

India-Australia Bilateral Relations

The India-Australia bilateral relationship has undergone evolution in recent years, developing along a positive track, into a friendly partnership. The two nations have much in common, underpinned by shared values of a pluralistic, Westminster-style democracies, Commonwealth traditions, expanding economic engagement and increasing high level interaction. Their several commonalities including strong, vibrant, secular and multicultural democracies, free press, independent judicial system and English language, serve as a foundation for a closer co-operation and multifaceted interaction. The long-standing people-to-people ties, ever increasing Indian students coming to Australia for higher education, growing tourism and sporting links, especially Cricket and Hockey, have played a significant role in further strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

With the changing global scenario, Australia has come to look at India as a potential partner in promoting regional security and stability. This led to upgradation of bilateral relationship between the two nations to a **'Strategic Partnership', including a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2009**. Over the years an array of institutional mechanism has been put in place to promote bilateral co-operation such as exchange of high level visits, Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue, Joint Trade & Commerce Ministerial Commission, Defence Policy Talks including Policy talks at the level of Senior Officials, Staff Talks, Energy Security Dialogue and Australia-India Education Council, Track-2 Dialogues like Australia-India Leadership Dialogue, Youth Dialogue, etc.

RECENT POLITICAL INTERACTION

Over the years, both governments recognized that there is significant potential for further cooperation across a broad range of areas. The two countries have built upon and created a partnership based on both principle and pragmatism. The two way **Prime Ministerial visits** in 2014 built significant momentum in the bilateral relationship, signifying the growing depth of the India-Australia strategic partnership and building on converging interests, shared values and common democratic institutions.

Former Prime Minister Mr. Tony Abbott visited India from 04-05 September 2014, During the visit, four Agreements/ MoUs on Civil Nuclear Cooperation, Sports, Water resources and Skills were signed along with a number of significant initiative were launched. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Australia for G20 Leaders' Summit at Brisbane in November 2014, followed by bilateral visit from 16-18 November 2014. During the visit, he held wide-ranging talks with then PM Abbott and addressed a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament, the first by an Indian PM. Five Agreements/MoUs on Social security, Tourism, Arts & Culture, Sentenced persons and combating Narcotics were signed on this occasion.

Prime Minister Mr. Malcolm Turnbull held meetings with Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of G-20 Summit in Antalya, Turkey on 15 November, 2015 and in Gangzhou, China on 04 September, 2016, for wide ranging discussion on bilateral and multilateral issues.

On his State Visit to India during 09-12 April 2017, Prime Minister Turnbull held bilateral discussion with Prime Minister Modi and both leaders committed to deepening bilateral defence and strategic partnership, broader economic relationship with greater emphasis on energy, education, science and innovation, sports and health cooperation and strengthening international rule based systems. Six bilateral agreements / MoUs on

Cooperation in combating International terrorism & transnational organized crime, Health and Medicine, Sports, Environment, Climate and Wildlife, Civil Aviation society and Space technology were signed during the visit.

Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue (FMFD), the central mechanism for advancing the bilateral agenda, is held annually, alternatively in India and Australia. Foreign Minister Ms Julie Bishop visited India on 18-19 July, 2017 for the annual FMFD in New Delhi with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj. The last **Senior Official's Talk (SOT)** between Secretary (East), MEA and Secretary, DFAT was held in Canberra on 16 February 2017.

The **India-Australia Dialogue on East Asia** is also held at senior official level with the 4th Round of dialogue on East Asia & Pacific held in Canberra in October, 2015. A closer strategic cooperation was also evident in the inaugural Secretary-level **Trilateral talks between India, Australia and Japan** held in New Delhi in June 2015. The second Foreign Secretary level trilateral talks were held in Tokyo on 26 February 2016 and the third took place in Canberra on 29 April 2017. The 10th Joint **Working Group on Counter-Terrorism & Transnational Crime** met in Canberra on 08 December 2016 and the 2nd **India-Australia Bilateral Dialogue on Global Cyber Issues** was held in Canberra on 13 July 2017.

India and Australia also co-operate in various **multilateral fora**. **Australia supports India's candidature in an expanded UN Security Council**. Both India and Australia are members of the Commonwealth, IORA, ASEAN Regional Forum, Asia Pacific Partnership on Climate and Clean Development, and have participated in the East Asia Summits. Both countries have also been cooperating as members of the Five Interested Parties (FIP) in the WTO context. **Australia is an important player in APEC and supports India's membership of the organisation**. In 2008, Australia became an Observer in SAARC.

Minister of Finance Sh. Arun Jaitley visited Australia during 29 March - 02 April 2016, accompanied by high level official delegation and business delegation led by CII and FICCI, to promote bilateral relations, trade and investment. During the visit, a major "Make in India" conference in Sydney and an "Invest in India" Roundtables in Melbourne were organised by the Mission in association with CII and FICCI respectively. He also delivered the "K.R.Narayanan Oration" at Australian National University.

The 2nd **Australia-India Leadership Dialogue**, jointly hosted by Australia India Institute and Confederation of Indian Industry, was held in Melbourne during 04-05 December 2016, with active participation from Government, Business, Public Life, Civil Society and media. The latest edition of **Australia India Youth Dialogue**, which brings interaction between young leaders of both countries to enhance bilateral relationship, was held in Melbourne/Sydney during 15-18 February, 2017.

BILATERAL ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONSHIP

The India-Australia economic relationship has grown significantly in recent years. India's growing economic profile and commercial relevance to the Australian economy is recognized, both at the federal and state level in Australia. The 7th **India-Australia Economic Policy Dialogue** was held in Canberra during 16-18 July, 2017.

Bilateral Trade: India's trade in goods and services with Australia was approximately US\$ 15.6 billion (A\$20.7 bn) in 2016. India's exports to Australia stood approximately at US\$4.6 billion (A\$6.1 bn) in 2016 while India's import from Australia

during the same period stood at US\$11 billion (A\$14.6 bn). India's main exports to Australia are Passenger Motor Vehicle & machinery, Pearls, Gems and Jewellery, medicaments and Refined Petroleum while our major imports are Coal, Non-monetary Gold, Copper, Wool, Fertilizers and education related services.

The two countries are currently discussing a **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)** which will provide greater market access to exporters of goods and services. The two sides have exchanged their goods and services offer lists. It is expected that the conclusion of the CECA will expand the base of merchandise trade, remove non-tariff barriers, encourage investment and address the border restrictions to trade. India is also seeking to address its adverse balance of trade in Goods and Services through specialized market access for its products. During his recent visit to India, Prime Minister Turnbull confirmed that CECA was still "on the agenda" and both countries remained committed to it.

India-Australia CEO Forum is a mechanism for business from both nations to engage directly on ways to build the bilateral trade and investment relationship. The Forum includes heads of Indian and Australian business from a broad range of sectors, including energy & resources, agribusiness, financial sector, telecommunications, IT, education and pharmaceuticals. The Forum held its last meeting in New Delhi on 29 August 2017. **Australia's Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Mr. Steven Ciobo**, led a 150 strong business delegation to India for the **2nd Australia Business Week** across multiple cities in India from 28 August to 01 September 2017. **India-Australia Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC)** was established in 1989 to enable interaction at a government and business level on a range of trade and investment related issues. JMC meetings are held regularly, with the last (14th meeting) held in New Delhi during 28-30 January 2013.

CIVIL NUCLEAR CO-OPERATION

A Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between the two countries was signed in September 2014 during the visit of then PM Tony Abbott to India. The agreement came into force from 13 November 2015 and provides the framework for substantial new trade in energy between Australia and India. The Australian Parliament passed the "Civil Nuclear Transfer to India Bill 2016" on 01 December, 2016 which ensures that Uranium mining companies in Australia may fulfil contracts to supply Australian uranium to India for civil use with confidence that exports would not be hindered by domestic legal action challenging the consistency of the safeguards applied by the IAEA in India and Australia's international non-proliferation obligations. It also ensures that any future bilateral trade in other nuclear-related material or items for civil use will also be protected.

DEFENCE CO-OPERATION

Former Raksha Mantri Shri A K Antony paid the **first ever official visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Australia** during 04-05 June, 2013 and held bilateral talks with the then Australian Defence Minister Stephen Smith. The Defence Ministers recognised the rapid progress made in Defence relations through the framework of bilateral talks at the level of Defence Ministries, and service-to-service interaction, defence training and exchanges of visits by Service Chiefs and Senior Officers.

During PM's visit to Australia in November 2014, both sides decided to **extend defence cooperation** to cover research, development and industry engagement. They agreed to hold regular meetings at the level of the Defence Minister, conduct regular maritime exercises and convene regular service-to-service talks. As a result, the then

Australian Defence Minister Mr. Kevin Andrews visited India during 01-03 September 2015 for bilateral talks, including issues related to Security co-operation with Raksha Mantri Manohar Parrikar. Our CNS Admiral RK Dhowan visited Australia during 02-07 October 2015 for bilateral talks, attend Sea Power Conference 2015 in Sydney and signed a **Technical Agreement on White Shipping Information Exchange**. The Defence Policy Talks and Service to Service Staff talks are also regularly held, with 5th India-Australia Defence Policy Talks held in New Delhi on 28 June 2106, 4th Army to Army Talks in New Delhi during 01-03 May, 2016, 10th Navy-to-Navy Staff Talks in New Delhi during 10-12 August, 2016 and 6th Air-to-Air Staff Talks in Canberra during 16-18 August, 2017.

In June 2015, two Indian ships, INS Satpura and INS Kamorta visited Fremantle Port, Perth, on a goodwill visit. Indian Naval Offshore Patrol vessel 'Sumitra' visited Sydney during 04-07 November, 2016 and Darwin during 06-09 December 2016 with the aim of strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing maritime security cooperation. Australian Naval ship HMAS Darwin participated in the **International Fleet Review** conducted off the coast of Vishakhapatnam during 04-08 February 2016. The second bilateral maritime exercise, **AUSINDEX 2017** was conducted off the coast of Freemantle, Australia during 17-19 June 2017 in which three Indian Naval Ships, Shivalik, Kamorta and Jyoti participated.

The **bilateral visits and talks by Services Chiefs** continued in 2016 with Australian Chief of Army, Lt. General Angus Campbell visiting India during 11-16 January, 2016 and General Dalbir Singh, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visiting Australia during 11-14 July, 2016 for bilateral calls, talks on bilateral defence and Army to Army relationships. Other areas of Defence Cooperation included visit of a delegation led by Secretary, Department of Defence Research and Development and Director General, DRDO to Australia during 17-21 April 2016 for **exploring collaboration in Defence Science and Technology** and visit by Director General, Indian Coast Guard during 26-28 July 2017 for strengthening cooperation and exploring training avenues with Australia's Maritime Border Command. The **3rd India-Australia Track 1.5 Dialogue** was held in Perth on 01 August 2016 and a delegation led by JS (D&ISA) MEA, with representatives from Ministries of Defence, Shipping and Earth Sciences, visited Canberra during 13-14 October 2016 for **Non-Proliferation/Disarmament talks and 2nd India-Australia Maritime Affairs Dialogue**.

AGRICULTURE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

An **Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF)** has been set up; the two countries have identified a number of collaborative research projects in areas such as agricultural research, astronomy and astrophysics, environmental sciences, microelectronics, nanotechnology, renewable energy, marine sciences and earth systems sciences. The tenth anniversary of the AISRF was celebrated during the recent visit of PM Turnbull to India.

The fund, where each side contributed A\$ 65 million over a five year period, supports large-scale research projects designed to deliver practical solutions, focussing on energy, food and water security, health and the environment. AISRF consists of **India Australia Biotechnology Fund; India-Australia Science & Technology Fund; Grand Challenge Fund and Fellowship Schemes**. Joint Committees on S&T and Biotechnology have been established to administer the Fund. The Australian side is also cooperating in our **Clean Ganga Project** as agreed during visit of our PM to Australia in 2014. Secretary (Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation) led a delegation to Australia during 19-25 June 2016 for bilateral cooperation on water resource management, including discussion on Ganga Rejuvenation.

RESOURCES AND ENERGY SECURITY

Sh. Piyush Goyal, Minister of State (I/C) for Coal, Power and New & Renewable Energy, accompanied by a business delegation, visited Australia during 08-11 February 2016 to participate in the **India-Australia Energy Security Dialogue**, jointly chaired by him and Federal Minister of Resources, Energy and Northern Australia Mr. Josh Frydenberg. He also held bilateral talks with Mr. Andrew Robb, the then Minister for Trade and Investment, NSW Premier Mr. Mike Baird and attended the five Roundtable events on Energy Security and renewable energy issues. Shri Goyal again led a delegation to Australia in October 2016 for bilateral discussion with Federal Minister for Resources Mr. Matthew Canavan and addressed the Roundtable events on Clean Energy renewables and LNG.

A Joint Working Group on Energy and Minerals was established in 1999 to expand bilateral relationship in the energy and resources sector. During the visit of our Prime Minister to Australia in November 2014, India and Australia agreed to cooperate on transfer of clean coal technology and upgrade the Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad. The **9th JWG meeting** in Brisbane in June 2015, provided the opportunity to discuss recent resources and energy policy developments and reforms, including opportunities and challenges in mining; petroleum and gas; power; new and renewable energy, as well as challenges in skills, science and innovation and infrastructure. **Secretary (Coal)** led a delegation to Australia during 19-23 June 2017 to explore further cooperation in Coal Mining sector, including safety and cutting edge technology and implementation of clean coal technology.

During her visit to India in July 2017, Foreign Minister Ms Julie Bishop signed a framework agreement for Australia to join the **International Solar Alliance**, led by the Governments of India and France.

EDUCATION, SPORTS, ART AND CULTURE

The **Joint Working Group on Education** between the two countries has identified several key areas for co-operation, including collaborative research in education policy, student exchange programmes, capacity building in vocational education and distance learning in higher education. The number of **Indian students currently enrolled for studying in Australia** is around 78,000 with 50% in higher education and rest in vocational and educational training. Under the **New Colombo Plan** of Australian government, 900 Australian undergraduates have studied and completed internships in India during 2015-16.

Dr. M. Pallam Raju, Minister for HRD visited Australia from 09-12 July 2013 for the Annual Education Ministers' Dialogue. During the occasion, the **2nd Australia India Vice-Chancellors' Conference** was also held which reviewed Australia-India university partnerships and Australia-India industry/sector skill council partnerships. **Minister for Education and Training, Mr. Christopher Pyne** visited India during 23-25 August, 2015 for the **3rd meeting of the Australia India Education Council (AIEC)**.

During PM's visit to Australia in November 2014, both sides welcomed cooperation between Australian and Indian Universities and in particular, Joint PhD Programme to encourage research, promote school level cooperation under which an Australian team can come and study 5-7 States in India and promote Universities tie-ups. Coinciding with the visit of PM Turnbull to India in April 2017, **Education Minister Simon Birmingham** led

a large delegation of Australians Vice-Chancellors, academics and educationists to India for collaboration in higher education, vocational training and skill development.

Australia has also agreed to help in establishing a **Sports University in India**. Secretary (Sports) Sh. Rajiv Yadav led a delegation to Australia during 07-11 October 2016 for study and discussion with Australian Sports University for setting up National Sports University in India. An MoU on Cooperation in **Sports** was signed during visit of PM Turnbull to India in April 2017. An MoU in the field of **Tourism** was signed between the two countries during the visit of PM Modi to Australia in November 2014, which is expected to promote and support the growth in the Tourism Industry.

Confluence, Festival of India in Australia, consisted of 72 events by outstanding Indian Cultural troops and artists across seven cities in Australia during August to November, 2016. The Festival promoted Brand India and the response to the Festival was excellent, including attendance by several Australian dignitaries. **Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (I/C) for Culture and Tourism**, visited Australia during Sept. 18-19, 2016 for inauguration of Confluence Festival and bilateral engagement with Federal Minister for Communications and Arts, Senator Mitch Fifield. Following the success of the Festival, **Confluence 2** is scheduled to take place in Australia during October-November 2017.

CONSULAR COOPERATION

The **Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT)** and the **Extradition Treaty** between India and Australia, which were **signed in June 2008**, have been ratified by both the Governments, and have entered into force on 20 January 2011. A **Joint Working Group (JWG) on Visas, Passports, and Consular Matters** was established during the visit of Foreign Minister Stephen Smith to India in September 2008. Regular meetings of the JWG are held, with the last **5th India-Australia JWG** taking place in Canberra during 20-21 October, 2015. Issues relating to Bio-metric, Border Management and illegal migration, Extradition, MLAT, Surrogacy, Visa etc are part of the discussion between the two nations.

India and Australia signed a **Social Security Agreement** on the eve of our PM's visit to Australia in November 2014. The Agreement has been ratified by both countries and came into force with effect from 1 January 2016.

INDIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA

There is a rapidly growing Indian community of nearly 4,96,000 in Australia, which is contributing significantly to the Australian economy as teachers, doctors, accountants, engineers and IT experts. India is now the third largest source of immigrants to Australia, after UK and New Zealand and the second largest source of skilled professionals for Australia after UK. There are hundreds of Indian Associations functioning in Australia based on language, ethnicity, religion, states, etc. Most of them are associated with some Federation of Associations structures. In addition, there are a sizeable number of people of Indian origin from countries such as Fiji, Malaysia, Kenya and South Africa. The growing significance of the community is reflected in the large scale celebration of Indian festivals in Australia, especially Deepawali. The Hindu Council of Australia celebrated Deepawali at the Federal Parliament on 08 November 2016, which was attended by over 45 MPs and Senators and members of various Indian community organizations in Australia.

Useful Resources: High Commission of India, Canberra website: www.hcindia-au.org

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