



India-Thailand Relations

For Prelims: 8th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue, [ASEAN](#), [BIMSTEC](#), [Exercise MAITREE](#), Exercise SIAM BHARAT, [India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol](#).

For Mains: India-Thailand Relations.

Why in News?

The **8th India-Thailand Defence Dialogue** was held in Bangkok, Thailand, during which both sides expressed satisfaction at the ongoing bilateral defense cooperation.



What are the Key Highlights of the Dialogue?

- The progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives was reviewed.
- The co-chairs identified **means to enhance existing areas of collaboration**, especially in the field of defence industry, maritime security and multinational cooperation.
 - Thailand expressed confidence in the capability of the Indian defence industry.
- The two chairs also **articulated steps in the direction of emerging areas of cooperation** and issues pertaining to global commons.

How have India's Relations been with Thailand?

- **Diplomatic Relations:**
 - Thailand and India have a **longstanding diplomatic relationship that dates back to 1947.**
 - The relationship is built on a foundation of **economic and cultural ties that have existed for more than 2000 years.**
 - India's '**Look East**' policy (since 1993) and **Thailand's 'Look West' policy** (since 1996) which has now metamorphosed into **India's 'Act East'** and **Thailand's 'Act West'** are strongly contributing to consolidating bilateral relations including economic & commercial linkages.
- **Economic And Commercial Relations:**
 - Bilateral trade was USD 12.12 billion in 2019 and it reached USD 9.76 billion in 2020 despite the pandemic situation.
 - Thailand exports to India amounted to USD 7.60 billion, while Indian exports to Thailand were worth **USD 4.86 billion in 2018.**
 - Bilateral trade between India and Thailand reached an all-time high of around **USD 15 billion in 2021-22.**
 - In the **ASEAN region**, **Thailand ranks as India's 5th largest trading partner** after Singapore, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia.
 - Currently, **Thai goods have benefited from tax reduction** under **ASEAN-India FTA** in Goods, which came into effect in January 2010.
- **Defence Cooperation:**
 - The bilateral defence engagements have expanded over time and include Defence Dialogue meetings, military-to-military exchanges, high-level visits, capacity-building and training programs, and the annual joint military exercises.
 - **Defense Exercises:**
 - **Exercise MAITREE** (Army).
 - **Exercise SIAM BHARAT** (Air Force).
 - **India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol** (Navy).
- **Connectivity:**
 - In 2019, approximately 1.9 million Indian tourists visited Thailand, while around 160,000 Thai tourists visited India mainly for **Buddhist pilgrimage sites.**
 - India and Thailand are working together to improve regional connectivity also under the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** framework.
 - The most awaited **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway** is expected to expand land connectivity through Northeast India and Southeast Asia, becoming the first-ever cross border facilitation agreement between South and Southeast Asia.
- **Cultural Cooperation:**
 - India and Thailand have a strong cultural exchange program with regular visits of Indian cultural troupes, festivals, and events.
 - An Indian Cultural Centre, now known as the **Swami Vivekananda Culture Centre**, was established in Bangkok in 2009.
 - The 550th birth anniversary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was also celebrated in Thailand with various events and a grand Nagar Kirtan procession in Bangkok.
 - The Thai language translation of the Constitution of India was launched in Thailand.

Way Forward

- Both should address issues regarding **trade barriers and reducing import duty charges through bilateral engagements** to expand trade and investments.
- Collaboration opportunities between India's start-up ecosystem and Thailand should also be explored.
- The two countries can work together to bridge supply chain gaps by investing in each other's markets.
- It is also essential to continue to strengthen strategic and security cooperation through defense engagements, military-to-military exchanges, and joint exercises.

Source: PIB

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