks (BNPTT) with the support of the Ministry bringing together the think tanks of BIMSTEC countries.

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Other Administrative Functions

The Division provided administrative guidance to the functioning of two autonomous bodies, ICWA and RIS, that work as research institutions within the Ministry. It supervised the expansion of library activities. Significant improvements in the procurement of books and journals and subscriptions to international newspapers and databases were achieved during 2020-21.

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The issue of countering terrorism continued to find prominent mention in various bilateral and multilateral meetings at all levels during 2020-21. During all such interactions, India reiterated its commitment to combating the menace of terrorism globally and strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. India’s call for zero tolerance to terrorism, rejection of any justification for any act of terror, de-linking terror from religion, need for all countries to unite in the fight against terrorism found greater acceptance among the international community and is reflected in a number of outcome documents issued after bilateral Summits and Ministerial meetings with various countries and at regional and multilateral fora.

India currently engages with senior interlocutors of 25 countries and regional and plurilateral groupings such as European Union, BIMSTEC and BRICS through the Mechanism of Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism (JWG-CT). During the year, India continued to hold structured consultations through JWG-CT with various partner countries despite the limitations caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In the year 2020-21, India held bilateral counter-terrorism consultations through the mechanism of JWG-CT with France and virtually with Australia, European Union (EU), the UK and the USA. The 3rd India-US Designation Dialogue was also held in September 2020 along with JWG-CT Meeting. India also participated in the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Working Group and Sub-Group Meetings virtually from 31 August 2020 to 02 September 2020. A BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy document was approved during the said meeting.

The JWG-CT meetings provide a useful forum for counter-terrorism cooperation enabling sharing of information, experience and assessments regarding global terrorism including cross-border terrorism, training and capacity building, inter alia, in relevant technologies and equipment, strengthening of multilateral efforts in the fight against terrorism and terrorist financing, expediting mutual legal assistance requests, facilitating agency-to-agency cooperation and emphasizing the importance of early adoption of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) under the auspices of the UN.

India has been in the forefront of global counter-terrorism efforts and has taken part in all major global initiatives against international terrorism. India has signed bilateral Agreements/MoUs on security cooperation with 28 countries, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties with 42 key countries, Extradition Treaties with 47 countries and extradition Arrangements with 11 countries. India is a member of FATF style Regional bodies (FSRBs) viz. Eurasian Group (EAG) and Asia Pacific Group (APG) and participated in their meetings held during the year. Indian representatives also regularly attended meetings of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Regional Anti-Terrorist structure (SCO-RATS).

During 2020-21, India’s premier Counter Terrorism Force, National Security Guard (NSG), organised capacity building courses for officials of Sri Lanka. The 3rd India-US Designation Dialogue was also held in September 2020 along with JWG-CT Meeting. India also participated in the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Working Group and Sub-Group Meetings virtually from 31 August 2020 to 02 September 2020. A BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy document was approved during the said meeting.

The JWG-CT meetings provide a useful forum for counter-terrorism cooperation enabling sharing of information, experience and assessments regarding global terrorism including cross-border terrorism, training and capacity building, inter alia, in relevant technologies and equipment, strengthening of multilateral efforts in the fight against terrorism and terrorist financing, expediting mutual legal assistance requests, facilitating agency-to-agency cooperation and emphasizing the importance of early adoption of a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) under the auspices of the UN.

India has been in the forefront of global counter-terrorism efforts and has taken part in all major global initiatives against international terrorism. India has signed bilateral Agreements/MoUs on security cooperation with 28 countries, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties with 42 key countries, Extradition Treaties with 47 countries and extradition Arrangements with 11 countries. India is a member of FATF style Regional bodies (FSRBs) viz. Eurasian Group (EAG) and Asia Pacific Group (APG) and participated in their meetings held during the year. Indian representatives also regularly attended meetings of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Regional Anti-Terrorist structure (SCO-RATS).

During 2020-21, India’s premier Counter Terrorism Force, National Security Guard (NSG), organised capacity building courses on counter-terrorism for officials of Sri Lanka.
Cyber Diplomacy (CD)

The Cyber Diplomacy Division of the Ministry deals with international cyber issues, at bilateral and multilateral levels. Cyber Diplomacy Division acts as the nodal point for discussions on cyber security issues, data protection and internet governance, in consultation with other agencies like National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity), Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCICPC), Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), Department of Telecommunication (DoT), etc.

India has been actively participating in and contributing to Cyber Dialogues, Conferences and Conventions to voice its views, sharing global cyber policies and strengthen its cyber security. In keeping with its commitment to a multi-stakeholder model of governance, India has been engaged in activities with the private sector, civil society and academia to shape and strategise cyber policy.

(i) Bilateral relations with Individual countries

The Cyber Diplomacy division is instrumental in organising bilateral cyber dialogues. During 2020-21, India has signed a Framework with Australia on cyber and cyber-enabled critical technology cooperation on 4 June 2020, along with a Five Year Plan of Action (2020-2025) in order to promote an open, free, safe and secure internet, in adherence with international law, and to provide an enabling environment to deliver increased prosperity to the two nations. The Five Year Plan of Action under the Framework is being implemented. This inter-alia includes formation of Joint Working Groups (JWGs) on ICT and on Cyber Security; creation of "Australia India Strategic Research Fund" to prioritise research focused on innovation in the area of cyber issues.

India and Japan have finalised a bilateral Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in the field of Cyber Security.

On 15 September 2020, India and USA conducted a Cyber Dialogue virtually, led by Deputy NSA R. Khanna. The Indian side comprised representatives from NSCS, MHA, DoT and MEA.

India and the US also held an ICT Working Group meeting virtually on 01 October 2020.

The 5th India-Germany Cyber Dialogue was held on 11 December 2020 over the virtual platform.

The 6th India-EU Cyber Dialogue was held virtually on 14 December 2020, led by the Indian delegation comprising of representatives from NSCS, MHA, DOT and Meity.

India also signed a CERT to CERT MoU with Israel in July 2020, and with France in October 2020.

(ii) Regional and Multilateral cooperation in the area of cyber issues

Indian delegation led by the Ministry participated as one of the select 25 experts in the ongoing 6th United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (UNGGE) for the period 2019-2021. The first session of the 6th UNGGE was held on 09-13 December 2019 in New York and the second session of UNGGE was held from 24-28 February 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland.

India has also been participating in Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) meetings which aim to deliberate on cyber related issues. The last substantive meeting of OEWG was held from 10-14 February 2020 in New York. In preparation for the next substantive meeting proposed in March 2021, OEWG is holding informal virtual meetings. The last such virtual informal meeting, attended by the Indian delegation, led by JS (eG&IT & CD), was held from 29 September to 01 October 2020. The third and fourth session of OEWG informal meeting was held from 17-19 November 2020 and 01-03 December 2020 respectively. The final session of the OEWG meeting is proposed to be held from 08-12 March 2021.

India actively takes part in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) meetings on cyber issues. The last such meeting was held from 14-16 January 2020 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. India participated in an online East Asia Summit Workshop on Regional Cyber Capacity Building: Seizing the Fourth Industrial Revolution’ held from 21-22 September 2020. The workshop provided EAS participating countries with a forum to discuss their cyber capacity building needs, share information on best practices on cyber capacity building, form partnerships to develop regional capacity building programmes, and enhance cooperation that is already underway through the ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity, the ASEAN-Singapore Cybersecurity Centre of Excellence (ASCCE) in Singapore, and the ASEAN-Japan Cyberspace capacity building centre in Bangkok.

India and Japan also held an ICT Working Group meeting virtually, led by Deputy NSA R. Khanna. The Indian side, which comprised representatives from NSCS, MHA, and CERT-In, in the meetings.

India also participated in the 5th Singapore International Cyber Week (SICW) and the 5th ASEAN Ministerial Conference on Cybersecurity (AMCC) organised virtually by the Cyber Security Agency in Singapore from 05-09 October 2020. The theme of the conference was “Co-operation in a Post-Covid future”.

India participated in the 6th meeting of the BRICS Working Group, on security in the use of ITCs, that was held, virtually, on 26-27 August 2020.

India also participated virtually in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Expert group meeting on International Information Security on 29 July 2020.

India joined the call on the International Statement on end-to-end encryption and public safety on 11 October 2020.

E-Governance & Information Technology

E-Governance and Information Technology (eG&IT) Division among other tasks has been involved in design, development, implementation and maintenance of various ‘e-Governance’ applications for the Ministry. eG&IT Division also provides all Information Technology (IT)-related support to the Ministry and Missions/Posts abroad for procurement, maintenance and upkeep of all IT infrastructure.

During the period, eG&IT Division has taken steps to implement different components of Digital India Programme in the Ministry and all Missions and Posts abroad. Automation and networking is being exploited as a tool to achieve synergy at all levels of functioning in the Ministry and render efficient services to government officials. The following e-governance projects have been implemented during the period 01 April – 31 October 2020.

MEA Performance Monitoring Dashboard developed under the supervision of eG&IT Division, focuses on three target areas capturing all major schemes, programmes and initiatives of Ministry with many major indicators sliced and diced across five clusters (Diaspora Engagement, Development partnership, International engagement, Trade & Commerce & Citizen services). The dashboard has been upgraded to include a new module, showcasing the details of various projects undertaken by the Ministry.
Vande Bharat Mission Portal (Repat Portal) available on the URL https://repat.videshapps.gov.in was launched on 06 May 2020 by the Ministry to bring back Indian nationals home during the Covid-19 pandemic by facilitating their travel on a Mission mode. The portal provides registration and access to stakeholders involved in the repatriation process. The data has been shared amongst the stakeholders in real time to facilitate the entire process.

MEADOWS App is an inhouse portal being developed as a basket comprising a number of utilities viz, APAR filing, Leave Management, Inventory Management, Bills Management, Deployment of personnel, etc. It is in the development stage and likely to be rolled-out in due course.

RISHTA Portal focuses on engaging Indian Diaspora abroad. RISHTA portal and App is a vision project envisages to connect with the Overseas Indian Community (NRIs, OCI & PIO) by facilitating and connecting them to various new and existing government schemes benefiting them in various areas of interest. This portal and App will also assist during any crisis management and lend a helping hand to the Indian Diaspora. The Pravasi Rishita portal was launched on 30 December 2020 by the Minister of State.

Global Indian Student Portal focuses on engaging Indian students studying abroad. It is a vision project under development, which will have information regarding various courses and schemes offered by the Foreign Universities. This portal will be of immense help and will provide first-hand authentic information to our students going abroad to pursue professional courses at undergraduate & postgraduate levels.

Integrated Mission Accounting System Ver 2.0 (IMAS 2.0) Portal: The latest version of Mission Accounting System will provide real time financial figures of all the Missions & Posts. The IMAS 2.0 is expected to be rolled out to all Missions and Posts in due course.

The security architecture has been reviewed in the Ministry and existing IT infrastructure has been upgraded with new generation networking and threat management devices to meet the ever growing challenges of cyber security. The Division from time to time, has organised a number of classes/lectures on the Fundamentals of Cyber Security, Implementation of Cyber Security Policy for the Ministry officials to increase awareness about the cyber security and enable them to manage and mitigate cyber threats.

Apart from implementing e-governance services projects, eG&IT Division has also given several lectures and training on Cyber Security, Safe & Secure Computing and other related topics at Foreign Service Institute to the Foreign Diplomats and Officer Trainees.

Video Conferencing: Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the eG&IT division has configured and conducted 500+ video conferencing for the officials of the Ministry at all levels, including the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

PV Division in the Ministry provides attestation and apostille (under the Hague Apostille Convention) services for authentication of educational, personal, and commercial documents through online (e-sanad) and manual modes for personal and commercial use in countries abroad.

In February 2015 as part of good governance initiatives to resolve consular grievances of Indian abroad, MEA launched a web portal MADAD (online Consular Services Management System). All Indian Missions and Posts abroad as well as the MEA Branch Secretariats and State/UT governments have been integrated with this portal for redressal of consular grievances. The MADAD online portal has led to qualitative improvement in handling of consular grievances, through online registration, forwarding, tracking and escalation until their eventual resolution.

During the year, the division has conducted various Consular dialogues, visa waiver agreements, extradition treaties, recommended Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) and e-Visas scheme etc., which are explained in detail below:

**Visa-Exemption Agreements**

India has signed visa waiver agreements in respect of diplomatic and/or official passport holders with 114 countries, out of which 101 are presently operational while the remaining are at various stages of ratification. During this year, visa exemption agreements for holders of diplomatic and/or official passport were signed with Grenada and Marshall Islands. Also, visa exemption agreements for holders of diplomatic and/or official passport were operationalized with Costa Rica, Equatorial Guinea, Oman, and Marshall Islands.
Consular Dialogue Mechanism

As part of the established mechanism for comprehensive review of consular matters with various countries, Consular dialogues were held with Indonesia, Tajikistan, Nigeria, Russia, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Austria and Switzerland in 2019, and USA, Italy, France and Turkmenistan in 2020. Out of these, Consular dialogues with Indonesia, Tajikistan, Nigeria, and Canada were held for the first time. At present, India has Consular Dialogue mechanisms with 24 countries.

Extradition

The MEA has been actively pursuing negotiations with various countries for bilateral extradition treaties to provide a legal and institutional framework to prosecute people involved in international terrorism, financial fraud, drug trafficking and other transnational organized crimes. It is the policy of the Government to conclude Extradition treaties with as many countries as possible to ensure that fugitive criminals do not escape justice. The MEA also facilitates negotiations for agreements on Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters, Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Civil and Commercial Matters and Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons. To facilitate extradition of fugitive offenders, Government of India has signed extradition treaties with 50 countries as on date. Besides, India has entered Extradition arrangements with 11 countries. During the year, India received 17 extradition requests, and has sent 18 extradition requests to various foreign countries. In the year 2020, two fugitive criminals were extradited by foreign countries for India.

Consular Issues

Indian Missions/Posts render various consular services viz. attestation of various categories of documents, registration of birth and death of Indian nationals & issue of birth and death certificates, facilitating transportation of mortal remains of Indian nationals back to India, solemnization/ registration of marriage of Indian nationals, consular access for Indian nationals residing abroad, providing welfare assistance etc. Missions/Posts also advise, assist, and guide the Indian community when required, and conducts Open Houses at Missions/Posts and Consular Camps at different locations to attend to grievances and provide timely assistance to Indian nationals. In Gulf countries where there are large numbers of Indian workers, our Missions and Posts have specialized Community Welfare Wings and Labour Wings. SEWA, an online consular service module has been launched this year in 19 Missions as a pilot project.

Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) Card Scheme

On the recommendation of a High-Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, Government of India launched the Overseas Citizenship of India scheme in August 2005 for persons of Indian Origin. OCI Card is a lifelong visa for visiting India. The erstwhile Person of Indian Origin (PIO) Card scheme, launched in 1999, was merged with OCI scheme in 2015. In September 2019, system of submission of OCI Card application in USA was further streamlined and restrictions on jurisdiction in sub-division of 5 categories i.e. e-tourist visa, e-Business visa, e-Medical visa, e-Conference and e-Medical Attendant and duration extended to 1 year. In August 2019 further liberalization in e-Visa regime has been made. Duration of e-Tourist visa has been further extended to 5 years and a new category of e-Tourist visa of three-month duration (with stay stipulation of 30 days) at a reduced fee was introduced. The fee of 3-month e-Tourist visa has been further reduced in off season month (April-June). The share of e-visas with respect to normal paper visas is around 46% for 2019. The trend of e-Visa applicants is continued to be in upward direction. However, since March 2020 the e-Visa scheme has been under suspension due to ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

PASSPORT SERVICES

The Passport Seva Programme (PSP) Division of the Ministry provides passport services in India and abroad. The issuance of passports has emerged as one of the most noticeable statutory and citizen-centric services rendered by the Ministry. The Ministry has been making quantitative and qualitative changes so that passports can be delivered to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner and in a comfortable environment through streamlined processes and by a committed, trained and motivated workforce.

Indian passports (together with other travel documents such as Certificate of Identity to Stateless persons, Emergency Certificate for returnees to India, Police Clearance Certificates, Surrender Certificates, Line of Control Travel Permits in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir) are issued by the Ministry of External Affairs through the Central Passport Organization (CPO) and its all-India network of 36 Passport Offices, the CPV Division (only Diplomatic and Official passports) and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration. This network has been vastly expanded by adding 93 Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode and 426 Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK) (in association with the Department of Posts) as extended arms of these 36 Passport Offices. The total number of Passport Seva Kendras functioning in the country was 519 as on 31 December, 2020, including PSKs and POPSK. For Indians living abroad, passports and Emergency Certificates are being rendered by 196 Indian Missions/Posts abroad.

Passport Seva Programme (PSP)

The Passport Seva Programme (PSP), a Mission Mode Project, being implemented in the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mode with M/s Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) as the Service Provider, has completed seven and half years of its successful operations since it went “Live” on 12 June, 2012. EAM delivered Keynote Address during the Passport Seva Diwas Celebrations on 24 June 2020

Passport services in India and Missions/Posts abroad

During 2020, the Ministry received over 66.8 lakh passport and passport related applications in India and through its Missions/Posts abroad. The Ministry processed nearly 55.80 lakh passport and passport-related applications in India during the year 2020, as compared to 1.18 crore in the year 2019. However, 58.44 passports and related documents were issued in India. The Indian Missions/Posts abroad received 10.99 lakh passport and passport-related applications and issued 9.82 lakh passports, Emergency Certificates (ECs) and other passport-related miscellaneous documents. This included 362,556 Police Clearance Certificates (PCCs) and 24,507 Emergency Certificates (ECs), more than half of ECs were issued on gratis basis to citizens abroad during amnesty schemes, to mitigate their hardships and travel back to India. Thus, the Government of India, issued more than 68.26 lakh passport and passport-related documents during 2020.

Revenue earned

The Ministry earned total revenue of Rs. 1,346.60 crore from all passport services during 2020 as compared to Rs. 1,853.85 crore during the year 2019. Thus, the Ministry lost revenue to the tune of more than Rs.507.25 crore due to Covid-19 pandemic. As Passport Seva Kendra received very less application during 2020 because of lockdows and travel bans and restrictions.

Improvements in passport service delivery

There has been noticeable improvement in passport service delivery in the country with the implementation of the PSP and continuous efforts being made by the Ministry. Quality service being provided to the people from the Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) established with good amenities across the country in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode. Under this system, the applicants are required to apply for their passports online, upload relevant documents, make the payment online through debit/credit card or State Bank of India (SBI) net banking/ SBI Challan, schedule an appointment and then visit the designated PSK/ POPSK. A user-friendly portal has been made available. When an applicant visits the PSK/ POPSK, an Electronic Queue Management System (EQMS) working on the principle of First-in-First-out is available at all PSK/ POPSK to monitor the flow of applicants. The applicants can track the status of their applications themselves through portal and also SMS services. In the current system of passport issuance, there is no manual intervention at any stage, and the complete process is digitally flown with re-engineered process through a single visit clearance.

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Consular, Passport and Visa Services
mPassport Seva Mobile App
The mPassport Seva Mobile App with additional facilities to apply, pay and schedule appointments for passport services is available both in Android and iOS platforms. In the year 2020, 1.87 lakh applications were filed using the mPassport Seva Mobile App. 8.06 lakh applications have been field using this app since its roll out in July 2016. Citizens do not require access to a computer and printer to apply for passport services. The mPassport Seva App supports enhanced set of passport services such as:
- New User Registration
- Sign In to Registered User Account
- Application form filing to apply for Passport and Police Clearance Certificate
- Pay for Passport Services
- Appointment Scheduling
- Application Availability Status
- Document Advisor
- Fee Calculator

Applying from anywhere in India
An applicant can now apply for passport from anywhere in India. This initiative has enabled applicants to choose the Passport Office (PO) and thus the desired Passport Seva Kendra (PSK)/ Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) under the PO where they wish to submit their application irrespective of whether the present residential address specified in the application form lies within the jurisdiction of the selected PO or not. Police verification is conducted by the Police Station in whose jurisdiction the address mentioned in the form falls and the passport will also be issued/delivered at the same address by the PO selected for application submission by the applicant. Nearly 9.11 lakh applications were submitted under this scheme during the calendar year 2020.

Appointments

Awards & Recognition
The Passport Seva Project has received recognition at the levels in the Government, has brought in the Passport Issuance System in India. The Ministry released nearly 45,000 appointments per day, including nearly 16,000 appointments, on an average, at the 426 POPSks. Securing online appointments for submission of passport applications at PSK has been simplified. The current provision is allowing applicants to choose any appointment date from the earliest five available dates (working days) for scheduling/rescheduling an appointment for passport related services. It has made the process of issuing passport easy and quick.

As on 31.12.2020, appointments were available the next working day at 410 Passport Kendras, between 2 and 7 working days at 72 Passport Kendras, and beyond 7 working days at 37 Passport Kendras.

Volume of applications
Top five states in terms of number of passport applications received were Kerala (6,59,728), Maharashtra (5,71,861), Punjab (4,77,822), Tamil Nadu (4,77,599) and Uttar Pradesh (4,75,612), accounting for nearly 48% of the total applications received (55.8 lakh) country-wide till 31 December 2020.

Top five Passport Offices in terms of number of applications received in the year 2020 were Mumbai (3,63,708), Bengaluru (3,33,963), Chandigarh (3,32,908), Kochi/kode (2,91,918) and Ahmedabad (2,91,506) till 31 December, 2020.

Offsite Passport Seva Camps and Melas at PSK
Passport Seva camps are organized at locations to cater to the demand for passports and to reach out to the people located far away from the PSK/POPSK.

The Passport Offices also organized weekend Passport Melas at PSK to address difficulties faced by citizens in obtaining appointments and to meet increased demand for passport services. 62 Passport Melas were conducted during 2020. A total of 24,188 applications were processed in these Melas.

Outreach of passport Services

A. Passport Office
The Ministry has taken steps to simplify the procedure for getting passports by the general public. These involve simplification of the passport rules and outreach to the people in the delivery of passport related services. The objective of the Government has been to cater to the demand for passports and to reach out to the people located far away from the Passport Offices.

The list of the 36 Passport Offices is at Annexure.

B. Passport Seva Kendras (PSK)
Towards this end, the Ministry has opened 16 PSK since May 2014 in all the States in the North East of India. There are 93 PSK functioning in the country as on 31 December, 2020. The list of these 93 PSK is at Annexure.

C. Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK)
The Ministry, in association with the Department of Posts (DoP), announced an innovative initiative on 24 January, 2017 to open Passport Seva Kendras at the Head Post Offices (HPO)/ Post Offices (PO) in the country called ‘Post Office Passport Seva Kendra’ (POPSK). The Ministry has functionalized 426 POPSK till 31 December 2020 as per list at Annexure.

The POPSK are functioning like the other existing PSK. The POs are working on the District model.

Some States/UTs have consistently maintained low Police Verification processing times. For example, Himachal Pradesh completes police verification in just two days and Andhra Pradesh & Haryana in four days and Kerala in six days. Constant and concerted efforts by the Ministry have resulted in increasing number of Districts switching over to the preferred District Police Headquarters (DPHQ) Verification Model. So far, 795, out of the 833 Police Districts, have adopted the new system and are working on the District model.

The Ministry has launched Android-based mPassport Police App for end-to-end paperless digital flow. The app has the capability to capture passport applicant’s personal particulars and photograph and transmit the same electronically to concerned stakeholders.

(viii. Fee Calculator

Appendix

Passport Seva Divas 2020
The Passport Seva Divas was celebrated on 24 June, 2020 to commemorate the enactment of the Passports Act on 24 June, 1967. A Special Event was organized by MEA to mark this occasion at which EAM and Minister of State addressed the Passport Officers through video conferencing.

Policy Verification
Policy Verification plays an important role in the timely issuance of passports. The Ministry engaged closely with the Police Departments across Union Territories (UT) to speed up police verification. The all-India average for the number of days taken to complete the police verification is now 18 days in 2020. 88% of the police verifications were completed within 21 days in 2020 (87% in 2019).

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The Ministry has launched Android-based mPassport Police App for end-to-end paperless digital flow. The app has the capability to capture passport applicant’s personal particulars and photograph and transmit the same electronically to concerned stakeholders. The app would also integrate the location co-ordinates of the applicant’s place of residence ensuring the authenticity of the field verification by police. 243 DPHQs in 18 States & UTs are using mPassport Police App. Till 31 December 2020, a total of 84,42,181 applications have been submitted through mobile app since inception of the mPassport Police App.

Functional Enhancements/Simplification of Procedures for re-verification of the Minimum Government Maximum Governance

(a) In order to ease the hardship to the citizens living in India and abroad, all re-issue cases up to 3 years after expiry of passport on the date of submission will be dealt on No-PV basis.

(b) Guidelines for PCC which inter-alia states that any change in personal particulars i.e. change of address; spouse name etc. necessitated the applicants to apply for a new passport first and then apply for PCC have been suitably liberalised. There is now no need for the applicant to apply for a new passport if there is change in present address and addition of spouse name for the issue of PCC.
In his keynote Address, EAM noted that there had been a complete transformation in the passport delivery system during the last six years of the present Government. He mentioned that the focus of MEA would be to further strengthen the outreach efforts to take passport services closer to the people by opening more POPPS, enhancing its capabilities, and setting up more facilities in Passport Offices. The initiative, he added, is a concerted effort to make citizens feel the benefits of better service delivery, which is in line with the government's vision of developing an electronics-driven India.

In addition, all Passport Offices (POs) handle public grievance, which at present works on a central system set up to cater to dissemination of information about various clearance and grievances. Under the Passport Seva Project, MEA has put in place a Public Grievance Redressal Mechanism, which was recognized for its efficiency in CPRGAMS, had further improved delivery of our services.

Passport Seva Puraskars were announced for the best performing Passport Offices personnel of the Service Providers. As Police verification is an important component of the process of issue of passport, special mention was made of the Police Departments for their efforts in providing speedy police clearances.

**Grievance Redressal Mechanism**

Under the Passport Seva Project, MEA has put in place a strengthened Grievance Redressal system whereby a multilingual National Call Centre with a toll free number (1800-258-1199 of 2019) out of which 25,050 grievances have been disposed off. During this period, 58,464 public grievance petitions (inclusive of grievances and inquiries and CPGRAMS as mentioned above) were received out of which 58,254 grievances have been disposed off. The latest position on their application, along with directions for further action, is posted on the website, which can be accessed by the public.

**Passport Adalats**

Passport Adalats have been appointed in every Passport Office to provide redressal of grievances. These Adalats have been very useful in disposing of some 7000 old and complex cases through direct interaction with the applicants in 2017.

**Haj pilgrims**

As decided by the Haj Committee of India (constituted under Act of Parliament, No. 35 of 2002), only valid passport holders can apply for Haj. Like previous years, instructions have been issued to all Passport Issuing Authorities to accord high priority to process passport applications of Haj pilgrims and ensure timely issuance of passports in such cases upon completion of requisite documentation, police verification and other formalities by means of nominating a nodal office, opening of facilitation counter, reserving appointment slots for such applicants and attending to requests/grievances petitions received from such citizens in a very prompt manner.

**Inspection of Passport Offices**

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Under CPRGAMS, 25,237 grievances were received during the period 1 January to 31 December 2020 (inclusive of outstanding 119 of 2019) out of which 25,050 grievances have been disposed off. During this period, 58,464 public grievance petitions (inclusive of grievances and inquiries and CPGRAMS as mentioned above) were received out of which 58,254 grievances have been disposed off. The latest position on their application, along with directions for further action, is posted on the website, which can be accessed by the public.

**Right to Information Act (RTI)**

Central Public Information Officer and First Appellate Authority have been appointed in every Passport Office to provide information to applicants under the RTI Act. Central Public Information Officers have also been appointed in the PSP Division. Joint Secretary (PSP) & Chief Passport Officer (CPO) is the First Appellate Authority for the matters related to the PSP Division in the Ministry only. From 17 June 2014, a CPIO portal has been created online in all Passport Offices. During the year 2020, a total number of 5,880 online RTI applications were received, out of which 5,454 were disposed off.

** Appeals (u/s 11 of the Passports Act)**

The appeal against the decisions of PIAs is a statutory right conferred upon the affected persons under Section 11 of the Passports Act. Joint Secretary (PSP) & Chief Passport Officer is the Appellate Authority for these cases. Up to December 2020, 16 appeal sessions took place at which 41 appellants/counsels were heard.

**Manufacturing and Personalization of Travel Documents**

All Indian travel documents are manufactured by the India Security Press, Nashik, which is a unit under the Security Printing and M minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL). In order to improve the overall quality, functionality and security of Indian passports, various measures have been taken. Passport booklets in new design and layout have been introduced in Passport Offices in a phased manner. All Passport Offices, Headquarters and select Missions/Posts abroad have been provided with machine-readable passport printers. All Passport Offices issue machine-readable passports as per the guidelines laid-down by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

For 166 Embassies/Consulates abroad and Office of Assistant Secretary (Passport) Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Port Blair, Machine Readable Passports (MRP) with ghost image security feature are printed at Central Indian Passport Printing System (CIPPS) Division, New Delhi. CIPPS printed 1,43,858 passports up to December 2020 (inclusive of 487 diplomatic passports and 397 official passports). 1,91,613 OCI cards were also personalized during the year at CIPPS/OCl Cell and Missions abroad.

**E-Passport**

In accordance with ICAO recommendations to incorpate bio-metric data in the Machine Readable Travel Documents, India has also decided to upgrade its existing passports and issue chip-enabled e-passports to citizens with advanced security features and better printing and paper quality. The Government has given its approval for procurement of electronic contactless chips for manufacturing of e-passports to India Security Press (ISP), Nashik. E-passport provides greater protection against fraudulent practices and tampering.

**International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)**

India served as a member of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTD) of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and has been implementing the ICAO guidelines on MRTD. The ICAO, in terms of Document 9302 as the central reference, has established ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD), on cost sharing basis, to promote a globally interoperable e-passport validation scheme for electronic travel documents to support ICAO’s strategic objectives to improve civil aviation security. The PKD Board members are nominated by PKD participating countries and appointed by the ICAO Council. India has been a member of ICAO PKD since February 2009.

**Central Passport Organization**

The Central Passport Organization (CPO) was created in 1959 as a Subordinate Office of the Ministry and is headed by Joint Secretary and Chief Passport Officer, who also acts as Appeal Authority under the Passports Act 1967 and the Head of Department under the Delegation of Financial Powers Rules, 1978.

As on 1 January 2021, the sanctioned strength of CPO was 2,741 and the working strength was 1,804. In addition, 15 Technical and 6 supporting staff man the Project Management Unit (PMU) of the Passport Seva Project. There are present 313 vacancies at Group ‘A’ level, 541 at Group ‘B’ level, 169 at Group ‘C’ level, 121 at Group ‘D’ level, and 358 at Group ‘E’ level, totaling to 937. The vacancies at Group ‘A’ level are filled up by taking officers on deputation from other Government Departments. Ministry has also deployed 347 Data Entry Operators and 51 Office Assistants (MTS) against the vacant non-Gazetted posts. The Posts are filled up by taking officers on deputation from other Government Departments.

The Ministry has taken several steps to improve the service conditions of the CPO personnel by restructuring and expediting the CPO cadre, to ensure that vacant posts available are filled by fast-tracking the process of recruitment through an Outsourced Agency to bridge the gap between the sanctioned strength and the working strength of the non-Gazetted posts. The Staff Selection Commission has been mandated to fill the vacancies for the posts of Assistant Superintendent, 17 Junior Passport Assistant, 8 Office Assistant (MTS), 33 Junior Translator and 1 Stenographer (Grade-III).

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measured against pre-set and mutually agreed norms. This is a unique scheme for the GOI employees. With a view to recognizing meritorious services rendered by CPO employees and thus, contributing to improving governance in the country, Passport Seva Purasksars have been instituted. The Puraskars are given away annually to the selected employees of Passport Offices during the Passport Officers Conference every year.

Regular meetings of the Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) have been held in the CPO during the year. Up to December 2020, 04 Senior Superintendent from Superintendent, 160 Superintendent from Assistant Superintendent, 02 Assistant Superintendent from Senior Passport Assistant, 26 Senior Passport Assistant from Junior Passport Assistant, and 09 Senior Translator from Junior Translator have been approved for promotion. DPC proposals for promotion of Senior Superintendent to the post of Assistant Passport Officer (APO) have been submitted to the Union Public Service Commission. Eighteen officials of CPO were considered for MACP in different grades. Out of 18, 3 Assistant Superintendent, 1 Senior Passport Assistant, 9 Junior Passport Assistant, 3 Office Assistants, 3 Junior Translators and 4 Stenographer (Grade-I) have been in different grades.

Cadre Review: In view of the 100% increase in the Passport applications processed by the Central Passport Organisation (CPO) from 2010 to 2020 through a network of 36 Passport Offices, 93 Passport Seva Kendras, and 426 POPSKs, need is felt for Cadre restructuring and reviewing the cadre strength of the CPO. A proposal for the physical inspection and staffing study of CPO by the Staff Inspection Unit (SIU) of the Department of Expenditure has been sent to the Ministry of Finance in November 2019.

2020-21 has been very challenging with Covid-19 pandemic ravaging the world and the resultant country-wide lockdown which had to be imposed as a safeguard to protect lives of our countrymen from this virus. While Vande Bharat Mission flights were started by the Government to bring back lakhs of Indians stranded abroad, help in all possible forms were extended to the stranded Indians all over the world. Due to the lockdown, several plans and targets of the Division suffered considerably, though efforts were made to carry on the work using online platforms, wherever possible.

Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF)

ICWF, set up in 2009, is aimed at assisting overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency in the most deserving cases on a means tested basis. ICWF has been a critical support during Covid-19 pandemic. Drawing support from the Fund, our Missions/Posts proactively helped distressed and stranded Indian nationals, in accordance with extant guidelines. As of 31 December 2020, around Rs. 33.5 crores were utilised to extend assistance to more than 156,000 Indians. Assistance was given for evacuation, boarding and lodging, medical care, repatriation and other miscellaneous matters such as providing masks, food packets and dry ration.

Welfare and Protection of Indian Migrant workers

During 2020-21, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed with Japan to facilitate mobility of Indian skilled workers, under the scheme of "Specialised Skilled Worker" visa category of Japan, on 18 January 2021. The third Project Advisory Committee (PAC) Meeting for Technical Project under India-EU Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility (CAMM) was held virtually on 2 July 2020. The meeting concluded with the mutual agreement on the activities to be undertaken during the next one year keeping into consideration balanced implementation of all the four pillars of CAMM. India also participated in the online GFMD-ADD regional consultative processes, on migration and mobility, chaired by UAE, in July 2020.
A Joint Committee Meeting with Qatar on Indian Labour Welfare was also held during 2020-21. Besides, further progress was made on negotiations with a number of countries, like Russia, Benelux countries, Portugal and UK on the signing of Agreements/MoUs on cooperation in Migration and Mobility matters.

**Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**

Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY), a joint collaborative partnership between MEA and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), aims at enhancing the skills set of potential emigrant workers in select sectors and job roles, in line with international standards, to facilitate their overseas employment. The scheme comprises two components. The first one is a technical top-up training, involving recognition of prior learning, assessment and certification, to be provided by MSDE through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). The second one is a one day training programme on soft skills called “Pre-Departure Orientation and Training (PDOT)”, to be imparted by MEA.

While a market-based, top-up skill training programme is being developed by MSDE, PDOT training being implemented by MEA has been progressing at a considerable pace. Out of the 28 PDOT Centres, opened by Ministry in collaboration with MSDE and the State Governments, five new training centres at Bhubaneswar, Kolkata, Thiruvananthapuram, Amritsar & Jalandhar were opened in October 2020. The opening of many more centres at major overseas Migration specific places in the country has been planned. Training has already been imparted to about 96,000 prospective emigrants by 20 January 2021. To meet the target of imparting training to 5 lakh workers, an online PDOT model has been adopted, in addition to the present offline classroom training model.

**India Centre for Migration**

The India Centre for Migration (ICM) is a research think-tank of the Ministry on all matters related to international migration. The broad areas of ICM’s activities include research, capacity building and assisting the Ministry on matters relating to international migration and mobility. During the year, ICM prepared two special reports on impact of Covid-19 on international migration from India and on the flow of returnee migrants so that suitable reintegration measures may be introduced. ICM has also developed two handbooks on law enforcement agencies and women workers from India were launched in December 2020, during the General Council Meeting of ICM. Eighteen panel discussions on relevant themes pertaining to Migration and Mobility with special focus on impacts of Covid-19 have been organised during 2020-21 and more are in the pipeline. Besides, one Training of Teachers Workshop for training of PDO Training Teachers, was also organised.

**OIA-II**

The Overseas Indian Affairs Division-II deals with issues relating to engagement with Indian Diaspora. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Conferences, Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Know India Programme, Scholarship Programmes for Diaspora Children, Bharat Ko Janiye Quiz, NRI marital disputes, Promotion of Cultural Ties with Diaspora, Students issues, grievances pertaining to diaspora, any other issues pertaining to diaspora and new initiatives taken from time to time by the Government are among the major Programmes and Schemes handled by the Division.

**Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)**

Since 2015, PBD has been celebrated once every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India, and to help them reconnect with their roots in India. During the Convention, selected overseas Indians are also honoured with prestigious “Pravasi Bharatiya Samman” Awards, to recognize their stellar contribution in various fields in India and abroad. In the run up to the main PBD convention, theme-based PBD conferences are organised in Delhi between two PBD conventions, which later feed into plenary sessions organised during PBD conventions.

The 16th PBD convention was held in virtual or Hybrid mode on 9 January 2021 in New Delhi on the theme “Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat”. The PBD convention was inaugurated by Prime Minister. The convention saw eminent members of the diaspora hold discussions on the role the diaspora can play in advancing the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat, and on the post-Covid world. Rashtrapati delivered a valedictory address, marking conclusion of PBD.

**Scholarship Programme for Diaspora Children (SPDC)**

SPDC was introduced by the Government of India in the Academic Year 2006-07 to make higher education in Indian Universities/Institutes in different fields (except Medical and related courses) accessible to the diaspora children and promote India as a centre for higher studies. Presently, under the Scheme, 150 scholarships are awarded to Children of Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), Non-resident Indians and Indian Workers in ECR countries. It consists of grant of financial assistance to each admitted student up to an amount of USD 4000 per annum for undergraduate courses in Central Universities in India. Institutions accredited ‘A’ grade by National Assessment and Accreditation Council and recognised by University Grant Commission and other institutions covered under the DASA Scheme. Since, 1227 scholarships have been granted during the academic year 2006-07. The Scheme for the academic year 2020-21 has not been announced yet due to Covid-19 pandemic.

**Pravasi Teerth Darshan Yojana (PTDY)**

PTDY was introduced in the financial year 2018-19 to provide the Persons of Indian Origin in the age group of 45-65 years an opportunity to reconnect with their roots. The programme is available for those Persons of Indian Origin in Girmitiya countries (Fiji, Guyana, Mauritius, South Africa, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Reunion Island) who belong to lower income groups and are unable to afford a visit to India. It is a 17-days programme and conducted with coordination of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd. 4 editions of this programme have been conducted successfully so far with the participation 160 PIOs. Two editions of KIP are scheduled for FY 2020-21 but have not been announced yet due to Covid-19 pandemic.

**Promotion of Cultural Ties with Diaspora (PCTD)**

Under PCTD, OIA-II Division provides grants to Indian Missions and Consulates to support their initiatives aimed at strengthening ties with the Overseas Indian Community; to preserve, maintain and showcase the glory of India’s heritage and culture. The scheme aims to nourish and strengthen the cultural bonds between India and its Diaspora. The projected outcome of the scheme is to reinforce the cultural identity of the persons of Indian origin. Grants are also provided to think-tanks and organisations in India which organise events pertaining to the overseas Indian community. Financial assistance to 40 Missions/Posts have been given in this Financial Year. Financial grant to Antar Rashtriya Sahayog Parishad (ARSP) for research activities of Data Research and Resource Centre (DRRC), New Delhi have also been given.
KIP was introduced in the financial year 2003-04. The aim is to connect diaspora youth aged between 18-30 years with their motherland and to motivate them by acquainting them with transformations taking place in contemporary India. The programme also aims to expose them to India’s diverse forms of art, heritage, and culture. Since its inception, the Ministry has, so far, conducted 57 editions of this programme, with the participation of a total number of 2061 diaspora youth. 06 editions of KIP are scheduled for FY 2020-21 but have not been announced yet due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Know India Programme (KIP)

MEA-State Outreach Conferences

MEA in recent years has launched several initiatives aimed at welfare and protection of the overseas Indian community and strengthening our engagement with the Indian Diaspora worldwide. With this objective, MEA initiated State Outreach Programmes under the banner “Videsh Sampark” in 2017, which is an in-depth dialogue between the Ministry and the State governments. State Outreach Events have been organised in partnership with the State Governments of Telangana (2017), Maharashtra (2017) and Kerala (2017), Gujarat (2018) and Madhya Pradesh (2018) to seek cooperation in addressing issues pertaining to welfare and protection of our citizens abroad and brief the State Governments about Ministry’s initiatives pertaining to engagement and welfare of the overseas Indian community and curbing illegal migration.

From 2019 onwards, EAM approved to expand the scope of the engagement to cover investment, trade and foreign relations. With this new mandate, Videsh Sampark Programme was held in Bengaluru, Karnataka on 26 February 2020.

Awareness Campaign and Media Plan

As per recommendations of Standing Committee on External Affairs, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, is conducting Impact Assessment Study. The report based on Desk Research Activities was submitted in November 2020 followed by preliminary findings of the study in December 2020. Report was submitted in January 2021.

As advised by Advertisement Approval Cell (AAC), ads could be prepared by involving prominent personalities in regional languages and disseminated through social media at minimum expenditure. Accordingly, the Division approached various prominent personalities for their support on a gratis basis. Many Prominent personalities have agreed to give bytes (40-50 seconds) for media awareness campaigns, on gratis basis.

NRI-Marital Disputes

MEA has been receiving a large number of petitions and complaints about marital issues faced by Indian nationals, mostly women, who are married to overseas Indians and are deserted or harassed by their Non-Resident Indian spouses. Most complaints pertain to issues such as abandonment, harassment, cheating, domestic violence by their spouses residing abroad, to ascertain whereabouts of NRI spouses. Requests are filed for extradiction, deportation of spouse to India, as well as maintenance, divorce or custody and legal and financial assistance to file a case against the NRI spouse. Between 01 April 2020 and 31 October 2020, the Ministry addressed 618 complaints of distressed Indian women deserted by their NRI spouses. The Ministry ensured that the petitioners are provided with counseling, guidance and information about procedures, mechanisms for serving judicial summons on the Overseas Indian spouse, filing a case in India, Issuing Look Out Circulars, impounding and revocation of Indian passport of the spouse, getting access to lawyers and NGOs empanelled with Indian Missions.

Bharat Ko Janiye (BKJ)

In pursuance of an announcement made by Prime Minister at the 13th PBD Convention on 8 January 2015 in Gandhinagar, as part of efforts to strengthen engagement with young overseas Indians, to encourage them to know more about their country of origin, an online “Bharat ko Janiye!” Quiz was organised for young overseas Indians of 18-35 years of age in 2015-16. Second round of the quiz was organised in 2018-19.

The 3rd round of Bharat Ko Janiye (BKJ) Quiz 2020-21 was launched on 30 September 2020. The Quiz consisted of 4 rounds in online format. The BKJ was open for 3 categories of participants - PIO, NRI & Foreigners between 18 to 35 years. The link for BKJ is www.bharatkojaniye.in. With participation over several competitive rounds, a total of 15 winners (5 in each category) are chosen, and the top three winners in each category are awarded. The finalists of the BKJ quiz were awarded during the PBD event in January 2021. All 15 winners of the latest edition of the quiz will be invited for a tour of India after the Covid situation improves.

The quiz consists of 4 rounds which cover diverse aspects and include questions related to current affairs, history, geography, science, and technology. The questions are designed to test the participants’ knowledge and understanding of India’s culture, heritage, economy, and society. The quiz is structured to make it engaging and interactive, allowing participants to learn while competing against one another.

There is a growing need to understand, analyse and anticipate the impact of disruptive, futuristic, emerging, strategic, and critical technologies that underpin economies, employment, security, social equity, and global relations while identifying forward looking opportunities.

Set up in January 2020, the New Emerging and Strategic Technologies Division engages in new technology diplomacy aspects and also deals with the foreign policy and international legal aspects of such discussions in global forums. It would be the coordinating point for positions taken by India in negotiations regarding technology governance rules, standards and architecture in the multilateral or plurilateral context, including at the UN and relevant international organizations.

NEST Division will build interfaces with key partner countries and international organizations in this context. It is assessing demand driven requirements of new emerging and strategic technologies in India in collaboration with line Ministries and facilitating, as synapses, the interlocutor/partner interfaces for their acquisition, strengthening, in particular, the role of Indian Missions in this process.

NEST Division has participated in robust dialogues on the new Science Technology Innovation Policy 2020 deliberations currently underway in Government of India.

NEST Division helped shape the outreach to Diaspora and the international scientific community under the VAIBHAV [Vaishvik Bharatiya Vijnan] Summit 2020, together with the sister Ministries and Institutions in India.

It was nodal to the suggestion for the National Portal “Pravasi Bharatiya Academic and Scientific Sankalp” that is being set up for effectively engaging with Indian Global S&T Community.

It also worked with Missions to facilitate international participation at the Responsible AI for Social Empowerment (RAISE 2020), organised by MeitY in October 2020.

NEST Division is coordinating Inter-Ministerial consultations within the Government of India, on emerging technology areas such as data security, with DoT (for IT related aspects on new technologies), MoIT (for Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence); and Ministry of Mines.
NEST Division launched an Emerging Technologies Initiative on 31 August 2020 together with the Office of Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA), and the Science Policy Forum for accelerating India’s technology intensity in new emerging and strategic technologies. It has been launched on the website: www.thesciencepolicyforum.org/initiatives/eti and has received an overwhelming response.

“NEST Monthly Newsletter” has been issued since May 2020. In this, NEST related developments within the country are reported intra-MEA and to Missions/Posts. Examples covered include technologies related to Covid; solar/EV cells; AI/quantum technologies, etc.

NEST Division related developments abroad (as reported by Missions) are forwarded to respective Ministries/agencies in Government of India/States. Some examples which are being explored for collaborations include: Lithium-ion Battery supply (Japan), Ocean wave electricity generation technology (Israel), supply of strategic minerals (Canada, others) and Hydrogen filling stations (Switzerland).

Regarding work performance, Protocol-I deals with incoming visits of Head of States/Head of Governments/Vice-Presidents and Foreign Ministers, outgoing visits of President, Vice President and Prime Minister, entertainment (official lunches, dinners, and receptions on behalf of the MEA) and ceremonial functions, airport passes, access to ceremonial and reserve lounge etc. Details of Bilateral Visits and Virtual Summits are outlined in Annexure-II.

Protocol-III and Protocol Special Sections

From April 2020 to March 2021, Protocol-III and Protocol (Housing) Section facilitated movement of HOMs and Diplomats for smooth functioning of all Foreign Representations resident in New Delhi, including issuing of requisite clearances for departure of diplomats. The Foreign representations were duly informed and regularly sensitized regarding Circulars/Orders/Guidelines issued by various Ministries (pertaining to various aspects such as travel/visa restrictions, medical facilities, changing lockdown guidelines etc.) of Government of India in view of Covid-19 pandemic. A briefing was organised for resident Heads of Missions and diplomatic community on development of Covid-19 vaccine by India.

It also provide permission to foreign diplomats for enrolment in Indian Universities; security arrangement for foreign representations and their residences in India; privileges and immunities to international organisations recognised under Article 3 of United Nations (Privileges & Immunities) Act, 1947; and issues related to tax exemptions on the principle of reciprocity; forwarding of court summons issued by various courts in respect of diplomats/oﬃcials and diplomatic missions in India and processing requests of purchase/registration/sale of motor vehicles & custom duty-free imports.

Protocol-III performs the following regular work:

- Arrange Credential Ceremony in Rashtrapati Bhawan, where incoming Heads of Missions hand over their Credentials papers to Hon’ble President of India.
- Provides Protocol facilities to Heads of Missions on their first arrival and final departure.
- Gives approval for establishing new Consulates General, Deputy High Commissions, Trade Offices, and Cultural Centres.
- Processes permanent Airport Entry passes every year with respect to foreign diplomatic missions/posts in India subject to reciprocity, which is determined after obtaining and scrutinising inputs from all our missions/posts abroad.
• Appointment of Honorary Consuls, Consul Generals, Deputy High Commissioners (Head of Posts for Commonwealth countries) of foreign countries and preparing Exequatur/Gazette Notification thereafter.
• Processes approval regarding awards given by foreign countries to Indian Officials.
• Forwarding messages from VIP (President, Vice President, Prime Minister, EAM) to Heads of States and Heads of Government of foreign countries. Onward transmission of messages from Heads of States and Heads of Government of foreign countries to President, Vice President, Prime Minister, EAM and Government of India Officials.
• Facilitates Heads of Missions and diplomats (wherever applicable) during Republic Day, Independence Day, Joint Session of Parliament, Swearing-in Ceremony of Honorable Prime Minister of India, Yoga Day etc.
• Courtesy requests by HOM/HOPs and other official work entrusted.
• Arranges Chief Guest for National Days of foreign countries celebrated by foreign missions in India and ensuring protocol guidelines are maintained in the venue.
• Facilitates Heads of Missions and diplomats (wherever applicable) during Republic Day, Independence Day, Joint Session of Parliament, Swearing-in Ceremony of Honorable Prime Minister of India, Yoga Day etc.
• Courtesy requests by HOM/HOPs and other official work entrusted.
• Arranges Chief Guest for National Days of foreign countries celebrated by foreign missions in India and ensuring protocol guidelines are maintained in the venue.

Protocol Housing Section

Protocol Housing section is responsible for the maintenance of upkeep of the Hyderabad House in cooperation with the Horticulture, Civil and Electrical wings of CPWD. This includes repair and maintenance works of Electrical/Civil/Horticulture.

In addition, this section also handles processing of payment to ITDC on account of their administrative, management and operational expenditure; matters relating to purchase/sale/allotment of land, built up property, lease etc. in respect of all diplomatic missions and international organisations in Delhi which involves communication with State Governments for land allotment, signing of perpetual lease deed etc.; disputes/court cases between landlords and diplomatic missions in Delhi and other states; Civic issues of the Missions were taken up on priority with local agencies like NDMC, DDA, MCD, Electricity Board etc and most of the issues are resolved; running and operation of the VIP Receptor at Air Force Station, Palam with the help of Military Engineering Services (MES) and CPWD and assisting the diplomatic Missions regarding services like NDMC, MCD, DDA, MTNL etc.

Further, for the last few years, this section has also been coordinating with various stakeholders on the upcoming second Diplomatic Enclave Project in Dwarka, New Delhi. A total of 85-acre land is available for allotment to Foreign Missions which require land in New Delhi. They need to send their realistic requirements and possible land use.

List of Resident Missions/Trade offices/Consulate Generals/Deputy High Commissions/ Honorary Consuls approved from 01 April 2020 to 31 January 2021

Resident Missions: Nauru, Saint Vincent, and Grenadines
Consulate Generals/Deputy High Commissions:

| 1 | Chile | Mumbai |
| 2 | Italy | Mumbai |
| 3 | Australia | Kolkata |
| 4 | UAE | Mumbai |
| 5 | Australia | Mumbai |
| 6 | Israel | Mumbai |
| 7 | Bangladesh | Agartala |
| 8 | Afghanistan | Hyderabad |
| 9 | France | Puducherry |

TRADE OFFICERS: NIL
CULTURAL CENTRE: NIL

Honorary Consulates General/ Honorary Consulates:

| 1 | Mexico | GOA |
| 2 | Kazakhstan | Kolkata |
| 3 | Luxembourg | Chennai |
| 4 | Austria | Hyderabad |
| 5 | Poland | Bengaluru |
| 6 | Serbia | Bengaluru |
| 7 | Mozambique | Chennai |
| 8 | Saint Vincent and Grenadines | New Delhi |
| 9 | Maldives | Kolkata |
| 10 | Tanzania | Chennai |
| 11 | Maldives | Mumbai |
| 12 | Israel | Guwahati |
| 13 | Mongolia | Mumbai |
| 14 | Lesotho | Hyderabad |
| 15 | Morocco | Mumbai |
| 16 | Morocco | Kolkata |

From 01 April 2019 to 11 January 2021, 53 new posts have been created in Foreign Diplomatic Missions in India. The details of 53 new posts are given in the table below:

| 1 | APRIL | 10 |
| 2 | MAY | 2 |
| 3 | JUNE | 2 |
| 4 | JULY | 4 |
| 5 | AUGUST | 5 |
| 6 | SEPTEMBER | 2 |
| 7 | OCTOBER | 7 |
| 8 | NOVEMBER | 13 |
| 9 | DECEMBER | 7 |
| 10 | JANUARY (UPTO 11.01.2021) | 1 |
TOTAL | 53 |
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EXTERNAL PUBLICITY & PUBLIC DIPLOMACY DIVISION

External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division continued with its efforts to effectively articulate India’s position on key foreign policy issues in accordance with its mandate. Simultaneously, pro-active efforts to project the ‘India Story’ and other notable achievements of the country to an international audience continued apace. While the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic presented their own set of challenges, with the creative use of virtual platforms, the Division was able to maintain the momentum of its activities during the year.

Engagement with the Media

Press Coverage

Due to Covid-19 induced lockdown and thereafter restrictions on movement of people between countries, not many visits took place during the period. However, Covid-19 resulted in a lot of interactions through virtual platforms, including at the Summit level which were covered by Division and due publicity given to the events.

Some prominent virtual events covered by XPD Division during the period include Prime Minister’s virtual Summit with Prime Minister of Australia in June 2020, India-EU Summit held virtually in July 2020, virtual Summit with Denmark PM, India-Sri Lanka Summit at Prime Ministers’ level and Special Keynote Address by Prime Minister at the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum in September 2020. In November 2020, Prime Minister’s engagement included virtual Summit with Italy’s Prime Minister, 20th Summit of SCO Council of Heads of State, launch of Rupee Card Phase II virtually along with PM of Bhutan, 17th ASEAN-India Summit, 12th BRICS Summit, India-Luxembourg virtual Summit and 15th G20 Leaders Summit. In December 2020, Prime Minister held a virtual Summit with the President of Uzbekistan, Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Prime Minister of Vietnam.

EAM’s notable engagements included the BRICS Foreign Ministers’ virtual meeting in April 2020, SCO Foreign Ministers virtual meeting in May 2020, virtual meeting with the US Special Representative on Afghanistan Reconciliation. India-France and India-Germany Foreign Office Consultations were held at EAM level in June 2020 virtually, which were duly covered. Launch of India’s candidature for the UNSC elected seat, India-Spain and...
India-US Foreign Office Consultations were attended virtually by EAM in July 2020. 17th India Vietnam Joint Commission Meeting, India-UAE Joint Commission Meeting, IBSA Sherpa meeting were held virtually in August 2020. EAM’s engagement in September included CICA Virtual meeting, IBSA ministerial meeting, ASEAN-India ministerial meeting, AIP, Foreign Ministers meeting, EAS Foreign Ministers meeting, BRICS Foreign Ministers Video Conference, G20 Foreign Ministers virtual meeting, India-Argentina and India-Palestine Foreign Office Consultations. India-Mexico Joint Commission Meeting, India-Central Asia Dialogue, 7th India EU Foreign Policy & Security Consultations, India-Chile Joint Commission Meeting, India-Norway Joint Commission Meeting, 13th India-Japan Foreign Ministers Strategic Dialogue, 2nd India Australia Japan USA Ministerial Meeting and India Myanmar Foreign Office Consultations were all held virtually in October 2020. In November 2020, EAM participated in India-GCC political dialogue. 4th India-Philippines Joint Commission, virtual meeting with his Brazilian counterpart, and representing India in 15th East Asia Summit. EAM had virtual meetings with Foreign Ministers of Oman and Spain and also co-chaired India Mongolia Joint Committee on Cooperation, in December 2020. All these events were duly publicized and media coverage was ensured.

EAM visited Moscow for the SCD Ministerial meeting and Japan in September 2020. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman, High Commission for National Reconciliation of Afghanistan visited India in October 2020 and India-US 2+2 Dialogue was also held in October 2020. EAM visited Bahrain, UAE and Seychelles in November 2020 and in December 2020 hosted the UK’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Commonwealth and Development Affairs apart from visiting Qatar. All these events were also publicized by the Division.

Professional Training Courses

XPD Division organised a training module on social media for all Heads of Mission and Posts in October 2020. This module was conducted virtually in four sessions.

Digital outreach

MEA Website

MEA’s website www.mea.gov.in communicates India’s stand on her foreign policy and foreign relations including bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral relations. The website is bilingual, user friendly, scalable, flexible, consistent and compliant to standard specifications. MEA website serves as a single stop source for information on all Missions/Posts and links to their websites, Public Diplomacy outreach (multimedia content), information on all Missions/Posts and links to their websites, MEA website www.mea.gov.in communicates India’s stand on her foreign policy and foreign relations including bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral relations. The website is bilingual, user friendly, scalable, flexible, consistent and compliant to standard specifications. MEA website serves as a single stop source for information on all Missions/Posts and links to their websites, Public Diplomacy outreach (multimedia content), information on all important events like Pravasi Bhartiya Divas, Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, International Day of Yoga etc., all outgoing and incoming visits at the level of President, Vice President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, India Treaties Database etc. MEA website is also accessible to visually and hearing impaired. Since its formal launch in September 2012 the web portal has registered more than 55 million hits with more than 4.8 million hits since January 2020. Mobile app of the Ministry (MeaIndia) is also available in Android and iOS platforms.

Social Media Platforms

MEA has been a pioneer in Go to embrace a robust social media presence and digital identity with a consistently growing number of followers across platforms.

a. MEA has a total of 3.6 million followers on Twitter with @MEAIndia having 2.1 million followers and @IndiaDiplomacy having 1.5 million followers, adding approximately 200,000 followers since 2019-20. Mission and Posts have also continued to increase engagement with the diaspora and the local population in the host country through actively using social media platforms. Today around 189 Indian Missions/Posts have a presence on Twitter and 185 Missions/Posts have a presence on Facebook and around 73 Missions/Posts have a presence on Instagram with more being encouraged to join the platform. This all-round digital outreach by the Ministry has enabled faster, direct and accurate dissemination of information on the Ministry and Mission/Posts’ activities to an audience not just in India but all across the world.

b. Twitter is a critical medium for immediate dissemination of significant information for the Ministry. @MEAIndia is now the third most followed handle among all MOFAs across the world. The platform is used to tweet updates on India’s foreign relations. During bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral engagements Twitter is updated on a real-time basis. Both twitter handles have used multimedia content which has increased their reach and impact.

c. MEA’s YouTube channels – The Division manages two YouTube channels for the Ministry. MEA India channel has a total of 1.0,000,000 subscribers, Indian Diplomacy channel has 1,211,000 subscribers as of November 2020, with a combined view count of over 27 million views across both channels, an increase of more than 27% over last year.

d. MEA has made a phenomenal increase in its followership on Instagram which is a visual-rich platform. With a growth of
31% over last year, MEA now has a followership of approxi-
mately 523,000 followers. Its popularity is increasing among
the young, with content especially curated for that segment of
the population.
e. MEA Flickr account (MEAphotography) continues to serve
as a repository of photos for all of MEA’s major events, in India
and abroad, with a photo bank of 42,417 HD photos as of No-
vember 2020.
f. Ministry’s SoundCloud account (MEAIndia) is a useful audio
clip database for accessing audio clips of all media briefings.
Video Clips of all media briefings are also uploaded on YouTube.
g. MEA has also registered a significant growth in the number
of followers on LinkedIn with a total of 25,280 followers over
last year, an increase of 620%.
h. The Ministry has also been proactive in marking important
occasions across social media platforms such as the 151st birth
anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, International Day of Yoga, 
550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji etc. The Ministry
has also publicized GoI’s efforts in combating the Covid-19
pandemic as well as India’s assistance to friendly countries in
their battle against the pandemic.
i. In the wake of the pandemic, the Ministry and its Missions/
Posts have particularly leveraged the power of digital when
physical gatherings have had to be avoided. It has been en-
sured that Indian community outreach, outreach with our in-
terlocutors and promotion of India’s soft power continues un-
interrupted even in challenging conditions.

The popularity and success of MEA’s efforts in expanding dig-
ital outreach and branding itself as a ‘digitally forward’ Minis-
try is demonstrated by the continuous growth of its followers
across social media platforms.

Visual Outreach – Films and Documentaries

XPD Division commissions documentary films and videos pro-
jecting a positive image of India abroad. These documentaries
are uploaded on MEA’s YouTube channel “Indian Diplomacy”
for wider social outreach. In 2020-21, around 10 documentary
films/publicity videos were commissioned by the Division to
mark events like the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak
Devji, Gandhi @150 celebrations, India’s development coop-
eration, India’s role in UN peacekeeping missions etc. In addi-
tion to that, the Division also commissioned a number of short
videos for use on social media platforms on themes like India’s
response to Covid-19 pandemic, on socio-economic develop-
ment in the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh
(J&K: Marching Ahead) etc. Division has procured eight titles
of Indian classical (instrumental & vocal) music cards for use by
our Missions/Posts for presentation/publicity purposes.

Public Outreach

Due to the disruptions caused by Covid-19 pandemic, public
outreach through hardcopy publications had to be disconti-
nued temporarily. The Division commissioned eBooks to show-
case significant events and activities during 2020 such as ‘A
New Dawn’ on the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir;
India: A Constructive and Dependable Actor Globally; Life in
Era of Covid, India @75. In addition to these, the Division is
bringing out an updated edition of ‘What Gandhi Means to Me:
An Anthology’ which was released in 2019 to commemorate the
150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Books and Periodicals

Book Committee

The Book Committee which was established in 2003 as a pub-
lic diplomacy tool to select books for the Missions’ library as
well as for presentation purposes held its 42nd meeting in No-
vember 2020. The 42nd Book Committee selected titles from
categories such as Indian Classics, Foreign Policy & Affairs,

The bi-monthly flagship magazine of the Ministry is now avail-
able in a digital format in 16 languages. The web version of
the magazine allows customisation of the content and option
to download and electronically disseminate it through social me-
dia by the Missions and Posts. The magazine covers selective
themes such as partnership, life & style, innovation & institu-
tions, economy and sports, tour & travel etc. It can be read
online at www.indiaperspectives.gov.in and www.mea.gov.in.

India Perspective

The bimonthly flagship magazine of the Ministry is now avail-
able in a digital format in 16 languages. The web version of
the magazine allows customisation of the content and option
to download and electronically disseminate it through social me-
dia by the Missions and Posts. The magazine covers selective
themes such as partnership, life & style, innovation & institu-
tions, economy and sports, tour & travel etc. It can be read
online at www.indiaperspectives.gov.in and www.mea.gov.in.

Administration, Establishment, and Right to Information

The main responsibility of the Administration division in the
Ministry is to provide manpower resources both at
Headquarters and in 197 Indian Missions/Posts, and 3
Representative Offices. In this regard, the division oversees cadre
management exercises which involve recruitment, training, postings/
transfers, deputations and career progression among others.

In addition, the Division also deals with formulation, amendments,
and reforms of all the relevant rules and regulations relating to Indian
personnel posted abroad and local employees serving in Indian Mis-
sions and Posts. The division is also responsible for vacancies in headquarters and an-
nounced them through intranet for Officers to exercise their choice,
thus bringing in more openness to the deployments.

The division actively utilised technological tools such as the e-Sa-
miksha portal, an online interface between Headquarters and the
Missions/Posts as an effective platform for idea-exchange, digitised
procedures, information gathering and effective monitoring of func-
tional areas of Missions/Posts. Efforts are also underway in digitising
administrative procedures including leave, pension processes etc.

In pursuance of the Cabinet approval in March 2018 for the open-
ing of 18 new Missions in Africa during 2018-21, the opening of six
Missions in the first phase – Rwanda, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea,
Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso and Guinea and three Missions in
the second phase - Eswatini, Eritrea and Cameroon - was completed.
Between June, 2019 and September, 2020, six more Missions were
opened in three phases – Sierra Leone, Sao Tome & Principe, Libe-
ria, Republic of Togo, Republic of Chad and Mauritania. Preparatory
administrative and establishment related measures were initiated to-
wards setting up of new Missions in Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and
Somalia. Cabinet has recently accorded approval to open three new
Missions in Estonia, Paraguay and Dominican Republic.

The current sanctioned strength of the Ministry is 4297 (Annexure
VII) with around 53% of these posts being in Missions and Posts
abroad. The total strength is distributed across different cadres of
the Ministry such as the IFS, IFS General Cadre Branch B, Stenographers
In continuation of its activities under Swachh Bharat Mission, ED organised ‘Swachhta Pakhwada’ as well as Shramdan in all its various offices in India and in Missions/Posts abroad. Besides, various Missions/Posts abroad were also provided with essential medicines and medical equipment to be used by Indian nationals keeping in view the shortage of such materials locally. SPM Section in ED undertook the supply of various essential items like rubber stamp, Godrej safe, padlocks, Ipad, Indian national flags, etc. through GeM Portal to various Missions/Posts abroad. In accordance with the provision provided under GFR, tender for supply of crockery, cutlery, and kitchen utensils for residences of HQMs/HQPs in Missions/Posts abroad was undertaken during the year. SPM Section is in the process of e-Auctioning of the gift items received by various dignitaries from foreign sources. In this regard, an e-Portal is being developed by NIC for the e-Auctioning of gift items.

Establishment Division also operates three departmental pantries in JNB, South Block and Patiala House and two outsourced canteens at JNB and South Block and two pantries at Shastri Bhawan and Akbar Bhawan.

During the reporting period more than thirty proposals for replacement/purchase of official vehicles were received from the Missions/Posts abroad out of which around 12 proposals were sanctioned by the Ministry.

Global Estate Management (GEM)
The Global Estate Management Division actively pursued acquisition, construction and renovation of properties for Indian diplomatic Missions/Posts abroad. An initiative to augment the available residential accommodation in New Delhi for officers of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) was taken, with a view to effectively address the existing shortfall in availability of such accommodation and to meet the enhanced future housing requirements of MEA.

Acquisition of properties was pursued in Tehran (Annex to Chancery), Paramaribo (land for Chancery & Residences) and Abidjan (land for Chancery, Ambassador’s Residence and other Residences). The Delhi Development Authority allotted 50 flats located at the Commonwealth Games Village Complex, New Delhi, to MEA, proposed to be used as residential accommodation for MEA officers. MEA took formal possession of the plot of land in New Delhi, measuring approx. 2.5 acres, allotted by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, for construction of an additional office of MEA.

Construction projects proceeded at a fast pace and the projects nearing completion include Khartoum (Chancery and Staff Residences), Port of Spain (Cultural Centre), Bangkok (Ambassador’s Residence & Residences), Islamabad (Residential Complex) and Kathmandu (Chancery and Residential Complex). Substantial progress was made in respect of construction projects at Kabul (Residences), Wellington (Chancery and Residences) and Phnom Penh (Chancery and Residences). Construction projects at Brunei Darussalam (Chancery, Ambassador’s Residence and Staff Residences) and Geneva (Chancery) moved forward from the design stage to the construction stage.

Notable achievements on the renovation front include completion of major renovations at Dar es Salaam (Ambassador’s Residence), Harare (Ambassador’s Residence), Yangon (India Centre) and Helsinki (Residences). Major renovations were completed at the Regional Passport Office building in Hyderabad which increased the effective available space and allowed other offices of MEA viz. Branch Secretariat, ICRR Regional Office and Protector of Emigrants to be accommodated within the same premises.

Right to Information (RTI)
RTI Cell conducts all matters related to the implementation of Right to Information Act 2005 in the ministry. From April to October 2020, a total of 1570 RTI applications and 183 First Appeals seeking information under the RTI Act 2005 have been received and have been disposed of satisfactorily. Applications, in general, covered subjects such as foreign relations, administrative issues, bilateral visits, Na-maste Trump event, Covid-19 pandemic, Vande Bharat Flights and expenditure incurred on the same.

The system of online acceptance & disposal of RTI applications has been implemented in 192 Missions/Posts abroad by aligning them with the RTI web portal.

During the pandemic, in keeping with instructions of Department of Personnel & Training (DOP&T) on Sue—suo moto disclosure, uploading of RTI applications/appellate/responses & monthly RTI figures on public domain has been initiated.

All Central Information Commission (CIC) hearings have been attended by the concerned Central Public Information Officers (CPIOs) and a representative of the RTI Cell. Quarterly return has been filed with CIC as required, on schedule.

In collaboration with ‘Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service’, implementation of online suo moto disclosure (transparency audit) by all the CPIOs in the Ministry in a time bound manner, as per the instructions of CIC, has been commenced.
The total budget allocated to the Ministry for the Financial Year (FY) 2020-21 is Rs. 17,346.71 crores in the Budget Estimates (BE) stage. The budget’s sectoral distribution for major allocations is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Allocation (In Rs. Crores)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Economic Cooperation (TEC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Economic Cooperation (TEC) with foreign countries</td>
<td>6617.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>832.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total TEC</td>
<td>7449.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Missions and Posts abroad</td>
<td>2994.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Diplomatic Expenditure</td>
<td>2800.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport and Emigration</td>
<td>1348.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Cooperation</td>
<td>1084.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Outlay on Public Works and Housing</td>
<td>500.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEA Secretariat</td>
<td>520.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance to Autonomous Bodies and Other Institutions</td>
<td>323.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>325.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total BE for FY 2020-21</td>
<td>17,346.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest allocation in the Ministry’s budget is for Technical and Economic Cooperation (TEC) with foreign countries through assistance as grants and loans. In FY 2020-21, of the total budget of Rs. 17,346.71 crores, the TEC outlay is 42.95% or Rs. 7449.65 crores, of which Rs. 6617.37 crores (38.15%) is for grant programmes and Rs. 832.28 crores (4.80%) is for loans.

### Technical and Economic Cooperation (TEC) Heads

| Aid to Bangladesh                           | 200.00     | 2.68%          |
| Bhutan                                      |            |                |
| Grant                                       | 2052.37    | 38.72%         |
| Loan                                        | 832.28     | 4.80%          |
| Total Bhutan                                | 2884.65    |                |
| Aid to Nepal                                | 800.00     | 10.74%         |
| Aid to Mauritius                            | 1025.00    | 13.76%         |
| Aid to Afghanistan                          | 400.00     | 5.37%          |
| Aid to Seychelles                           | 140.00     | 1.88%          |
| Aid to Myanmar                              | 300.00     | 4.02%          |
| ITEC Programme                              | 220.00     | 2.95%          |
| Aid to African Countries                    | 350.00     | 4.70%          |
| Aid to Sri Lanka                            | 200.00     | 2.68%          |
| Chabahar Port, Iran                         | 100.00     | 1.34%          |
| Aid to Maldives                             | 300.00     | 4.03%          |
| Aid to Other Developing Countries           | 120.00     | 1.61%          |
| Investment Publicity & Promotion Programme  | 250.00     | 3.36%          |
| Indo-Pacific Cooperation                    | 45.00      | 0.60%          |
| Aid to Eurasian Countries                   | 45.00      | 0.60%          |
| Multilateral Economic Relations Programme    | 20.00      | 0.27%          |
| Aid to Latin American Countries             | 20.00      | 0.27%          |
| Aid for Disaster Relief                     | 20.00      | 0.27%          |
| SAARC Programmes                            | 8.00       | 0.11%          |
| Aid to Mongolia                             | 2.00       | 0.03%          |
| Total                                       |            | 7449.65        |
The Ministry has been optimally utilising the funds allocated to it in the Revised Estimates (RE) stage of a financial year, as given below for the past ten FYs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY</th>
<th>BE Allocation</th>
<th>RE Allocation</th>
<th>Actual Expenditure</th>
<th>Utilization as % of BE</th>
<th>Utilization as % of RE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Rupees Crores; Rounded Off</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>6375</td>
<td>7120</td>
<td>7154</td>
<td>112 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>7106</td>
<td>7836</td>
<td>7873</td>
<td>111 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>9662</td>
<td>10062</td>
<td>10121</td>
<td>105 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>11719</td>
<td>11794</td>
<td>11807</td>
<td>101 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>14730</td>
<td>12620</td>
<td>12149</td>
<td>82 %</td>
<td>96 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>14967</td>
<td>14967</td>
<td>14541</td>
<td>97 %</td>
<td>97 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>14663</td>
<td>13426</td>
<td>12772</td>
<td>93 %</td>
<td>95 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>14798</td>
<td>13690</td>
<td>13750</td>
<td>93 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>15011</td>
<td>15582</td>
<td>15526</td>
<td>103%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>17885</td>
<td>17372</td>
<td>17272</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ministry has revenue receipts of Rs. 758.14 crores till 31 October 2020 in FY 2020-21, from passport services (Rs. 583.56 cr), visa fees (Rs. 24.85 cr) and other receipts (Rs. 149.73 cr). The revenue receipt for the last 5 financial years from FY 2016-2017 to FY 2020-2021 is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Heads</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>2285.85</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>2018.04</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>717.07</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5020.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>2479.08</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>2152.15</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>648.38</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5299.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>2679.75</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>2688.9</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>680.06</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6048.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>2522.71</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>1792.11</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>856.16</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5170.98</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>583.56</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visa</td>
<td>24.85</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>149.73</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>758.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the total budget for FY 2020-21 of Rs. 17,346.71 crores, the bifurcation of allocations between establishment heads and non-establishment heads is 28% (Rs. 48190 crores) and 72% (Rs. 12457 crores) respectively. The Ministry has consistently maintained its expenditure on Establishment heads within 30% of its total budget.
The details and status of these C&AG Paras are as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C&amp;AG Report No.</th>
<th>Para No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 of 2017</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Receipts and Expenditure outside Government account in EoI Tokyo</td>
<td>PAC process for this para started even before the C&amp;AG process could be complete. In its hearing on 13 Oct 2017, the Hon'ble Members of the PAC instructed the Ministry to carry out their recommendations on various aspects of this Para. The same was carried out and thereafter, to fulfill the requirements of the C&amp;AG process, the First ATN was submitted to C&amp;AG on 03 Dec, 2019 which was vetted by Audit on 29 Jan 2020. Revised Draft ATN submitted on 24 July 2020 was vetted by Audit on 26 August 2020. Final ATN is under preparation by the Ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 of 2020</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Delay in Establishment of SAARC Museum of Textiles and Handicrafts</td>
<td>Draft ATN is under preparation by the Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Incorrect adoption of Exchange Rate by HCI Wellington resulting in less collection of revenue</td>
<td>Draft ATN submitted. Vetted comments awaited from Audit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Excess expenditure on Speed Post services of Rs.4.11 crore by RPOs</td>
<td>Draft ATN is under preparation by the Ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>Incorrect adoption of overhead rates and cess/taxes resulting in extra cost by Nalanda University</td>
<td>Draft ATN is under preparation by the Ministry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The details and status of Outstanding PAC paras are as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lok Sabha No.</th>
<th>Report No</th>
<th>Para No.</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Committee’s observations on Action Taken by the Ministry on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their 112th Report (16th Lok Sabha) on “Incorrect Adoption of Exchange Rate in Ottawa and its Consulates” as contained in C&amp;AG Report No.11 of 2016 Chapter VII Para 7.1. (The Committee reiterated that (i) action be taken against those responsible for not adhering to stipulated rules and guidelines, (ii) basic/refresher training may be imparted to all Mission staff, and (iii) a review may be carried out of all Missions to check that such errors are not occurring. Ministry may furnish specific data on real-time monitoring of such issues since the integration of passport issuance project.)</td>
<td>Draft Action Taken Report (ATR) is under preparation by PSP Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Committee’s observations on Action Taken by the Ministry on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their 112th Report (16th Lok Sabha) on “Undue benefit to the Service Provider by the HCI London” as contained in C&amp;AG Report No.11 of 2016 Chapter VII Para 7.2.</td>
<td>Draft Action Taken Report (ATR) is under preparation by CPV Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Committee’s observations on Action Taken by the Ministry on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their 112th Report (16th Lok Sabha) on “Incorrect Adoption of Exchange Rate in Ottawa and its Consulates” as contained in C&amp;AG Report No.11 of 2016 Chapter VII Para 7.1. (The Committee would like to be apprised of the details of the Global Passport Seva Project as well as the resultant impact on monitoring and real time reporting. The Committee would also like to know if the implementation of this project specifically addresses the concerns raised by them in earlier recommendation.)</td>
<td>Draft Action Taken Report (ATR) is under preparation by PSP Division</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parliament Section

The endeavour of the Ministry has been to ensure effective and timely response to the issues raised by Parliament including assistance on issues related to Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parliamentary Exchange Programme, Parliamentary Friendship Groups etc. Parliament Section is the interface and the focal point for all Parliament related work of the Ministry.

On 16 January 2021, EAM Chaired the first Consultative Committee Meeting of the year 2021 on ‘India’s Global Strategy’.

During January-December 2020, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs held 17 meetings on the following subjects:

i. Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill 2019
ii. Registration of Marriage of NRI Bill 2019
iii. Demand for Grants for the year 2020-21
v. India’s Soft power and Cultural Diplomacy: Prospects and Limitations
vi. India and International Law, including its Extradition Treaties with foreign countries, asylum issues, international cybersecurity and issues of financial crimes
vii. India and Bilateral Investment Treaties
viii. India’s Neighbourhood First Policy.

Coordination Section

The Coordination Section effectively carries out interaction between the Ministry and other Government of India Ministries, State Governments / Union Territories, autonomous bodies and private institutions, including NGOs.

This section coordinates Ministry’s responses to the Cabinet Secretariat’s Portal and Ministry’s participation in Prime Minister’s PRAGATI video-conference on grievance redressal and review of programmes and projects.

The Division also coordinates work relating to various awards including Padma Awards, Gandhi Peace Prize, Tagore Award, Presidential Award of Certificate of Honour to Scholars of Indian Classical Languages and Presidential Award for Classical Tamil.

Further, the Division streamlined the issuance of political clearance related to sports events.

During the Budget Session of Parliament, 128 Questions were admitted and replied. During Zero Hour, under Rule 377 and Special mention, 40 matters of public importance were replied to.

Whereas during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, 57 Questions were admitted and replied to and responses on 10 issues of urgent public importance were raised during Zero Hour and under Rule 377.

On 18 January 2020, EAM chaired the Consultative Committee Meeting on ‘India’s Neighborhood First Policy’ highlighting India’s consultative, non-reciprocal and outcome-oriented approach of engagement.

On 16 January 2021, EAM chaired the Consultative Committee Meeting on ‘India’s Neighborhood First Policy’ highlighting India’s consultative, non-reciprocal and outcome-oriented approach of engagement.

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Whereas during the Monsoon Session of Parliament, 57 Questions were admitted and replied to and responses on 10 issues of urgent public importance were raised during Zero Hour and under Rule 377.
Education Section

The Education Section continued its agenda of facilitating admission of foreign students in Indian educational institutions, and to create an environment for projecting India as a centre of excellence for the education of foreigners in India.

The Education Section deals with the selection, nomination and admission of foreign students from 57 countries for MBBS, BDS, MD/MS, B.Arch., BE, B. Pharmacy and Diploma courses in various educational institutions in India under the Self-Financing Scheme. Persecuted religious minority migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan based in India are also offered seats under the scheme. The Education Section also processes applications in respect of foreign students seeking direct admission to graduate and postgraduate courses in Engineering, Medicine, Management and other professional courses including elective training/internship/research in various fields and thus coordinates with educational institutions and various organs of the government. Till November 2020, 16 seats were allotted for Engineering and Pharmacy courses and the process for allocation of 42 seats for MBBS and BDS are under progress. 05 applicants were granted clearance for elective training, observerships & short-term training. This year due to Covid-19, international flights were not operational and as a result, there were few foreign students for elective training.

1831 applications of foreign students appearing in various postgraduate entrance examinations were processed and 67 foreign students were given admission at Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra.

Monitoring Cell

The Monitoring Cell has been mandated to coordinate the review of MOUs/Agreements signed with foreign countries by Ministries/Departments of Government of India from the angle of their continued relevance and status.

A total of 3178 MOUs/Agreements exist out of which 3038 MOUs/Agreements have been reviewed so far. It has been decided by Ministries/Departments to continue 2294 MOUs/Agreements and discontinue 744 MOUs/Agreements. Out of 744 for discontinuation, 694 MOUs/Agreements have been examined by the Ministry while 50 are under process of examination. Out of 694 MOUs examined by the Ministry, it has been decided for the discontinuation of 602 MOUs while 92 have been recommended for continuation.

Conference Division

Conference Division (CD) provides all logistical arrangements to various Divisions of the Ministry of External Affairs in organizing meetings/events/seminar/conferences including international & multilateral involvement of foreign Ministers/delegates in India and abroad. In view of specific nature of organizing events involving protocol, security of delegates and highest degree of precision, CD has empanelled 08 Event Management Companies (EMCs). Selection of EMC for the event is done as per requirements of the concerned division of the Ministry.

During the period from 01 April 2020 to 31 October 2020, most of the scheduled events were postponed/cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. CD, however, did provide all logistical support to the 2nd CCCS Seminar held at Delhi on 20-21 October 2020.

In addition, CD also acts as nodal agency for Sushma Swaraj Bhawan (SSB) which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on 02 October 2016. Since the inauguration of SSB, the President has attended 3 events, Vice President has attended 09 events and Prime Minister has attended 15 events as Guest of Honour. Further Prime Minister has also chaired 06 meetings of Council of Ministers at SSB. SSB continues to be a preferred venue for official events, seminars, conferences, conventions, workshops etc. organised by various Ministries/Departments and other government organisations. The year wise number of events held at SSB is given below-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number of Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oct 2016 to March 2017</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>April 2017 to March 2018</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>April 2018 to March 2019</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>April 2019 to March 2020</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The organisation wise total number of events held at SSB is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other Ministries/Department</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other Government Organization</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other organization</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>488</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SSB is now undergoing upgradation/creation of facilities to serve as G20 Summit Secretariat with a working space for nearly 300 officers and is expected to be operational in due course.

Archives & Record Management (ARM) Division of the Ministry deals with all the matters related to archives and record management. Upgradation of Record Management Software (REM), replacement of existing software and replacement of existing server with new server as well as old desktops which are being used for accessing data through the Record Management Software is being undertaken regularly. Upgradation of REM, replacement of existing software, and the replacement of existing computers with new computers is a process currently underway. During the period, computer room, browsing room, compactor rooms, six compactors with 282 racks with files were cleaned by record sorters and all the files were packed in the boxes for shifting.

ARM Division of the Ministry is presently operating from two locations, namely from a few rooms in the third floor of the ISIL.
At campus, every year SSIFS execute several projects with regard to maintenance, renovation, upgradation and modernization of infrastructure and facilities at the Institute. Moreover, it conducts various kind of training programmes for IFS officers which are described below in details:

Cadre Training Programmes for Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Officers

Induction Training Programme

Thirty IFS OTs of the 2019 batch and two Bhutanese diplomats joined SSIFS for the six-month Induction Training Programme from 09 December 2019, which got extended beyond the stipulated six months period to 24 July 2020 on account of Covid-19 restrictions. The training programme of the OTs included modules on theories of international relations, foreign policy, bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and big powers, and multilateral organisations. It also included modules on finance, accounts, administration, establishment, consular work, passport and visa, international law, protocol, economic & commercial diplomacy, defence diplomacy, cyber security, domestic policy, health module, tourism, hospitality and media management. Soft power and communication skills were stressed upon.

For effective dissemination of knowledge to trainees, experienced civil servants, retired Ambassadors, senior faculty and research fellows from various Ministries, institutions and think tanks were invited as resource persons. Additionally, SSIFS also invited Ambassadors/High Commissioners of foreign countries (including from the P5 countries) to interact with the IFS OTs. The Canadian Foreign Service Institute (CFSI) also provided training on bilateral and multilateral negotiations to the OTs under the aegis of the MoFA.

Various innovative pedagogical approaches were adopted to train the IFS OTs and state-of-the-art Information Technology (IT) tools were used in conducting the training programme (both offline and online). The pedagogical tools included interactive lectures, simulations, role plays, workshops, hands-on training, case studies, success stories, structured mentoring programmes, interactions between foreign and Indian diplomats, field visits and exposure through various attachments.

The OTs had a week-long Mission Orientation Attachment from 03 to 07 February 2020 with Indian Missions under the Indo-Pacific framework viz. Indonesia, UAE & Vietnam, to familiarize themselves with the work of Indian Missions abroad. They also had a one-week attachment with the Indian Army (09-13 March 2020) to acquaint them better with the rich cultural diversity, heritage and tourism potential of the country had to be curtailed due to Covid-19 pandemic. The OTs attended the Indian Ocean Dialogue (13 December 2019), Delhi Dialogue (14 December 2019) and Raisina Dialogue (15-16 January 2020) as delegates.

To mark the conclusion of training of the 2019 batch of IFS OTs with SSIFS, a valedictory function was organised on 24 July 2020 which was presided over by EAM as Chief Guest. EAM’s Gold Medal for the Best OT of the 2019 Batch, MoS Silver Medal for esprit de corps, Ambassador Bimal Sanyal Memorial Medal for the Best Dissertation, trophy for best committee (Cinema Committee) and trophies for Bhutanese diplomats were awarded on the occasion.

Starting with the IFS 2019 batch, SSIFS introduced a new system of objective and transparent assessment of OTs in line with the prescribed mandate. The year also witnessed the introduction of online courses in ‘Cyber Security’ from 11 February to 25 May 2020 conducted by the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar and ‘Rapid Reading’ from 29 April to 01 May 2020 conducted virtually by Iris Reading, Chicago for the OTs.

Mid-Career Training Programme-III

A supplementary Mid-Career Training Programme-III for a 1994 batch IFS Officer was conducted from 05-09 October 2020. The training programme consisted of a Foreign Policy module and a paper on foreign policy.

Mid-Career Training Programme-I

A Mid-Career Training Programme-I (MCTP-I) for the 2008 batch IFS officers is being conducted online from 23 November to 04 December 2020. The training programme consisted of a Foreign Policy module, a foreign policy paper and book review on India’s foreign policy.

Other Training Programmes

- Promotion related Training Programme for Interpreters’ Cadre: A promotion-related training programme for seven officers of the Interpreters’ Cadre of the Ministry was conducted by SSIFS through online mode from 06-17 April 2020. The training programme consisted of two elements - foreign policy module and interpretation module.
- Online Training Module for Heads of Missions/Posts on social media: A two-day training programme for Heads of Missions/posts on social media was conducted by SSIFS in coordination with the External Publicity (XP) Division of the Ministry from 12-16 October 2020. The training programme was held virtually and the Missions/Posts actively participated in the programme.
- A one-week training programme for Officers from States and Union Territories is proposed to be conducted in collaboration with the States Division of the Ministry from 04 to 08 January 2021. The training programme aims at enhancing the capacity of the Officers of the States/Union Territories and provide them with necessary orientation, knowledge and professional skills to engage with the world so as to attract FDI, technology tie-ups, joint ventures, trade and tourism etc. for their respective States/UTs.

Non-Representational Grade Training Programmes for Branch B of IFS

During the period under review, the following training courses were organised through webinar for training of Non-Representational Grade (NRG) officials:
- 76th IMAS (Integrated Mission Accounting System) Training Programme from 10-12 June 2020 attended by 88 participants.
- IVFRT (Immigration, Visa, Foreigners’ Registration & Tracking) Training Programme on 13 June 2020 attended by 51 participants.
- Promotion related Training Programme for Assistant Section Officers (ASOs) and Personal Assistants (PAs) from 31 August – 04 September 2020 attended by 90 participants.
- Half Yearly English Stenography Test for the Direct Recruit Personal Assistants and Stenographers on 09 September, 2020 attended by 19 participants.
- IVFRT Training Programme from 14-15 September, 2020 attended by 54 participants.
- Quarterly Typing Test for Direct Recruit Assistant Section Officers on 25 September 2020 attended by 04 participants.
- Promotion related Training Programme for Senior Secretarial Assistants (SSAs), Junior Secretarial Assistants (JSAs) and Stenographers from 28 September – 05 October 2020 attended by 62 participants.
- 77th IMAS Training Programme from 12-16 October 2020 attended by 83 participants. IVFRT Training Programme from 24-25 November, 2020 attended by 72 participants.
- 78th IMAS Training Programme from 14-18 December 2020 attended by 66 participants.
- Half Yearly English Stenography Test for the Direct Recruit Personal Assistants; Stenographers and Accounts Training Programme (in preparation for IMAS Training); 79th IMAS Training Programme were conducted in the first quarter of 2021.

Training programmes for Foreign Diplomats

SSIFS conducted following training programmes for Foreign Diplomats in 2020:
- 3rd special course for Syrian diplomats and 4th special course for Iraqi diplomats jointly held from 24 February - 07 March 2020 and attended by 14 Diplomats.
- 1st Special Course on Protocol for Surinamese Diplomats conducted online from 14-25 September 2020 which was attended by 19 Diplomats.

Memoranda of Understanding

During 2020, SSIFS signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with the following foreign counterpart institutions:
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Portuguese Republic on 14 February 2020.
- Venancio Da Silva Moura Institute of International Relations, Ministry of External Relations, Republic of Angola on 07 September 2020.

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Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) functions as the principal organ for soft and cultural diplomacy of the Government of India. It aims to foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries.

The council organises major webinars commemorating significant events, online celebration of ICCR’s Foundation Day by various Regional Centres of the Council, poetry writing and essay writing competitions. Under its mega project, it initiated a dedicated web portal for providing knowledge capsules on Indian traditional knowledge and culture.

Achievements (2020-21)

It offered 3454 scholarships offered to foreign nationals to pursue UG / PG / MPhil / PhD level course in Indian Universities / Institutes from 131 countries under 26 schemes Against 3454 scholarship slots, 2617 admission have been confirmed.

During the pandemic, ICCR facilitated online classes through Universities / Institutes to more than 900 newly admitted students to avoid loss of their academic year.

Besides this, students interested in going back to their home countries were facilitated and about 503 students were evacuated over a period of two months i.e. from March to May 2020.

To promote Indian Studies and Indian languages abroad, ICCR in consultation with Indian Missions abroad, established Chairs of Indian Studies (Political Science, Philosophy, History, Sociology, Economics and Buddhist Studies) & Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu, and Bengali (Dance & Music) in different foreign universities across the globe.

Conferences

Every year ICCR organises and supports several international & national Conferences on subjects like Indology, Buddhism, Sufism, Indian linkages, Indian studies etc. During Covid-19, ICCR took the initiative of conducting virtual conferences and seminars individually and in collaboration with other agencies.

On 26 May 2020 and 05 August 2020, the Centre for Roma Studies and Cultural Relations (CRSCR)-ARSP (established on 24 July 2019) organised three Virtual International Roma Conferences. In April 2020, an Essay Competition was conducted online on the 70th Foundation Day of ICCR for two categories i.e., for ICCR students in India and ICCR alumni overseas and for Indian diaspora (both NRIs and POs).

On 21 May 2020, ICCR organised the 3rd Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya International Oration by Dr. Antonio Morandi, Ayurvedic Expert from Milan, Italy on World Culture Day.

On 01 August 2020, a day-long International Webinar “Lokmanya Tilak-Swaraj to Atmanirbhar Bharat” was organised to mark the 100th Death Anniversary of Lokmanya Tilak which was inaugurated by Hon’ble Home Minister Shri Amit Shah.

On 15 August to 06 September 2020, it collaborated with Centre of Soft Power (CSP) for “Namaste 2020-Global Utsava of Indian Soft Power”. It coordinated with Missions abroad for commemorating grand finale activities of closing of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi ji. From 19-21 November, 2020 it held webinars on Indology.

Hindi

In June 2020, ICCR published the Hindi bi-monthly magazine “Gagananchal” No.5-6. On 14 September 2020, a Hindi workshop “Text to Speech – कंठस्थ का व्यावहारिक प्रशिक्षण was organised at Azad Bhavan.

India’s Soft Power and Cultural Diplomacy

To promote Yoga, Veda, and Sanskrit globally, the Council deployed Teacher of Indian Culture (TIC) to various Missions/Posts/ICCs and India based teachers in the disciplines of Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Hindustani/Carnatic Vocal, Tabla and Hindi language etc. to its ICCs. Additionally, the Council has also deployed Resources Persons as Teachers of Yoga, Indian Dance where ICCR does not have a Cultural Centre.

During Covid-19 in abroad, ICCR took the initiative of presenting online/ virtual performances by streaming recorded performances at festivals abroad such as in “India Global Week” - Lon-
don”, “The Great India Festival (TGIF)’ – Ottawa”, “Sarang-2020 – The 6th Annual Festival of India in Republic of Korea” and “sponsored sitar group for India en Concierto festival – Spain” International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2020 was celebrated across the globe mostly in a virtual mode. ICCR facilitated the celebration of the 6th International day of Yoga -2020 in 147 Countries through 114 Indian Missions and 39 posts.

APPENDICES

ANNEXURE-I : List of Full Powers processed during 2020-21
ANNEXURE-II : List of Treaties Ratified by India during 2020-21
ANNEXURE-III : List of Treaties, Agreements, MoUs etc. concluded during 2020-21
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ANNEXURE-V : Virtual Summits From April 2020 To Jan 2021
ANNEXURE-VI : Credential Presentation by Foreign Heads of Mission during 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
ANNEXURE-VII : Cadre strength at Headquarters and Missions abroad during 2020-21
ANNEXURE-VIII : Number of IFS officers with proficiency in various languages
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ANNEXURE-X : State/UT-wise List of Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs)
ANNEXURE-XI : State/UT-wise List of Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs)
### Annexure-I

#### List of Full Powers processed during 2020-21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date of signature</th>
<th>Administrative Ministry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND FINLAND ON COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF PRODUCTION, PROCUREMENT, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF DEFENCE RELATED EQUIPMENT AND INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION</td>
<td>FINLAND</td>
<td>15.01.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF DEFENCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>INVESTMENT COOPERATION AND FACILITATION TREATY BETWEEN THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL AND THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA</td>
<td>BRAZIL</td>
<td>17.01.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF FINANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND SAMOA FOR THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION WITH RESPECT TO TAXES</td>
<td>SAMOA</td>
<td>20.01.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF FINANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>PROTOCOL AMENDING THE CONVENTION BETWEEN INDIA AND BRAZIL FOR AVOIDANCE OF DOUBLE TAXATION AND THE PREVENTION OF FISCAL EVASION WITH RESPECT TO TAXES ON INCOME SIGNED AT NEW DELHI ON 26 APRIL 1988</td>
<td>BRAZIL</td>
<td>21.01.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF FINANCE</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT ON SOCIAL SECURITY BETWEEN INDIA AND BRAZIL</td>
<td>BRAZIL</td>
<td>22.01.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND CHILE FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DOUBLE TAXATION AND THE PREVENTION OF FISCAL EVASION AND AVOIDANCE WITH RESPECT TO TAXES ON INCOME AND ITS PROTOCOL</td>
<td>CHILE</td>
<td>10.02.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF FINANCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN JAPAN AND INDIA CONCERNING PROVISION OF SUPPLIES AND SERVICES BETWEEN SELF DEFENCE FORCES OF JAPAN AND INDIAN ARMED FORCES</td>
<td>JAPAN</td>
<td>02.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF DEFENCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND PHILIPPINES REGARDING COOPERATION AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN CUSTOMS MATTERS</td>
<td>PHILIPPINES</td>
<td>03.11.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF FINANCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK AND INDIA ON HOSTING OF NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK INDIAN REGIONAL OFFICE IN INDIA</td>
<td>NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK</td>
<td>03.12.2020</td>
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### Annexure - II

#### List of Treaties Ratified by India during 2020-21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Country/Organization</th>
<th>Date of signature</th>
<th>Date of Ratification</th>
<th>Administrative Ministry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND ALGERIA ON VISA EXEMPTION FOR HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL PASSPORTS</td>
<td>ALGERIA</td>
<td>31.08.2019</td>
<td>19.06.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND BRAZIL ON MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE IN CRIMINAL MATTERS</td>
<td>BRAZIL</td>
<td>25.01.2020</td>
<td>03.03.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN CHILE AND INDIA FOR THE ELIMINATION OF DOUBLE TAXATION AND PREVENTION OF FISCAL EVASION AND AVOIDANCE WITH RESPECT TO TAXES ON INCOME</td>
<td>CHILE</td>
<td>09.03.2020</td>
<td>18.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF FINANCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA ON EXEMPTION FROM VISA REQUIREMENT FOR HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL/SERVICE PASSPORTS</td>
<td>EQUATORIAL GUINEA</td>
<td>18.08.2017</td>
<td>12.03.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>MIGRATION AND MOBILITY PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH FRANCE</td>
<td>FRANCE</td>
<td>10.03.2018</td>
<td>14.02.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND GRENADA ON EXEMPTION FROM VISA REQUIREMENT FOR HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL PASSPORTS</td>
<td>GRENADA</td>
<td>06.02.2020</td>
<td>27.02.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND JAPAN CONCERNING RECIPROCAL PROVISION OF SUPPLIES AND SERVICES BETWEEN IAF AND SELF DEFENCE FORCES OF JAPAN</td>
<td>JAPAN</td>
<td>09.09.2020</td>
<td>11.11.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>EXTRADITION TREATY BETWEEN INDIA AND MALAWI</td>
<td>MALAWI</td>
<td>05.11.2018</td>
<td>27.07.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND MARSHALL ISLANDS ON EXEMPTION FROM VISA REQUIREMENT FOR HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL PASSPORTS</td>
<td>MARSHALL ISLANDS</td>
<td>18.02.2020</td>
<td>27.02.2020</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND SAMOA FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION WITH RESPECT TO TAXES</td>
<td>SAMOA</td>
<td>12.03.2020</td>
<td>22.05.2020</td>
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### Annexure III

**List of Treaties, Agreements, MoUs etc. concluded during 2020-21**

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<th>Title</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND SIERRA LEONE ON EXEMPTION FROM VISA REQUIREMENT FOR HOLDERS OF DIPLOMATIC AND OFFICIAL PASSPORTS</td>
<td>SIERRA LEONE</td>
<td>03.03.2020</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>TENTH ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION</td>
<td>UPU</td>
<td>07.09.2018</td>
<td>DEPARTMENT OF POSTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>AMENDMENT OF ANNEXES TO THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION ON PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS</td>
<td>UNO</td>
<td>02.12.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST &amp; CLIMATE CHANGE</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding between Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, Ministry of External Affairs, Republic of India and Venancio Da Silva Moura Institute of International Relations, Ministry of External Relations, Republic of Angola</td>
<td>ANGOLA</td>
<td>07.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Africa New Delhi 17 Jan 2020</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>89.</td>
<td>MoU on Traditional Systems of Medicine between India and Suriname</td>
<td>SURINAME</td>
<td>23.01.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF AYUSH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.</td>
<td>Protocol to amend the Agreement between the Swiss Federal Council</td>
<td>SWITZERLAND</td>
<td>11.03.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and the Government of India relating to Air Services Agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>91.</td>
<td>MoU for Establishment of India-Syria Next-Gen Centre for Excellence</td>
<td>SYRIA</td>
<td>01.10.2019</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in Information Technology in Damascus</td>
<td></td>
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<td>92.</td>
<td>MoU between India and U.A.E for Scientific and Technical Cooperation</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>23.11.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.</td>
<td>MoU between University of Texas, Austin, USA (UTA) and ISRO to</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>21.02.2020</td>
<td>ISRO</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>establish a general framework of scientific collaboration in area of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Space Situational Awareness (SSA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>94.</td>
<td>Arrangement Extending the Duration of the Memorandum of</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>26.10.2020</td>
<td>DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding between the Government of India and the United States</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of America Concerning Cooperation with the Global Centre for Nuclear</td>
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<td>Energy Partnership, India</td>
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<td>95.</td>
<td>Technical Arrangement on Maritime Defence Information Sharing and</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>26.10.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF DEFENCE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cooperation between India and USA</td>
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<td>96.</td>
<td>Agreement for Electronic Exchange of Customs Data of Postal</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>24.10.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shipments</td>
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<tr>
<td>97.</td>
<td>MoU on “Mental Health” between Dept Of Health And Family Welfare</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>21.02.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Min Of Health &amp; Family Welfare, GoI) &amp; Dept Of Health And Human</td>
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<td>Services, US Gov</td>
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<td>98.</td>
<td>MoU between the U.S. Department of Energy and the Indian Ministry</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>17.07.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of Petroleum and Natural Gas on cooperation on Strategic Petroleum</td>
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<td>99.</td>
<td>Statement Of Intent Ministry Of Power And US State Department</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>23.07.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF POWER</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cooperation India-US Clean Energy Fin Task Force</td>
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<td>100.</td>
<td>MoU Between The Ministry Of Statistics And Programme Implementation</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>08.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And The Population Council Institute</td>
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<td>101.</td>
<td>National Oceanic And Atmospheric Administration</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>23.10.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCES</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(NOAA) Of The Government Of The United States Of America And</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ministry Of Earth Sciences (MoES) Of The Government Of The Republic</td>
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<td>Of India</td>
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<td>102.</td>
<td>Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement between India and USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>26.10.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF DEFENCE</td>
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<td>103.</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding Between Department For Promotion of</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>02.12.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Industry And Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry</td>
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<td>Government Of The Republic of India and the United States Patents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and Trademark Office, Department of Commerce of the United States</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of America For Cooperation in the Field of Intellectual Property</td>
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<td>104.</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding Between Department For the Development</td>
<td>UZBEKISTAN</td>
<td>21.09.2020</td>
<td>DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Nuclear Energy under the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Uzbekistan and the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership</td>
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<td>105.</td>
<td>Memorandum between the State Customs Committee of the Republic Of</td>
<td>UZBEKISTAN</td>
<td>21.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF FINANCE</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Uzbekistan and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs of the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Republic of India on the Exchange of Pre-arrival information on Goods</td>
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<td></td>
<td>moved across the state Border.</td>
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<td>106.</td>
<td>MoU between National Maritime Foundation, New Delhi and Scientific</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>24.06.2020</td>
<td>NATIONAL MARITIME FOUNDATION</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Institute of Sea and Islands, Vietnam.</td>
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<td>107.</td>
<td>MOU between the Consulate General and People’s Committee of Kien</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>23.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giang Province for the project of Rainwater harvesting (RWH) for the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sustainable water supply utilizing the QIP fund extended by the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>108.</td>
<td>MOU between the Consulate General of India and People's Committee</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>23.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Kien Giang Province province for the project of Support water</td>
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<td></td>
<td>containers for border areas and islands (standing plastic tanks of</td>
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<td>1000 liters) utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>India to CLMV countries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>S. No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Date of signature</td>
<td>Administrative Ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td>109.</td>
<td>MOU between the Consulate General of India and People’s Committee of Ben Tre Province for the Project on construction of Thoi Dinh irrigation drainage tunnel at Thoi Dinh Hamlet, Cho Lach Town, and Dinh Binh Hamlet, Hoa Nghia Commune, Cho Lach District, Ben Tre Province utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>23.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110.</td>
<td>MOU between the Consulate General of India and People’s Committee of Tien Giang Province province for the Project of Constructing rain water reservoirs to provide clean water for people in Tan Phu Dong district, Tien Giang province utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>23.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111.</td>
<td>MOU between the Consulate General of India and People’s Committee of Tien Giang Province province for the Project of Installation of water pipeline system to provide clean water for inhabitants’ domestic use in Dong Thanh Commune, Go Cong Tay District, Tien Giang province utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>23.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112.</td>
<td>MOU between the Consulate General of India and People’s Committee of Hau Giang Province province for the Project of Support of supplying clean water to people in drought and saline intrusion areas in Hau Giang province utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>23.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113.</td>
<td>MOU between the Consulate General of India and People’s Committee of Hau Giang Province province for the Project of Construction of irrigation model with advanced irrigation, saving water, applying technology 4.0 to prevent drought and saline intrusion in Chau Thanh district, Hau Giang province utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>23.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114.</td>
<td>MOU between the Embassy of India and People’s Committee of Tuyen Quang province for the project of construction of classroom at Tien Toc Branch of Binh An Primary School, Binh An commune, Lam Binh District, Tuyen Quang Province utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>25.08.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115.</td>
<td>MOU between the Embassy of India and People’s Committee of Thanh Hoa Province for the project of Construction of Traditional House with Specialized Activities at Hoang Quy Secondary School, Hoang Hoa District, Thanh Hoa Province utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>25.08.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116.</td>
<td>MOU between the Embassy of India and People’s Committee of Thua Thien Hue Province for the project of Construction of Classrooms at Xuan Duong Kindergarten, Quang An Commune, Quang Dien District, Thua Thien Hue Province utilizing the QIP fund extended by the Government of India to CLMV countries.</td>
<td>VIETNAM</td>
<td>07.09.2020</td>
<td>MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*As per the information available in the L&T Division as on 01-12-2020

# Agreements/MoUs relating to the Ministry of Defence and those which are politically sensitive have been excluded.
Annexure-IV

Bilateral Visits in 2020-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>6-10 October 2020</td>
<td>Visit of H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council of National Reconciliation of Afghanistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>12-14 October 2020</td>
<td>Visit of H.E. Mr. Stephen E. Biegun, former United States Deputy Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>26-27 October 2020</td>
<td>Visit (2+2) of Michael R. Pompeo, former United States Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>12-13 December 2020</td>
<td>Visit of H.E. Mr. Stephen E. Biegun, former Deputy Secretary of State of USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>14-18 December 2020</td>
<td>Official Visit of Dominic Raab MP, First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Annexure-V

Virtual Summits From April 2020 To Jan 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>4 May 2020</td>
<td>Video Conference Summit of NAM for COVID19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>14 May 2020</td>
<td>Video Conference with Bill Gates, Co-founder of Microsoft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>4 June 2020</td>
<td>India-Australia Leaders' Virtual Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>13 July 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Conference with Mr. Sundar Pichai, CEO of Alphabet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>15 July 2020</td>
<td>India-EU Virtual Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>20 July 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Conference with Mr. Arvind Krishna, CEO of IBM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>30 July 2020</td>
<td>Inaugural through Video Conferencing of Mauritius Supreme Court building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>12 Sept 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Conference with Mr. Bernard Looney, CEO of British Petroleum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>26 Sept 2020</td>
<td>India-Sri Lanka Virtual Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>28 Sept 2020</td>
<td>India-Denmark Virtual Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>06 Oct 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Conference with Mr. Henrik Andersen, CEO of Vestas</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>19 Oct 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Conference with Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>05 Nov 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Global Investors Roundtable</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>06 Nov 2020</td>
<td>India-Italy Virtual Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>09 Nov 2020</td>
<td>Video Conference of PM with Australian Investors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>10 Nov 2020</td>
<td>SCO Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>11 Nov 2020</td>
<td>Video Conference of PM with CEO of Future Fund, Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>12 Nov 2020</td>
<td>Virtual conference of Prime Minister with Shri Lakshmi Mittal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>12 Nov 2020</td>
<td>Video Conference of PM with Governor of Japan Bank of International Cooperation</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>12 Nov 2020</td>
<td>17th ASEAN Summit</td>
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<td>21.</td>
<td>14 Nov 2020</td>
<td>15th East Asia Summit</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>17 Nov 2020</td>
<td>12th BRICS Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>19 Nov 2020</td>
<td>India-Luxembourg virtual Summit</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>20 Nov 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Ceremony for launch of RuPay card Phase – II in Bhutan</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>21-22 Nov 2020</td>
<td>G20 Nations Virtual Summit</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>24 Nov 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Conference of PM with President and CEO of Canada Pension Plan Investment Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>26 Nov 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Conference of PM with President and CEO of Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>30 Nov 2020</td>
<td>SCO Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>03 Dec 2020</td>
<td>Virtual Meeting of Prime Minister with T.B. Pedersen, CEO of PensionDanmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>11 Dec 2020</td>
<td>India-Uzbekistan Virtual Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>17 Dec 2020</td>
<td>India-Bangladesh Virtual Summit</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>21 Dec 2020</td>
<td>India-Vietnam Virtual Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>09 Jan 2021</td>
<td>16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Annexure-VI

**Credential Presentation by Foreign Heads of Mission during 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL No.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name of Ambassador/High Commissioner</th>
<th>Date of Credential Presentation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Korea</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Choe Hui Chol</td>
<td>21.05.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>H.E. Mr Abdoul Wahab Haidara</td>
<td>21.05.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Trinidad and Tobago</td>
<td>H.E. Dr. Roger Gopaul</td>
<td>21.05.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>H.E. Mrs. Santi Bai Hanomanjee</td>
<td>21.05.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Barry Robert O'Farrell</td>
<td>21.05.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cote d'Ivoire</td>
<td>H.E.M. N'DRI Eric Camille</td>
<td>21.05.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Jacqueline Mukaniga</td>
<td>21.05.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. David Pine</td>
<td>08.07.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Akhatov Dilshod Khamidovich</td>
<td>08.07.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Simon Wong Wie Kuen</td>
<td>10.09.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>H.E. Dr. Ralf Heckner</td>
<td>14.10.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Malta</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Reuben Gauci</td>
<td>14.10.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Gilbert Shimane Mangole</td>
<td>14.10.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Andras Laczlo Kiraly</td>
<td>20.11.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>H.E. Hussain Niyaz</td>
<td>20.11.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Ahmed Souangi</td>
<td>20.11.2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>H.E. Mr. Lukmon Bobokalonzoda</td>
<td>20.11.2020</td>
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<td>Date of Arrival 23.12.2020</td>
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<td>Date of Arrival 20.12.2020</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>H.E. Mrs. Hayet Tahi EP Bilel</td>
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<td>Date of Arrival 26.01.2021</td>
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<td>H.E. Mr. Alexander Ellis</td>
<td>Date of Arrival 11.01.2021</td>
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## Annexure-VII

**Cadre strength at Headquarters and Missions abroad during 2020-21**

(including posts budgeted by M/o Commerce, ex-cadre posts and posts encadred from MOIA & POE)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Cadre/Post</th>
<th>Posts at Hqrs.</th>
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<td>(iv) Deputation Reserve</td>
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### Number of IFS officers with proficiency in various languages (as on 5 November 2020)

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## State/UT-wise List of Regional Passport Offices (RPOs)

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<td>Punjab</td>
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<td>PO Bareilly</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PO Bengaluru</td>
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<td>Chandigarh</td>
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### Annexure-XI

State/UT-wise List of Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSKs)

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