

Brief Embassy Report on Bilateral Relations – ITJ Division, DGCI&S, Kolkata.

India-Thailand Bilateral Relations

A. Introduction

1. Indian Trade Journal (ITJ) division of the Director General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS) brings out weekly publication on Embassy Profile Report providing information on recent policy changes and happenings in other countries that may be of interest to the Indian trading community. This is the Profile Report depicting the Embassy of Thailand.

2. 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.

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).

B. Commercial Relations (Trade and Foreign Investment) – Recent facts & figures

4. 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 2020-21, despite the pandemic situation, the trade figures stood at US\$ 9.91 billion. In 2022-23, it reached a record high of around US\$ 16.90 billion. An account of Bilateral commodities trade in goods from 2019-20 to 2023-24 are as under:

The Export-Import statistics as per India's Ministry of Commerce data bank from 2018-19 to 2022-23 are as follows :

The Export-Import statistics from 2018-19 to 2022-23

(US Dollar Billion)

Year	Total trade	Import	Export
2019-20	11.08	6.78	4.29
2020-21	9.91	5.68	4.23
2021-22	15.08	9.33	5.74

2022-23	16.90	11.19	5.71
2023-24	14.95	9.91	5.04

(Source: Department of Commerce, India)

Thailand's top imported goods from India:

- Iron & Steel, products of Iron & Steel.
- Drug formulation.
- Auto Components.
- Aluminium & products of aluminium.
- Incl. machinery for Dairy etc.
- IC Engines & Parts.

India's top imported goods from Thailand:

- Vegetable oils.
- Organic Chemicals.
- Paper, paper board and products thereof.
- Residual chemical and allied products.
- Plastic Raw Materials.

5. 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.

6. 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.

C. Other Major Areas of Co-operation:

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with Prime Minister Gen

Prayut Chan-o-cha on 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.

➤ **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.

➤ 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.

➤ 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.

➤ 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.

➤ An Indian Cultural Centre was opened in Bangkok [It has since been renamed as the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre]. Cultural Exchange Programme was signed during the visit of Thai PM to India. 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 regularly. This festival included Indian classical dances, food festivals, art and painting exhibitions, literary festival and seminars, etc.

➤ 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.

- 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.
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Education was signed between the two countries. India offers 67 scholarships annually under various schemes (ITEC – 40, ICCR scholarships – 25 and Hindischolarships – 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Source: www.mea.gov.in
