

India-Thailand Relations

India-Thailand relations are marked by cultural ties and mutual cooperation that have been shaped by centuries of deep-rooted historical and cultural connections.

India-Thailand relations are an important topic in the international relations segment of the UPSC Mains Exam.

Background of India-Thailand Relations

Upon India's independence in 1947, full diplomatic relations were established in 1947. But the relations between the two were minimal at best as there was little incentive for India to look towards Thailand in terms of economy and trade. Additionally, Cold War politics put them in opposite camps of two superpower blocs of USSR and USA. Post the East Asian economic boom of the 1970s and the end of the Cold War in changed the situation. Ever since then the relations have between Thailand and India have been largely cordial.

It was since 2001 that the Indo-Thai relations have seen remarkable growth with an increase in economic and commercial links, high-lever visits and signing of various agreements. India and Thailand are cooperating in various multilateral forums such as ASEAN and the sub-regional grouping BIMSTEC involving Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal and Bhutan

India is a member of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) initiated by Thailand in 2002 and of the Mekong–Ganga Cooperation (MGC), a group of six countries.

Indo-Thai Cultural ties

Centuries of deep-rooted historical and cultural connections have lent shape to the India-Thailand relationships. Geographical proximity had led to extensive people-to-people contacts and a long history of bilateral diplomatic relations which would gradually evolve into a mutually beneficial partnership

Most of the Thai language has its roots in the ancient Sanskrit and Pali languages which originated in India. Buddhism which spread under the reign of King Ashoka of the Mauryan Empire made its way to Thailand, becoming the principal religion of the country. Drawing inspiration from India art as and legends, Thai religious practices, art, architecture and music flourished throughout the centuries of historic ties.

The Hindu epic Ramayana has greatly influenced the Thai lore of Ramakien, from which the classical dances of Khon and Lakhon derived their inspiration. The Thai festivals of Songkran and Loy Krathong are enthused by the Indian festivals of Holi and Diwali.

Recent development regarding the India-Thai relations

In the recent past, India's Look East policy has complemented Thailand's Look West policy, which has greatly helped in bringing the two countries closer economically, politically, and culturally.

An Extradition Treaty was signed in 2013 between the governments of India and Thailand. The treaty established a robust framework for facilitating extradition of fugitives, including those involved in economic offences, drug smuggling, transnational crimes and terrorism.

This will help both the countries in expediting extradition of fugitives. The treaty said it would further strengthen the relationship between two law enforcement agencies by providing a firm legal basis for their bilateral cooperation.

The Thai Prime Minister welcomed the signing of the extradition treaty. Both the countries agreed to pursue Infrastructure development corridors on the lines of the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway project. In addition, New Delhi and Bangkok agreed to take up an Indo-Thai exchange programme to enhance economic, scientific, educational, technical and cultural ties

Overall the security relationship is relatively undeveloped. India has provided assistance to Thais to combat separatists in Southern Thailand in return for Thai authorities taking action against Indian separatists using Thailand as a supply route for arms originating in Cambodia.

In 2019 it was reported that the trade between the two countries had gone up by 60%. This can be possibly attributed to a series of MOU's signed between Thai and Indian ports in the previous years in order to bust maritime trade.