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BILATERAL RELATIONS
INDIA - THAILAND

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INTRODUCTION

India and Thailand share a historically deep, multidimensional and rapidly evolving relationship. Diplomatic relations were formally established in 1947, and the two countries celebrated the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic ties in 2022. As maritime neighbours, India and Thailand are connected across the Andaman Sea and share longstanding civilizational, cultural, religious and linguistic bonds. Thailand holds an important position in India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision, while Thailand's Act West Policy complements India's engagement with Southeast Asia.

The relationship entered a significant new phase on 3 April 2025, when India and Thailand elevated their bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit to Thailand. The Strategic Partnership reflects the growing importance of cooperation across political and security engagement, defence and maritime cooperation, trade and investment, connectivity, digital technology, MSMEs, startups, science and technology, innovation, tourism and people-to-people exchanges. The two countries also agreed to deepen cooperation against transnational threats, including human trafficking, narcotics trafficking and cyber-related crimes.

India and Thailand are important partners in regional and multilateral platforms, including ASEAN, the East Asia Summit, BIMSTEC, the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, the Indian Ocean Rim Association and ACMECS. Their cooperation within these frameworks supports greater regional connectivity, economic integration, maritime cooperation and stability in the Indo-Pacific. In 2025, the two countries further strengthened cooperation through the India-Thailand Strategic Partnership, with new initiatives and agreements in areas including digital technologies, MSMEs, handlooms and handicrafts, maritime heritage and consular cooperation.

Economic relations have expanded steadily, with bilateral trade reaching approximately US\$19.08 billion in FY 2024-25, according to India's Department of Commerce. Tourism and people-to-people exchanges also form a major pillar of the relationship. In 2024, around 2.1 million Indian tourists visited Thailand, making India one of Thailand's most important tourism markets.

Cultural and civilizational connections remain the foundation of India-Thailand relations. Indian influences can be seen in Thai language, art, architecture, traditions and religious life, with Sanskrit and Pali contributing significantly to Thai vocabulary. Buddhism provides one of the strongest spiritual links between the two countries, while the Ramayana continues to hold a prominent place in Thai culture through the Ramakien. These centuries-old connections continue to strengthen modern diplomatic relations and provide a strong foundation for the growing India-Thailand Strategic Partnership.

A further boost to bilateral engagement came with the 2025 elevation of relations to a Strategic Partnership, creating a stronger framework for cooperation in security, connectivity, trade, technology and people-to-people ties. The growing alignment between India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision and Thailand's Act West Policy is expected to further strengthen their role as key partners in promoting stability, connectivity and prosperity across the Indo-Pacific region.

ANTIQUITY OF TRADE RELATIONS

Evidence of India-Thailand trade and maritime exchange dates back over two millennia, to at least around 500 BCE, with archaeological discoveries of etched carnelian and agate beads of likely Indian origin and Indo-Pacific glass beads in Thailand indicating early commercial and cultural contacts across the Bay of Bengal. These ancient exchange networks laid the foundation for the enduring economic and maritime relationship between India and Thailand.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

India-Thailand relations have entered a new phase of strategic engagement, marked by expanding cooperation in political, economic, defence, security, connectivity and people-to-people domains. A major milestone was achieved in April 2025, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid an official visit to Thailand and held bilateral discussions with the Thai leadership on strengthening the full range of cooperation between the two maritime neighbours.

On 3 April 2025, India and Thailand elevated their bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership, marking a significant development in their long-standing ties. The new partnership provides an enhanced framework for cooperation in political and strategic affairs, defence and security, trade and investment, connectivity, science and technology, innovation, digital cooperation, education, culture and tourism.

During the visit, the two countries also exchanged agreements and Memoranda of Understanding covering cooperation in digital technologies, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), handlooms and handicrafts, and maritime heritage. The establishment of an India-Thailand Consular Dialogue was also welcomed to further strengthen people-to-people contacts and bilateral mobility.

Security cooperation has become an increasingly important pillar of the relationship. Both countries have agreed to deepen collaboration against transnational organised crime, including human trafficking, narcotics trafficking, cybercrime and cyber scams, while also exploring the establishment of a Strategic Dialogue between their security agencies. Defence cooperation continues to expand through institutional dialogue, naval cooperation, exercises and coordination in the maritime domain.

Economic and connectivity cooperation remains another major focus. India and Thailand are working to strengthen trade, investment, business-to-business linkages and MSME collaboration, while supporting improved physical and digital connectivity. The two countries also continue to cooperate through regional frameworks such as ASEAN, BIMSTEC and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, with shared interests in regional peace, stability, connectivity and prosperity.

Recent engagement has also highlighted cooperation in emerging sectors such as renewable energy, FinTech, e-vehicles, robotics, space technology, biotechnology, digital innovation and start-ups. The strengthening of these new areas of cooperation reflects the growing strategic and economic importance of the India-Thailand relationship and its potential to contribute to a more connected and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

The recent elevation of India-Thailand relations to a Strategic Partnership is expected to provide fresh momentum to bilateral engagement across both traditional and emerging sectors. Greater emphasis is being placed on strengthening maritime cooperation, resilient supply chains, digital connectivity and collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region. The two countries are also exploring new opportunities for closer cooperation between businesses, start-ups, research institutions and technology-driven industries. As India and Thailand continue to deepen their strategic engagement, their partnership is increasingly positioned to play an important role in promoting regional stability, economic growth and stronger connectivity between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Connectivity has also emerged as a key priority in recent India-Thailand relations. Both countries have continued to emphasise the importance of strengthening multimodal connectivity between India and Southeast Asia, particularly through the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway and related regional connectivity initiatives. Enhanced road, maritime and digital connectivity is expected to facilitate trade, tourism, investment and people-to-people exchanges, while strengthening economic integration between India and the ASEAN region.

People-to-people relations remain one of the strongest foundations of the bilateral partnership. Tourism, cultural exchanges, educational cooperation and religious linkages continue to bring the people of India and Thailand closer. The deep Buddhist and civilizational connections between the two countries have provided an enduring basis for bilateral engagement, while growing air connectivity and tourism have further strengthened these traditional links.

The India-Thailand Strategic Partnership also reflects the growing importance of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. As maritime neighbours with shared interests in peace, stability and prosperity, the two countries are increasingly engaging on maritime security, regional connectivity and sustainable economic development. Through stronger bilateral cooperation and their participation in regional mechanisms such as ASEAN, BIMSTEC, the East Asia Summit and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, India and Thailand are expected to play an increasingly important role in promoting a secure, connected and prosperous Indo-Pacific.



ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT RELATIONS

Economic and commercial relations constitute an increasingly important pillar of the India-Thailand partnership. As two major economies connected through the Bay of Bengal, the Indo-Pacific and ASEAN, India and Thailand have steadily expanded cooperation in trade, investment, manufacturing, services, technology and regional connectivity. The elevation of bilateral relations to a Strategic Partnership in April 2025 has further strengthened the focus on realising the full potential of economic and investment cooperation.

Bilateral merchandise trade between India and Thailand reached approximately US\$19.08 billion in FY 2024-25, making Thailand one of India's important economic partners in ASEAN. India's exports to Thailand stood at around US\$4.81 billion, while imports from Thailand amounted to approximately US\$14.27 billion. Trade between the two countries covers a diverse range of sectors, including machinery, electrical equipment, chemicals, automobiles and auto components, agricultural and food products, precious stones and other manufactured goods.

India and Thailand benefit from multiple regional and bilateral trade frameworks. The ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA), which entered into force for India and Thailand in 2010, provides an important framework for merchandise trade. The ASEAN-India Agreements on Trade in Services and Investment, effective since 2015, have further supported economic engagement. In addition, India and Thailand operate an Early Harvest Scheme covering 83 products under the India-Thailand Framework Agreement for establishing a Free Trade Area.

Investment cooperation is also developing across a range of sectors. According to the Thailand Board of Investment (BOI), Indian investors submitted 13 investment promotion applications in Thailand during 2025, with a total investment value of approximately 1.856 billion baht. During the same year, the BOI approved 12 projects involving Indian investment, with a total investment value of approximately 2.463 billion baht. These projects were spread across sectors such as agriculture, food and biotechnology, machinery and vehicles, chemicals and petrochemicals, digital activities and high-value services.

The 2025 Strategic Partnership has created fresh opportunities for greater business and investment engagement. Both countries have emphasised cooperation in MSMEs, digital technologies, renewable energy, FinTech, electric vehicles, robotics, space, biotechnology and start-ups. An MoU on cooperation in MSMEs was also concluded in April 2025, reflecting the growing importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in strengthening bilateral business linkages.

Connectivity remains closely linked with the economic relationship. Improved land, maritime, air and digital connectivity has the potential to reduce trade costs and strengthen supply chains between India and Thailand. The development of regional connectivity initiatives, including the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, is expected to support trade, investment, tourism and business-to-business engagement while creating stronger economic links between India, Thailand and the wider ASEAN region.

INDIA - THAILAND MARITIME BOUNDARY

India and Thailand are maritime neighbours, sharing a maritime boundary in the Andaman Sea, which connects the two countries through the wider Bay of Bengal and Indo-Pacific region.

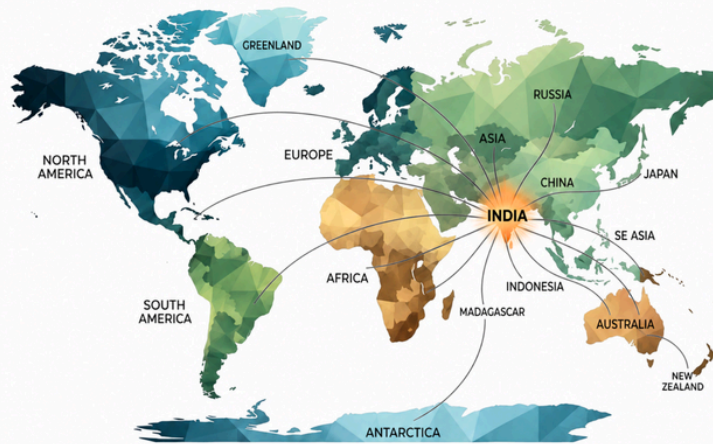
The maritime boundary was formally delimited through an agreement signed on 22 June 1978. The maritime proximity of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Thailand's western coast has made maritime cooperation an important pillar of bilateral relations.

The Indian Navy and Royal Thai Navy conduct coordinated patrols and cooperate in strengthening maritime security and addressing challenges such as illegal fishing, smuggling, drug trafficking and other transnational crimes.

The shared maritime boundary therefore remains an important strategic link, supporting closer cooperation in security, trade, connectivity and regional stability.



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