

Brief on 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.

2. Thailand, which aspires to be a regional hub given its central location in South East Asia, initiated a 'Look West' policy in 1997. This 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 Summit Level 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 was the Country Coordinator for India-ASEAN Dialogue Relations from Aug 2018 to Aug 2021 (3 years). Thailand handed over Country Coordinatorship for ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations to Singapore on 4 August 2021. Thailand took over the BIMSTEC Chairmanship from Sri Lanka on 30 March 2022 for next 2 years.

4. Ambassadors of India, Australia, Japan & US Cd'A 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.

5. The celebration 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.

6. 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 75th 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.

High Level Exchanges

7. High level visits and meetings took place on a regular basis between both sides, before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 November 2019 to attend ASEAN related Summits (16th ASEAN India Summit, 14th East Asia Summit, the 3rd RCEP Summit and related events). 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.

8. During 2001 to 2009, India and Thailand had an annual exchange of PM-level visits, except for 2006 because of uncertainties caused by Thailand’s internal situation. These visits include (i) State Visit by PM Thaksin Shinawatra to India (Nov 2001); (ii) visit of PM Thaksin Shinawatra to India (Feb 2002); (iii) transit visit by PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Thailand (Nov 2002); (iv) visit of PM Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Thailand (Oct 2003); (v) visit of PM Dr. Manmohan Singh for 1st BIMSTEC Summit (July 2004); (vi) visit of PM Thaksin Shinawatra to India (June 2005); (vii) State Visit of PM Surayud Chulanont to India (June 2007); (viii) visit of PM Somchai Wongsawat for 2nd BIMSTEC Summit (Nov 2008); and (ix) Visit of PM Manmohan Singh to Thailand (Oct 2009).

9. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on 1 May 2020. The two leaders exchanged views on effectively dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and agreed to have collaboration for Research and Development in the field of medical sciences and vaccine development. Two sides have finalised an MoU in this regard.

10. 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.

11. HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, is a regular visitor to India (20 visits), a member of the International Advisory Panel of Nalanda University and recipient of Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace (2004), Padma Bhushan (2017), World Sanskrit Award (2016). She visited Delhi, Uttarakhand and Telengana recently from 10-14 February 2020. HRH Princess Chulabhorn visited India from 14-23 February 2020. She attended the commemoration of 10th Anniversary of Chulabhorn Hospital at Wat Thai Bodh Gaya. She also visited Kushinagar and Delhi during her stay in India. 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.

12. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, EAM has had five interactions/meetings with Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand. Three of these were telephonic conversations on 1 May 2021, 23 July 2021 and on 21 March 2022. Two physical meetings were held on the sidelines of 76th UNGA on 25 September 2021 in New York and on the margins of BIMISTEC Ministerial on 28 March 2022 in Colombo. Their discussions mostly focussed on COVID-19 related cooperation, including vaccine cooperation, and global and regional issues, as well as on taking the agenda of BIMSTEC forward. EAM had earlier visited Thailand from 01-03 August 2019 for attending the ASEAN related Foreign Ministers' meetings. During the visit, EAM co-chaired the 17th ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' meeting on 1 August along with Thai FM Don Pramudwinai (now Deputy PM & Minister of Foreign Affairs). EAM also attended the 10th MGC Ministerial Meeting, 9th EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting and 26th ASEAN Regional Forum Meeting. He had a bilateral meeting with Thai FM Don Pramudwinai on 01 August 2019. Both FMs had a pull aside meeting on the margins of 74th UNGA in September 2019 in New York. In 2020, both the FMs jointly inaugurated the 6th Round Table of ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (AINTT) on 20 August 2020.

13. Shri Piyush Goyal, CIM visited Thailand from 8-10 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.

14. Smt. Anupriya Singh Patel, MoS (C&I), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GoI, visited Bangkok from 22-24 May 2022 to attend the 78th 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. Ms. Meenakashi Lekhi, Minister of State for Culture and Minister of State for External Affairs had a virtual meeting with Mr. Ittiphol Kunplome,

Minister of Culture of Thailand on 27 December 2021 to discuss cultural cooperation between India and Thailand.

15. Defence Minister 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 18 November and discussed bilateral issues.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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.

20. 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 8 March. The Deputy Prime Minister and the 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.

21. Smt. Nirmla Sitharaman, then Defence Minister, 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. Nirmla 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.

Bilateral Institutional Mechanisms

22. **Joint Commission Meeting (JCM):** The 8th round of JCM was held in India on 9-10 October 2019 in New Delhi. The JCM was co-chaired by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and Thai Foreign Minister Mr. 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 9 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.

23. **Foreign Office Consultations (FOC):** The 6th 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. The Thai delegation also called on Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs on 21 April 2022. The 5th FOCs were held in Bangkok in March 2019 in Bangkok.

24. **Joint Task Force (JTF) on Maritime Cooperation:** 4th 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

25. The MoU on Defence Cooperation between India and Thailand was signed on 25 January 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

26. 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 2020, despite the pandemic situation, the trade figures stood at US\$ 9.76 billion. In 2021, it reached a record high of around US\$ 15 billion. Trade figures between the two countries in last few years are as under:

(amount in billion USD)

Year	Total trade	Thai Export to India	Thai Import from India	Year	Total trade	Thai Export to India	Thai Import from India
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

(Source: Ministry of Commerce of Thailand)

(Source: Department of Commerce, India)

27. Major Indian companies in Thailand include – Tata Steel Thailand, Tata Consultancy Services, Aditya Birla Group, Tech Mahindra, Kirloskar Brothers Ltd., L&T, Royal Enfield, 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, Innovative Gloves Co.,Ltd, SRF Industries Thailand Ltd, Polyplex (Thailand). Public Co. Ltd, Sunflag (Thailand) Ltd, Jogani Group of Companies, Flawless Co., Ltd. Atlantic Food Co. Ltd. etc.

28. 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, acquired 42% stake in Avaada Energy Private Co., India, by investing approximately USD 450 million in July 2021. SCG international has invested in the field of concrete blocks and panels in India recently.

29. 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

30. 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 of India operate between the two countries: Air India, Thai Airways, Bangkok Airways, Air Asia, IndiGo, Vistara and Spicejet. According to Tourism Authority of Thailand, on 27 May 2022, Indians became the largest group of tourists to Thailand, with more than 100,000 arrivals up to 27 May 2022, with the potential of touching 600,000 by year-end.

Cultural Cooperation

31. An Indian Cultural Centre was opened in Bangkok in September 2009 [It has since been renamed as the Swami Vivekananda Cultural 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.

32. International Day of Yoga (IDY) in 2020 and 2021 was celebrated in the Embassy premises in a hybrid mode due to the COVID-19 situation. The 5th 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. The 8th IDY is being celebrated this year.

33. The Thai language translation of the Constitution of India was released by Mr. Chuan Leekpai, Hon'ble President of the National Assembly and Speaker of the House of Representatives of Thailand on 12 March 2021 at an event organised by the Embassy to launch the celebrations of 75th anniversary of India's independence.

Cooperation in the field of Education

34. MoU on Cooperation in the field of Education was signed in 2005. India offers 67 scholarships annually under various schemes (ITEC – 40, ICCR scholarships – 25 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 5 Indian Studies Centres in Thailand at Silpakorn University, Mahidol University, Chiang Mai University, Thammasat University and Chulalongkorn University. In addition to these India Studies Centres, 9 India Corners have been set up in Thai Institutes i.e. Chiang Mai University, Chulalongkorn University, Ubon Ratchathani University, Pridi Banomyong International College, Prince of Songkla University, Mae Fah Luang University, Surat Thani Rajabhat University, Srinakharinwirot University and National Library of Thailand. Ubon Ratchathani University has an India Studies Group and Pridi Banomyong International College, Thammasat University has an Indian Studies Programme.

35. Recipients of Padma Awards: H.H. 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

36. The total number of people of Indian origin in Thailand is estimated to be around 175,000 and 20,000 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.

Embassies/Consulates:

37. 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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