

## **Brief on India - Thailand Relations**

India and Thailand share a maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea. India's bilateral relations with Thailand are rooted in history, age-old social and cultural interactions and extensive people to people contacts. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1947. In 2022, India and Thailand celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations with a series of commemorative events and activities.

2. Thailand, which aspires to be a regional hub, given its central location in South East Asia, initiated a 'Look West' policy in 1997. The policy seeks to accord priority to strengthening relations with South Asia and beyond. The 'Look West' policy of Thailand complements India's 'Look East' policy, which is now elevated to 'Act East' policy and has provided the basis for a substantive elevation of bilateral relations. Thailand also launched its 'Act West' policy in 2016.

3. Thailand plays an important role in various regional and sub-regional groupings. It is, therefore, an important partner for India in the India-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, the East Asia Summit (EAS), the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), the Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS). Thailand took over the BIMSTEC Chairmanship from Sri Lanka in March 2022 for a period of 2 years.

### **High Level Exchanges**

4. High level visits and meetings have taken place on a regular basis between both the sides. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi accompanied by Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister (EAM) and Shri Piyush Goyal, Commerce and Industries Minister (CIM), visited Thailand from 2-4 November 2019 to attend ASEAN related Summits (16<sup>th</sup> ASEAN India Summit, 14<sup>th</sup> East Asia Summit, the 3<sup>rd</sup> RCEP Summit and related events). PM Modi held a bilateral meeting with Thai PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha on 3 November. During the visit, PM Modi addressed a community event "Sawadee Modi" on 2 November, which was attended by around 5000 persons of Indian community. Prime Minister released a special commemorative coin to mark the 550<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the Thai language translation of Tamil book, Thirukkural. Earlier in June 2019, PM Modi and Thai PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha had met on the sidelines of G-20 Summit in Osaka, Japan. They had also met thrice in 2018: on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Singapore on 14 November 2018, on the margins of the 4<sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu on 31 August 2018 and on the occasion when Thai PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha visited Delhi from 24-26 January 2018 for the India-ASEAN Special Commemorative Summit and as a Guest of Honour for the Republic Day Parade 2018 along with other ASEAN leaders. On 10 November 2016, PM Modi had visited Bangkok to pay tributes to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Thai PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Industry Minister and Culture Minister had paid a state visit to India from 16-18 June 2016.

5. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha on 1 May 2020, a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The two leaders exchanged views on effectively dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and agreed upon collaboration for Research and Development in the field of medical sciences and vaccine development. In August 2022, the two sides signed an MoU in this regard.

6. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, has been a regular visitor to India (20 visits). Her last visit to India was in February 2020. She is a member of the International Advisory Panel of Nalanda University and recipient of Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace (2004). She had visited India in March 2017 to receive the Padma Bhushan from the President of India. She was awarded the first World Sanskrit Award by the Vice President of India in November 2016.

7. In the recent times, External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar, has had several interactions with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, visited India and met with External Affairs Minister on 30 January 2023. Prior to this, they interacted on the sidelines of the ASEAN - India Summit in Phnom Penh in November 2022. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Bangkok from 16-18 August 2022 to co-chair the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of India-Thailand Joint Commission (JCM) with Mr. Don Pramudwinai on 17 August 2022. During the visit, EAM paid a courtesy call on Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand on 17 August 2022. EAM's other engagements included interaction with the Indian Community on 16 August 2022; joint inauguration of the newly constructed Embassy Residence and Residential Complex, along with Deputy PM and FM of Thailand; and a public talk on "India's Vision of the Indo-Pacific" at the prestigious Chulalongkorn University on 18 August 2022.

8. Shri Om Birla, Speaker, Lok Sabha, had a meeting with Mr. Chuan Leekpai, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Thailand on the sidelines of P20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit in Jakarta, Indonesia on 7 October 2022. Both sides agreed on strengthening parliamentary cooperation between India and Thailand.

9. Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs and Education visited Thailand from 29-31 July 2022 to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of North-East India Festival. During the visit, he held a bilateral meeting with the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi, on 29 July 2022.

10. Smt. Anupriya Singh Patel, MoS (C&I), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, visited Bangkok, Thailand, from 22-24 May 2022 to attend the 78<sup>th</sup> Commission Session of UNESCAP. On the sidelines of the Commission session, she held meetings with Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of UNGA and Ms. Armida Alisjahbana, Executive Secretary, UNESCAP and discussed issues of mutual interest.

11. Ms. Pornpimol Kanchanalak, Advisor to Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand visited India to attend the Special ASEAN-India Foreign Minister Meeting (SAIFMM) as Special Envoy of DPM/FM Don on 16 June 2022 in New Delhi. During the visit, she attended a joint call on Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and had bilateral meetings with EAM and Secretary (East). She also attended Delhi Dialogue XII on 16 June 2022.

### **Recent Events & Engagements**

12. Ambassador Nagesh Singh called on Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister of Thailand, on 9 January 2023. They discussed wide ranging issues including trade & investment, connectivity, people-to-people connect, cultural exchanges, cooperation in traditional and non-traditional areas of defence and security, and collaboration on regional and multilateral fora.

13. Ambassador Nagesh Singh called on Mr. Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn, Minister of Tourism and Sports of Thailand, on 15 February 2023 and discussed ways to further promote tourism and sports ties between India and Thailand. Ambassador paid a courtesy call on Mr. Suriya Jungrungreangkit, Minister of Industry of Thailand, on 31 January 2023 and discussed various issues of mutual interest, with focus on trade and investment ties between India and Thailand.

14. Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of Health & Family Welfare of India, met with Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health of Thailand, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos on 17 January 2023 and discussed cooperation in the fields of digital health, disease surveillance system and pandemic management among other matters of mutual interest.

15. On 12 January 2023, the Prime Minister of Thailand participated in the Inaugural Leaders' Session of the Voice of Global South Summit, at the invitation of our Prime Minister and shared his thoughts on pertinent issues affecting the Global South, through a pre-recorded video message.

16. The second edition of the North-East India Festival was organized from 29-31 July 2022 in Bangkok. Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Commerce, Government of Thailand and Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs, jointly inaugurated the Festival on 30 July 2022 in the presence of Chief Ministers of Meghalaya and Nagaland, Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh and other Ministers and senior officials from the North Eastern states of India. During the festival, seminars on trade & tourism and people to people exchanges were held. A large contingent of around 400 artists, craftsmen, businessmen, exhibitors, tour operators and academics from North Eastern states of India participated in the Festival.

17. The Embassy in association with Triratnabhoomi Society of Thailand organized an exposition on Buddhist heritage sites of India under the theme of 'Buddhabhoomi: Journey along the Footsteps of Buddha' from 26-28 August 2022 in Bangkok. Ms. Usha Thakur, Tourism Minister of Madhya Pradesh visited Thailand to attend the event.

18. Ambassadors of India, Australia, Japan & the Cd'A of the US in Thailand jointly presented 200,000 doses of Made in India Covovax vaccines to Thailand under the Quad Vaccine Partnership on 21 April 2022. This was in fulfilment of the commitment made by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi at the Quad Leaders' Summit in Washington DC in

September 2021 to donate 500,000 doses of COVID vaccines to countries in the Indo-Pacific region under the Quad Vaccine Partnership.

19. The celebrations of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' was launched in Thailand on 12 March 2021 with the release of Thai language translation of the Constitution of India by Mr. Chuan Leekpai, President of the National Assembly and Speaker of the House of Representatives of Thailand.

20. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Smt. Suchitra Durai, Ambassador of India to Thailand jointly presided over the logo unveiling ceremony on 21 March 2022 on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of India-Thailand diplomatic relations. The logo design contest was launched in January 2022 in collaboration with the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **Bilateral Institutional Mechanisms**

21. **Joint Commission Meeting (JCM):** The 9<sup>th</sup> round of JCM was held in Bangkok, Thailand on 16-17 August 2022. External Affairs Minister of India (EAM) and Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand (DPM/FM) Mr. Don Pramudwinai co-chaired the JCM on 17 August. The JCM was preceded by Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) held on 16 August 2022. The entire gamut of bilateral relations was reviewed during these meetings and two MoUs, namely, (i) MoU on Health and Medical Research Cooperation between Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), India and Department of Medical Sciences (DMS), Thailand; and (ii) MoU for Cooperation & Collaboration on Broadcasting between Prasar Bharti, India and Thai Public Broadcasting Service of Thailand were signed.

22. **Foreign Office Consultations (FOC):** The 6<sup>th</sup> round of Foreign Office Consultations between India and Thailand, co-chaired by Secretary (East), Shri Saurabh Kumar and Thai Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Thani Thongphakdi, were held on 21 April 2022 in New Delhi. Both sides discussed bilateral, regional & global issues including post COVID-19 recovery.

23. **Joint Task Force (JTF) on Maritime Cooperation:** 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Joint Task Force (JTF) on Maritime Cooperation between India and Thailand was held on 17 February 2021 in virtual mode. The meeting was co-chaired by Shri Pankaj Saran, Deputy NSA (Strategic Affairs), National Security Council Secretariat of India and Prof. Padermsak Jarayabhand, Adviser to the Thai National Security Council of Thailand. The Meeting of Joint Task Force (JTF) on Legal and Judicial Cooperation between India and Thailand was also held on 17 February 2021 in virtual mode.

### **Defence Cooperation**

24. The MoU on Defence Cooperation between India and Thailand was signed on 25 January 2012. Bilateral exercises are held annually between the armed forces of both countries. The ongoing defence cooperation initiatives comprise of bi-annual joint maritime patrolling by the navies of both countries, annual staff talks, subject matter expert exchange visits and training of officers at each other's institutions, trilateral/multilateral

military exercises etc. The 8<sup>th</sup> edition of Annual Defence Dialogue is planned in Thailand in March/April 2023.

## **Economic & Commercial Partnership**

### **Bilateral Trade**

25. Thailand views India as the gateway to South Asia and beyond. As a result of the reduced tariff rates and new initiatives adopted by both the countries, trade between two countries increased manifold in recent years. In 2022, it reached a record high of US\$ 17.7 billion. The trade figures between the two countries in last few years are as under:

**(amount in billion USD)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total trade</b>	<b>Thai Export to India</b>	<b>Thai Import from India</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total trade</b>	<b>Thai Export to India</b>	<b>Thai Import from India</b>
2017	10.39	6.49	3.90	2017-18	10.78	7.13	3.65
2018	12.46	7.60	4.86	2018-19	11.88	7.44	4.44
2019	12.12	7.30	4.82	2019-20	11.08	6.78	4.29
2020	9.76	5.48	4.28	2020-21	9.91	5.68	4.23
2021	14.94	8.53	6.40	2021-22	15.08	9.33	5.74
2022	17.70	10.52	7.18	2022-23 (April- Dec, 22)	12.94	8.58	4.36

*(Source: Ministry of Commerce of Thailand)*

*(Source: Department of Commerce, India)*

26. Major Indian companies in Thailand includes the Tata group – Tata Steel Thailand, and Tata Consultancy Services, Aditya Birla Group, Tech Mahindra, Kirloskar Brothers Ltd., L&T, Bajaj Auto, NRB Bearing, Ranbaxy, Camper Pharmaceuticals Coforge Ltd, Usha Siam Steel Industries PLC, KEC International, Kalpataru Power Transmission Ltd., Desmond International, Apollo Tyres, Rajasthan Thai Wire, Dee Piping Systems, DT Wiring Systems, Growel Chemical, Monte Big Drum, Kings Food & Beverage, Triveni Turbines DMCC, SRF Industries Thailand Ltd, Polyplex (Thailand). Public Co. Ltd, Atlantic Food Co. Ltd. and others.

27. Leading Thai companies in the fields of agro-processing, construction, automotive, engineering and banking have active and growing business presence in India. Major Thai companies active in India are – Charoen Pokphand Group, Italian Thai Development PCL, The Thai Union Frozen Products PCL, Thai Summit Neel Auto Pvt. Ltd., Delta Electronics (Thailand) PCL, Srithai Superware PCL (Melamine tableware manufacturing), Siam Makro PCL, Magnolia Quality Development Corporation Limited, Dusit Group of Hotels, Vee Rubber Corporation Co., Ltd, Allied Metals(Thailand) Co., Ltd., Tong Garden Food Marketing Pvt. Ltd., Rockworth PCL, Ltd, SCG International, Pranda Jewelry Pvt. Ltd., Krung Thai Bank PCL., and Dutch Mill Thailand. Global Renewable Synergy Co (GRSC), the renewable energy arm of Global Power Synergy Co. (GPSC), owned by Thailand's national oil and gas conglomerate PTT Group, has acquired 42% stake in Avaada Energy Private co., India by investing approximate USD 450 million in July 2021. SCG international has invested in the field of concrete blocks and panels in India recently.

28. MoUs between Port Authority of Thailand and Navayuga Container Terminal (Krishnapatnam Port), Kolkata Port Trust, Chennai Port Trust and Visakhapatnam Port

Trust were signed in 2019. The last Joint Trade Committee Meeting between India and Thailand was held in December 2020 through video conference when the two sides discussed various trade, investment, market access issues to promote economic cooperation.

### **Connectivity**

29. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand was directly connected with 17 Indian cities with approximately 300 weekly flights with seasonal variation. Around 1.9 million Indian tourists visited Thailand in 2019. The number of Thai tourists to India was close to 160,000 (mainly to Buddhist pilgrimage sites). All major airlines operate between the two countries, including Air India, Thai Airways, Bangkok Airways, Air Asia, IndiGo, Vistara and Spicejet. There are presently over 400 flights operating between the two countries every week. Indians were the second largest group of tourists visiting Thailand (around 1 Million) during 2022.

### **Cultural Cooperation**

30. An Indian Cultural Centre was opened in Bangkok in September 2009 [it has since been renamed as the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre]. The India-Thailand Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for the years 2022-2027 was signed by Minister of Culture of India and Minister of Culture of Thailand in a virtual ceremony held on 22 December 2022. The CEP will further enhance cultural cooperation and people-to-people connect between the two countries and also deepen the multifaceted partnership.

31. Regular visits of Indian cultural troupes to Thailand are organized, in addition to Indian films, food and other festivals. The Embassy of India in Bangkok, in collaboration with Ministry of Culture and several local partners organized the Festival of India in Thailand in March 2014, the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in February-May 2015 and then from July 2017 to March 2018 to mark 70 years of establishment of India-Thailand diplomatic relations. The festival included Indian classical dances, food festivals, art and painting exhibitions, literary festivals and seminars, etc. Several commemorative events were organized to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2022, as well as to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's Independence under the theme of "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav".

32. In 2022, the 8<sup>th</sup> International Day of Yoga was celebrated at Srinakharinwirot University grounds in Bangkok on 19 June 2022. More than 600 yoga enthusiasts from all walks of life participated in the mass yoga session. Mr. Chadchart Sittipunt, the Governor of Bangkok, was the Chief Guest at the event. Another important yoga event was organised at Wat Mahathat Historical Park, Ayutthaya, as part of "The Guardian Ring For Yoga" on 21 June 2022.

### **Cooperation in the field of Education**

33. MoU on Cooperation in the field of Education was signed in 2005. India offers 72 scholarships annually under various schemes (ITEC – 40, ICCR scholarships – 30 and Hindi scholarships – 2) to Thailand. India has also offered 1,000 Ph.D. fellowships at the IITs to ASEAN countries, including 100 slots to Thailand. Currently, there are 6 Indian

Studies Centres in Thailand. In addition to these India Studies Centres, 11 India Corners have been set up in various Thai Universities/institutions.

34. Recipients of Padma Awards: HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn received the Padma Bhushan in 2017 and HH Somdet Phra Ariyawongsakhatayan, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, who is an alumnus of BHU, received the Padma Shri in 2018. Recently, on 28 March 2022, Dr. Chirapat Prapandvidya received the Padma Shri under the category of 'Literature and Education'.

### **Indian Diaspora in Thailand**

35. The total number of people of Indian origin in Thailand is estimated to be around 250,000 and around 25,000 NRIs, majority of whom are concentrated in Bangkok. The community comprises mainly of Punjabi Hindus, Namdhari and other Sikh sects, Gorakhpuris, Malayalis, Tamils, Gujaratis, Marwaris, and Sindhis; however, other linguistic and regional groups are also well represented.

### **Embassy & Consulate**

36. Besides the Embassy in Bangkok, India has a Consulate in Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. Thailand has 3 Consulates in India in the cities of Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai, besides its Embassy in New Delhi.

### **Useful Resources:**

Embassy of India, Bangkok Website: <https://embassyofindiabangkok.gov.in>

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

Twitter: @IndiainThailand: <https://twitter.com/IndiainThailand>

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**23 February 2023**