

India - Thailand Relations

India and Thailand, located in each other's extended neighborhood, 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. The shared link of Buddhism is reflected in regular pilgrimages to places of Buddhist interest in India by a large number of Thai people. Hindu elements can be found among those reflected in Thai architecture, arts, sculpture, dance, drama and literature. Thai language incorporates Pali and Sanskrit influences. A large Indian diaspora living and working in Thailand is another important bond.

In the past two decades, with regular political exchanges, growing trade and investment, India's ties with Thailand have now evolved into a comprehensive partnership. India's 'Act East' policy has been complemented by Thailand's 'Act West' policy in bringing the two countries closer. Both countries are important regional partners linking South and Southeast Asia. They cooperate closely in the ASEAN, East Asia Summit (EAS) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) groupings as also in Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC), Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS). The India-ASEAN Agreement on Trade in Goods was implemented in January 2010 and the India-ASEAN FTA in Services and Investment was signed in September 2014 and came into force in July 2015.

High Level Exchanges

Dignitary visiting Thailand	Period
PM Narendra Modi	10 Nov 2016 (To pay homage to HM late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the Great), 02-04 Nov 2019 (to attend 35 th ASEAN Summit and other related Summits)
PM Dr. Manmohan Singh	July 2004, Oct 2009, May 2013
PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee	Nov 2002 (transit), Oct 2003
PM P. V. Narasimha Rao	April 1993
PM Rajiv Gandhi	Oct 1986
President V. V. Giri	1972
Vice President Dr. Zakir Hussain	1966
Dignitary visiting India	Period
HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn	1987, 1996, 2001, 2004, March 2005, Nov 2005, March 2007, Aug 2007, March 2008, Feb 2009, Aug 2009, March 2011, Oct 2011, Feb 2014, July 2014, Nov 2016; Mar 2017, July 2017 and Nov 2018;
PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha	16-18 June 2016, 24-26 Jan 2018
HRH Princess Bajrakitiyabha	Nov 2011, June 2015
HRH Princess Chulabhorn	Feb 2013, Feb 2015
PM Yingluck Shinawatra	24-26 Jan 2012, 20-21 Dec 2012
PM Abhisit Vejjajiva	April 2011
HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn (Now HM King Rama X)	Dec 1998, Nov 2010
PM Somchai Wongsawat	Nov 2008
PM Surayud Chulanont	June 2007

PM Thaksin Shinawatra	Nov 2001, Feb 2002, June 2005
PM Gen Chatichai Choonhavan	March 1989

High level visits and meetings have taken place on a regular basis between both 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 02-04 Nov 2019 to attend the 35th ASEAN Summit and related Summits. PM Modi had a bilateral meeting with Thai PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on Nov 03. During the visit, PM Modi addressed a community event "Sawadee Modi" on Nov 02 which was attended by around 5000 persons of Indian community. Prime Minister released a special commemorative coin to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Thai translation of Tamil book Thirukkural. Earlier in June 2019, PM Modi and Thai PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha met on the sidelines of G-20 Summit in Osaka, Japan. They had also met three times in 2018: on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Singapore on 14 November 2018, on the margins of the 4th BIMSTEC Summit in Kathmandu on 31 August 2018 and 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 visited Bangkok to pay tributes to the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. Thai PM General Prayut Chan-o-cha accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Industry Minister and Culture Minister paid a state visit to India from 16-18 June 2016. He called on Hon'ble Vice President and had a restricted meeting and delegation level talks with PM Modi on 17 June 2016 in New Delhi. The then EAM called on Thai PM General Prayut Chan-o-cha. Thai PM met Indian businessmen from the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of Indian Industry, and Associated Chambers of Commerce of India and gave a keynote address on 17 June 2016 at a joint business event. He also offered prayers at the Mahabodhi Temple and the Thai Buddhist Temple in Bodhgaya on 18 June 2016.

Former Vice President, Shri M. Hamid Ansari, accompanied by a high level delegation, paid an official visit to Thailand from 3-5 February 2016. The Vice President had an audience with Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and held extensive bilateral discussions with Thai PM General Prayut Chan-o-cha. The Vice President delivered an address at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, interacted with academicians/ Indologists and addressed the Indian community in Thailand.

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn has visited India 19 times. HRH Princes Maha Chakri Sirindhorn last visited India from 26 to 29 November 2018. She had visited India earlier in July 2017 and on 30 March 2017 to receive Padma Bhushan from the President of India. She was awarded the first World Sanskrit Award by the Vice President of India on 21 November 2016.

Dr. S. Jaishankar, EAM visited Thailand from 01-03 August 2019 for attending the ASEAN related Foreign Ministers' Meetings. During the visit he co-chaired the 17th India-ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Aug 01 together with Thai FM Don Pramudwinai. EAM also attended the 10th MGC Ministerial Meeting (01 Aug), 9th EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting (02 Aug) and 26th ASEAN Regional Forum (02 Aug). He had a bilateral meeting with Thai FM Don Pramudwinai on 01 August 2019. EAM met with Thai FM Don Pramudwinai on the margins of 74th UNGA in September 2019 in New York.

Shri Piyush Goyal, CIM visited Thailand from 08-10 September 2019 to attend the 51st ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting and other related meetings. CIM had a bilateral meeting with Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand on 10 September 2019. Both the leaders also co-chaired 16th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting. CIM again visited Thailand from 11-12 October 2019 to attend the RCEP Intersession Ministerial Meeting. Mr. Jurin Laksanawisit, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand visited Mumbai and Chennai from 24-28 September 2019. He again visited Bengaluru and Hyderabad from 17-20 January 2020 to expand trade opportunities and boost export.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh visited Bangkok from 16-18 November 2019 to attend the 6th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus [ADMM-Plus] and opening ceremony of Defence and Security 2019 Exhibition. Raksha Mantri had bilateral meetings with General Prawit Wongsuwan, Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand on the sidelines of 6th ADMM-Plus. Raksha Mantri also called on Thai PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha on Nov 18 and discussed bilateral issues.

Former Agriculture and Cooperatives Minister Grisada Boonrach visited India on 30 May 2019 as Special Envoy of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Council of Ministers of the Government of India.

Former Deputy Minister of Commerce, Chutima Bunyapraphasara, Enggartiasto Lukita, Trade Minister of Indonesia and Dato' Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary General of ASEAN visited India on 09 July 2019 for discussions related to RCEP negotiations. Ms. Chutima had also visited India on 17-22 May 2019 to create networking for expanding opportunities and boosting business between India and Thailand, on 21-23 Feb 2019 for India-ASEAN Expo and Summit and on 15-16 January 2019 for Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019. Thailand was partner country for Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2019.

Smt. Sushma Swaraj, former EAM, met Thai FM Don Pramudwinai in New Delhi during his visit to India on 30 November 2018. Both the leaders discussed a wide range of bilateral issues. Both sides agreed to work closely to further strengthen India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership. Former EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj visited Bangkok on 04-05 January 2018 for having discussions with Thai FM Don Pramudwinai.

Shri. M.J. Akbar, Former Minister of State for External Affairs, visited Bangkok from 26-27 October 2017 for the royal cremation ceremonies for the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the Great.

A delegation led by Gen. Tanasak Pratimapragorn, Former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand in charge of Culture and Tourism visited Mumbai from 6-8 March 2016. Deputy Prime Minister Tanasak and the delegation met with Chief Minister of Maharashtra on March 08. The Deputy Prime Minister and then Minister of Defence of Thailand Gen. Prawit Wongsuwan visited India from 16-18 March 2016. Gen. Prawit Wongsuwan met the Vice President, Defence Minister and the National Security Advisor.

In 2015, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, former EAM, visited Thailand to co-chair the 7th Meeting of India-Thailand Joint Commission and to attend the 16th World Sanskrit Conference in Bangkok from 27-29 June 2015. EAM called on HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Gen Prem Tinsulanonda, the then President of the Privy Council of Thailand. EAM and the then

Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs Gen Tanasak Patimapragorn held delegation level talks.

Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, then Raksha Mantri visited Bangkok from 26-29 August 2018. She held delegation level talks with Gen. Prawit Wongsuwan, Deputy Prime Minister and then Defence Minister of Thailand. She also called on Thai PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, then Commerce and Industry Minister(CIM), visited Bangkok from 3-5 August 2017 to participate in India-ASEAN Expo & Forum. Shri Ajit Doval, National Security Advisor (NSA) visited Thailand on 1-2 April 2015. He called on Thai PM Gen. Prayut Chan-o-cha, DPM & Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan, DPM & FM Gen Tanasak Patimapragorn and met Mr. Anusit Kunakorn, Secretary General of the National Security Council of Thailand. NSA again visited Thailand on 21 March 2019 for 3rd Meeting of BIMSTEC Security Chiefs. Air Chief Marshal B. S. Bhanoa visited Thailand from 26-27 August 2019 to attend the Annual Chiefs of Defence Conference 2019. Adm Luechai Ruddit, Commander-in-Chief, Royal Thai Navy visited India from 18-20 December 2018.

In 2014, PM Narendra Modi discussed bilateral issues of mutual interest with Thai PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on the sidelines of ASEAN Summit in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 November 2014. PM Dr. Manmohan Singh accompanied by EAM Salman Khurshid and senior officials paid an official visit to Thailand at the invitation of PM Yingluck Shinawatra on 30-31 May 2013. He presented a sapling of Bodhi Tree in Bodh Gaya as a special gift to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej as a symbol of India and Thailand's shared cultural heritage. During the visit, six agreements/MoUs were signed.

Bilateral Institutional Mechanisms

Joint Commission Meeting (JCM): The 8th round of JCM was held in India on 09-10 October 2019 in New Delhi. The JCM was co-chaired by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and Thai FM Don Pramudwinai. It was preceded by a Senior Officials' Meeting co-chaired by Ms. Vijay Thakur Singh, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs and Ms. Busaya Mathelin, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand on 09 October 2019. The entire gamut of bilateral relations was reviewed at the JCM. An MoU between Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi and Devawongse Vorapakarn Institute of Foreign Affairs was signed. The 7th Round of India-Thailand JCM was held on 29 June 2015 in Bangkok and the 6th JCM was held in New Delhi in December 2011.

Foreign Office Consultations (FOC): The 5th India-Thailand Foreign Office Consultations were held in Bangkok on 18 March 2019. The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. Vijay Thakur Singh, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs and Ms. Busaya Mathelin, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. 4th India-Thailand FOC was held in New Delhi on 4 August 2016.

Defence Cooperation

The MoU on Defence Cooperation between India and Thailand was signed on 25 Jan 2012. Since 2015, India is participating in Ex-Cobra Gold, the largest Asia Pacific Military exercise as 'Observer Plus' category. India fields its Engineers, Observers and Medical Delegations in the exercises in Thailand. Bilateral exercises are held annually between the armed forces of both countries. The other ongoing defence cooperation initiatives comprises 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.

Economic & Commercial Partnership

Bilateral Trade

As a result of the reduced tariff rates and new initiatives adopted by India and Thailand, trade between the two countries has increased manifold in recent years.

(amount in billion USD)

Year	Total trade	Thai Export to India	Thai Import from India
2014	8.66	5.62	3.04
2015	7.92	5.30	2.62
2016	7.72	5.15	2.57
2017	10.39	6.49	3.90
2018	12.46	7.60	4.86
2019	12.12	7.30	4.82

Major Indian companies in Thailand include – Tata Motors, Tata Steel, and Tata Consultancy Services, Indorama, The Aditya Birla Group, Tech Mahindra, Ranbaxy (now Sun Pharma), Dabur, Lupin, NIIT, Kirloskar Borthers Ltd, L&T, Punj Lloyd Group, Polyplex (Thailand) Public Co. Ltd, Precious Shipping PCL and Usha Siam Steel Industries PCL.

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, Thai Union Frozen Products PCL, Stanley Electric Engineering India Pvt. Ltd., Thai Airways International PCL., Minor Group of Companies, Rockworth PCL, Precious Shipping of Thailand, Delta Electronics (Thailand) PCL, Siri Thai Superware PCL, Bangkok Airways, Siam Cement Group, Ital Thai Development PCL, Dusit Group, Thai Air Asia, ONYX Hospitality Group, Pruska Reality, Thai Summit, etc.

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.

Connectivity

Thailand is directly connected to 17 Indian cities with approximately 280-340 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 of India operate between the two countries : Air India, Thai Airways, Bangkok Airways, Air Asia, IndiGo, Vistara and Spicejet. India and Thailand are closely cooperating on improving regional connectivity through initiatives such as India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Asian Highway Network (under UNESCAP), BTILS under BIMSTEC framework.

Cultural Cooperation

An Indian Cultural Centre was opened in Bangkok in September 2009 [This has now been renamed as the Swami Vivekananda Culture Centre]. Cultural Exchange Programme for 2016-19 was signed during the visit of Thai PM to India in June 2016. A number of India Studies Centers are operational in prestigious Thai Universities. Regular visits of Indian cultural troupes are organized, in addition to Indian film, food and other festivals. Embassy in collaboration with

Ministry of Culture and several local partners organized Festival of India in Thailand in March 2014, the 2nd edition in February-May 2015 and from July 2017 to March 2018 to mark 70 years of establishment of India-Thailand diplomatic relations. This festival included Indian classical dances, food festivals, art and painting exhibitions, literary festival and seminars, etc.

The 5th International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated on 16 June 2019 at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. Over 6000 people participated in the event. Separate events on IDY were also organized in Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Rayong and Khon Kaen. Several other events/seminars/lectures/cycling event/painting competition were organized for celebrating 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

550th birth anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was celebrated in Thailand. The inaugural event of the 550th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Devji was held as tree plantation ceremony on 20 July 2019 at Klang Dong forest 200 kms east of Bangkok where all major Sikh organizations came under the auspices of the Embassy and planted 550 saplings. Several other events/tree plantation/blood donation camps/lectures/sangat/kirtan were organised. At the closing event a grand Nagar Kirtan, a procession of Sri Guru Granth Sahib through the streets of Bangkok was organised by Thai Sikh community in association with Embassy on Nov 10. The Nagar Kirtan was attended by around 3,000 persons. Thai Minister of Culture, Mr. Ittiphol Kunplome also participated in the Nagar Kirtan.

Education Cooperation

MoU on Cooperation in the field of Education was signed in 2005. During 2018-19, Government of India offered 72 scholarships to Thai students under its various schemes (ITEC – 40, ICCR sponsored schemes – 24 and Hindi Scholarship – 8). Currently there are five India Studies center in Thailand at Chulalongkorn University, Silpakorn University, Mahidol University, Thammasat University and Chiang Mai University.

Indian Diaspora in Thailand

There are an estimated 250,000 people of Indian origin in Thailand, many of them having lived in the country for several generations. 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.

Embassies/Consulates: Besides the Embassy in Bangkok, India has a Consulate in Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. Thailand has consulates in 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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