

**Ministry of External Affairs
Southern Division**

INDIA - AUSTRALIA BILATERAL RELATIONS

I OVERVIEW

The India-Australia bilateral relationship has undergone evolution in recent years, developing along a positive track, into a friendly partnership. The two nations have much in common, underpinned by shared values of a pluralistic, Westminster-style democracies, Commonwealth traditions, expanding economic engagement and increasing high level interaction. Several commonalities, including strong, vibrant, secular and multicultural democracies, free press, independent judicial system and English language, serve as a foundation for a closer co-operation and multifaceted interaction. Australia has joined now as a fellow traveller in our commitment to Disarmament, Global peace, North-South Dialogue, Human rights, Environmental protection and combating International terrorism. The long-standing people-to-people ties, ever increasing Indian students coming to Australia for higher education, growing tourism and sporting links, especially Cricket and Hockey, have played a significant role in further strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries.

The **historical ties** between India and Australia started immediately following European settlement in Australia from 1788. All trade to and fro from the penal colony of New South Wales was controlled by the British East India Company through Kolkata. India and Australia established diplomatic relations in the pre-Independence period, with the establishment of India Trade Office in Sydney in 1941. The end of the Cold War and simultaneously India's decision to launch major economic reforms in 1991 provided the first positive move towards development of closer ties between the two nations. Trade and commercial links between the two nations began to develop and this economic cooperation has continued to deepen since the turn of the century. With passage of time, the relationship gained momentum towards a strategic relationship, alongside the existing economic engagement.

India-Australia Strategic Relationship: With the changing global scenario, Australia has come to look at India as an important partner in promoting regional security and stability. This led to upgradation of bilateral relationship between the two nations to a '**Strategic Partnership**', including a **Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2009**. Over the years an array of institutional mechanism has been put in place to promote bilateral co-operation through a variety of mechanism such as exchange of high level visits, Annual Meetings of Prime Ministers of both the countries, Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue, Joint Trade & Commerce Ministerial Commission, India-Australia '2+2' Foreign Secretaries and Defence Secretaries Dialogue, Defence Policy Talks including Policy talks at the level of Senior Officials, Staff Talks, Energy Security Dialogue and Australia-India Education Council. **The Australian foreign policy blueprint** released in November 2017 sees India in the front rank of Australia's international partnerships. It says, "Beyond an increasingly important economic relationship, our security interests are congruent, particularly in relation to the stability and openness of the Indian Ocean. Both the countries have common interests in upholding international law, especially in relation to freedom of navigation and maritime security". Australia strongly encourages India's strategic engagement with East Asia and the United States.

II) RECENT POLITICAL INTERACTION

Over the years, both governments recognized that there is significant potential for further cooperation across a broad range of areas. The two countries have built upon and created a partnership based on both principle and pragmatism. The two-way **Prime Ministerial visits** in 2014 built significant momentum in the bilateral relationship, signifying

the growing depth of the India-Australia strategic partnership and building on converging interests, shared values and common democratic institutions. India's relations with Australia reached a new high during 2018 with **the first ever visit of the President of India to Australia in November 2018**. Rashtrapati's visit to Australia was preceded by the **visit of Governor General of Australia to India in March 2018** to attend the founding conference of the International Solar Alliance. **Prime Ministers of both the countries also met twice during 2018** - on 19th April 2018 on the sidelines of London CHOGM and on November 14, 2018 on the sidelines of EAS Summit in Singapore giving significant impetus to the strategic partnership between both the countries. **On June 29, 2019 also Prime Ministers of both the countries held bilateral meetings on the sidelines of G-20 Summit held in Osaka, Japan.**

During his visit to Australia in November 2018, President unveiled the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Parramatta in New South Wales as part of the ongoing 150th Birth Anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, and addressed a large gathering of Indian diaspora and local community. Prime Minister Scott Morrison also attended the function. Five Memorandum of Understanding were exchanged during the Rashtrapati's visit.

Prime Ministerial Visits: Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott visited India from 04-05 September 2014, During the visit, four Agreements/ MoUs on Civil Nuclear Cooperation, Sports, Water resources and Skills were signed along with a number of significant initiative were launched. On this occasion, PM Abbott handed back two stolen statues of Nataraja and Ardhanarishwara, which were with Australian museums. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Australia for G20 Leaders' Summit at Brisbane in November 2014, followed by bilateral visit from 16-18 November 2014. During the visit, he held wide-ranging talks with then PM Abbott and addressed a joint sitting of both houses of Parliament, the first by an Indian PM. "Framework for Security cooperation between India and Australia" and five other Agreements/MoUs on Social security, Tourism, Arts & Culture, Sentenced persons and combating Narcotics were signed on this occasion. Prime Ministers also met in Hangzhou on the sidelines of G-20 in September 2016.

Former Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull paid a State Visit to India from 09-12 April 2017. During discussions, both PM Turnbull and PM Modi committed to deepening the bilateral defence and security partnership and welcomed the significant progress achieved through the bilateral Framework for Security Cooperation, agreed in 2014. Both leaders committed to deepening economic relationship with greater emphasis on energy, education, science and innovation, sports and health cooperation and strengthening international rule based systems. Six bilateral agreements / MoUs on Cooperation in combating International terrorism & transnational organized crime, Health and Medicine, Sports, Environment, Climate and Wildlife, Civil Aviation society and Space technology were signed during the visit.

Other Ministerial visits: A number of high-level delegations at the Ministerial level visited Australia from India in 2018. Minister of Health & Family Welfare Shri J. P. Nadda visited Australia from February 18 to 21, 2018 to participate in the Inaugural Meeting of the Global Digital Health Partnership in Canberra and International Digital Health Symposium in Sydney. Shri Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, Minister of State for Youth Affairs & Sports visited Australia from April 12 to 16, 2018 to represent India at the closing ceremony of the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Shri Suresh Prabhu visited Canberra and Sydney from June 24 to 26, 2018 for the 15th India-Australia Joint Ministerial Commission, which was held on 25th June 2018 in Canberra. Shri Prakash Javadekar, Minister for Human Resource Development visited Australia from June 28 to July 03, 2018 to participate in the 4th meeting of Australia-India Education Council.

Foreign Ministers' Framework Dialogue (FMFD), the central mechanism for advancing the bilateral agenda, is held annually, alternatively in India and Australia. Foreign Minister Ms Julie Bishop visited India on 18-19 July, 2017 for the annual FMFD in New Delhi with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj. During the visit, she also called on PM Narendra Modi, held meeting with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and delivered her second Indo-Pacific Oration at

ORF in Delhi. EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj met with Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne on September 25, 2018 in New York on the sidelines of UNGA. Foreign Minister Marise Payne visited India on January 08-09, 2019 to participate in the Raisina Dialogue. During the visit Senator Payne met with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Defence Minister Mrs. Nirmala Sitharman and NSA Mr. Ajit Doval. This was Senator Payne's first visit to India as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

India-Australia '2+2' Foreign Secretaries and Defence Secretaries Dialogue: India and Australia agreed in 2015 to hold annual meetings of Foreign and Defence Secretaries (2+2) to enhance foreign policy and security cooperation; the inaugural Dialogue was held in New Delhi on 12th December 2017. The 2nd Dialogue was in Canberra on October 10, 2018,

Trilateral Dialogues: (a) India-Australia-Japan Trilateral Dialogue: A closer strategic cooperation was also evident in the inaugural Secretary-level trilateral talks between India, Australia and Japan held in New Delhi in June 2015. The second Foreign Secretary level trilateral talks were held in Tokyo on 26 February 2016 and the third took place in Canberra on 29 April 2017. The 4th India-Australia-Japan Trilateral Dialogue was held in New Delhi on 13 December 2017. **(b) Indonesia-Australia-India Trilateral Dialogue:** The 1st Indonesia-Australia-India Senior Officials' Strategic Dialogue was held in Bogor, Indonesia on 27th November 2017. The second dialogue was held in Canberra on September 21, 2018.

Other recent Important Bilateral Mechanisms Talks: India-Australia Dialogue on East Asia is also held at senior official level. The sixth round of the dialogue was held in Canberra in June 2018. The senior officials-level **Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism** met in Canberra in May 2019. The JWG had previously focused on Counter-Terrorism only, but in November 2014, Prime Ministers agreed to include transnational crime in the Working Group, under the framework for Security Cooperation. The 3rd **India-Australia Bilateral Dialogue on Global Cyber Issues** was held in New Delhi on September 04, 2019. On November 1st 2018, India and Australia held bilateral **consultations on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament issues** in Canberra. On 2nd November 2018, **4th India-Australia Maritime Dialogue** was held in Canberra. Defence Policy Talks were held on March 14, 2019. JWG on Tourism was held in Sydney on April 15, 2019.

The inaugural **Australia-India Leadership Dialogue**, jointly hosted by Australia India Institute and CII, was held in New Delhi in June, 2015, with participation from Government, Business, Public Life, Civil Society and media. The 2nd Dialogue in Melbourne during 04-05 December 2016 involved several keynote speakers, including former PM Malcolm Turnbull, Sh. Y. Ramakrishnu, Finance Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Senator Penny Wong, Labor's shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. Andrew Robb, former Trade Minister. The latest edition of the Australia India Leadership Dialogue was held in New Delhi on 22nd January 2018, which was attended by Mr. David Littleproud, Agriculture Minister of Australia, Leader of the Opposition in the Australian Senate, Ms. Penny Wong, Shri Shashi Tharoor, MP, Lok Sabha, Dr. A. M. Gondane, High Commissioner of India to Australia among other dignitaries.

India and Australia also co-operate in various **multilateral fora**. **Australia supports India's candidature in an expanded UN Security Council.** Both India and Australia are members of the Commonwealth, IORA, ASEAN Regional Forum, Asia Pacific Partnership on Climate and Clean Development, and have participated in the East Asia Summits. Both countries have also been cooperating as members of the Five Interested Parties (FIP) in the WTO context. **Australia is an important player in APEC and supports India's membership of the organisation.** In 2008, Australia became an Observer in SAARC.

III) BILATERAL ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONSHIP

The India-Australia economic relationship has grown significantly in recent years. India's growing economic profile and commercial relevance to the Australian economy is

recognized, both at the federal and state level in Australia. The **7th India-Australia Economic Policy Dialogue** was held in Canberra during 16-18 July, 2017. As part of its efforts to develop strong economic relationship with India, the Australian government commissioned the **India Economic Strategy** to define a pathway for Australia to unlock opportunities offered by Indian Economic growth. The strategy aims for a clear exposition of the kind of relationship Australia should aspire to have with India out to 2035. The paper was released on July 12, 2018 in the presence of the Australian Prime Minister. The Paper identifies ten key sectors (Education as flagship sector; Agribusiness, Resources and Tourism as lead sectors; Energy, Health, Financial Services, Infrastructure, Sports, Science & Innovation as Promising Sectors) and ten states in India (Andhra Pradesh, Delhi NCR, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, UP and West Bengal) where Australia should focus efforts. During the Rashtrapatiiji's recent visit to Australia in November 2018, Australian Prime Minister announced the response of the Australian government to the IES Report providing in-principle support to the Strategy's 20 priority recommendations, as well as agreeing to an initial round of measures under an ongoing implementation plan. He also accepted the recommendations of the IES report to take necessary measures to increase the Australian investment from current AUD 10 billion to 100 billion by 2035.

India-Australia Joint Ministerial Commission: India-Australia Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) was established in 1989 to enable interaction at a government and business level on a range of trade and investment related issues. JMC meetings are held regularly. Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Shri Suresh Prabhu visited Canberra and Sydney from June 24 to 26, 2018. He co-chaired the 15th India-Australia Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC), which was held on 25th June 2018 in Canberra, with Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment. The Ministers discussed at length on ways to increase two-way investment flows between the two countries. In Canberra, the Commerce Minister called on Prime Minister. He also had extensive bilateral meetings with the Treasurer, Agriculture & Water Resources Minister and Foreign Minister. In the second leg of his visit, the Commerce Minister addressed representatives of about 25 Australian Superfunds in Sydney on June 26. The Minister informed them about the work being done in transforming India and about the many investment opportunities that are being generated for investors. He focused on structural changes and increased digitization and the measures being taken in making the processes of doing business in India easier. He invited the Australian Superfunds to invest in India. This was followed by further presentations by Invest-India and Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation on details of specific projects that Australian Superfunds may invest in.

Bilateral Trade: India is the 5th largest trade partner of Australia with trade in goods and services at A\$ 29 billion representing 3.6% share of the total Australian trade in 2017-18, with export at A\$ 8 billion and import at A\$ 21 billion. Overall trade increased 13.1% on yoy basis. While imports increased 9.7% on yoy basis, export increased by an impressive 23.3% although on a lower base. India's main exports to Australia are Refined Petroleum, medicaments, Railway vehicles including hover-trains, Pearls & Gems, Jewellery, made up textile articles, while our major imports are Coal, copper ores & concentrates, Gold, vegetables, wool & other animal hair, fruits and nuts, lentils and education related services. The two countries are also discussing a **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)**, however, the progress is currently stalled.

Australia Business Week in India (ABWI): Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Steven Ciobo led the 170-member business delegation to India for the 2nd ABWI during 28 August – 01 September, 2017, focusing on bilateral cooperation in Mining, Agribusiness, Higher Education, Innovation and Smart Infrastructure.

India-Australia CEO Forum is a mechanism for business from both nations to engage directly on ways to build the bilateral trade and investment relationship (It was established in 2011 and revitalised in November 2014) . The Forum includes heads of Indian and Australian

business from a broad range of sectors, including energy and resources, agribusiness, financial sector, telecommunications, IT, education and pharmaceuticals. **The last meeting (CEO Dialogue) was held in Sydney in November 2018 during the visit of Rashtrapati ji to Australia.**

Australia's Minister for Resource Matt Canvan visited India from 26 to August 2019 and held discussions with CIM, Minister of Coals & Mines , Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gases and other stakeholders.

IV) CIVIL NUCLEAR CO-OPERATION

A Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between the two countries was signed in September 2014 during the visit of then PM Tony Abbott to India. The agreement came into force from 13 November 2015 and provides the framework for substantial new trade in energy between Australia and India. The Australian Parliament passed the "Civil Nuclear Transfer to India Bill 2016" on 01 December, 2016 which ensures that Uranium mining companies in Australia may fulfil contracts to supply Australian uranium to India for civil use with confidence that exports would not be hindered by domestic legal action challenging the consistency of the safeguards applied by the IAEA in India and Australia's international non-proliferation obligations. It also ensures that any future bilateral trade in other nuclear-related material or items for civil use will also be protected.

V) DEFENCE CO-OPERATION

Former Raksha Mantri Shri A. K. Antony paid the **first ever official visit by an Indian Defence Minister to Australia** during 04-05 June, 2013. During his visit, he held talks with the then Australian Defence Minister Stephen Smith and called on the then Prime Minister Ms Julia Gillard. The Defence Ministers recognised the rapid progress made in Defence relations through the framework of bilateral talks at the level of Defence Ministries, and service-to-service interaction, defence training and exchanges of visits by Service Chiefs and Senior Officers. Defence Ministers of both the countries held bilateral meeting in Singapore in October 2018 on the sidelines of the ADMM plus. Former Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne and Chief of Australian Navy Vice Admiral Tim Berrett visited India in January 2018 for bilateral discussions with their counterparts. They also participated in the Raisina Dialogue. Both the countries also held usual Army to Army Staff Talks, Navy to Navy Staff Talks and Air Force to Air Force Staff Talks during the year.

During PM's visit to Australia in November 2014, both sides decided to **extend defence cooperation** to cover research, development and industry engagement and agreed to hold regular meetings at the level of the Defence Minister, conduct regular maritime exercises and convene regular service-to-service talks. As a result, the then Australian Defence Minister Mr. Kevin Andrews visited India during 01-03 September 2015 for bilateral talks, including issues related to Security co-operation with Raksha Mantri Manohar Parrikar. Our CNS Admiral RK Dhowan visited Australia during 02-07 October 2015 for bilateral talks, attended Sea Power Conference 2015 in Sydney and signed a **Technical Agreement on White Shipping Information Exchange**. Defence Policy Talks and Service to Service Staff talks are also regularly held.

In October 2013 Australian Navy conducted an International Fleet Review in Sydney where Indian Navy's ship INS Sahyadri participated. Indian Coastguard Ship 'Sankalp' visited Port Darwin in the first week of December 2014 and two Indian ships, INS Satpura and INS Kamorta visited Fremantle Port, Perth, in the first week of June 2015 as a goodwill visit. Indian Naval Offshore Patrol vessel 'Sumitra' visited Sydney during 04-07 November, 2016 and Darwin during 06-09 December 2016 with the aim of strengthening bilateral ties and enhancing maritime security cooperation. The first-ever **Bilateral Maritime Exercise, AUSINDEX 15**, was conducted in Visakhapatnam and the Bay of Bengal in September 2015. Australian Naval ship HMAS Darwin participated in the **International Fleet Review** conducted off the coast of

Vishakhapatnam during 04-08 February 2016. Chief of Royal Australian Navy, Vice Admiral Tim Barrett and thirty men military band participated in IFR 2016.

The **bilateral visits and talks by Services Chiefs** continued in 2016 with Australian Chief of Army, Lt. General Angus Campbell visiting India during 11-16 January, 2016 for bilateral calls, talks on bilateral defence and Army to Army relationships. General Dalbir Singh, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited Australia during 11-14 July, 2016 for bilateral calls, discussions with Australian Chief of Defence forces, Chief of Army, Chief of Navy and other Senior Defence officials and visited various Defence establishments, including newly commissioned RAN Ship HMAS Adelaide and naval establishment HMAS Kuttabul. Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, Chief of the Air Staff visited Australia during 19-23 September 2017 for bilateral calls and talks on India-Australia defence cooperation. ACM Dhanoa also held discussions with Air Marshal Leo Davies, Chief of Australian Air Force and other senior Defence officials. Defence Industry, Minister Christopher visited India from 16th to 18th January, 2018 to attend the 'Raisina Dialogue'. He also held bilateral discussions with Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, Defence Minister. Chief of Royal Australian Navy Vice Admiral Tim Berrett visited India from 15th to 20th January 2018. He participate in the Raisina Dialogue. His other engagements included meeting with the Chiefs of Indian Army, Navy & Air Force. He also had a meeting with the Defence Secretary. He also met with C-in-C, Western Naval Command, C-in-C, Southern Naval Command & Commandant, INS Ezhimala.

The second bilateral maritime exercise, **AUSINDEX 2017** was conducted off the coast of Freemantle, Australia during 17-19 June 2017 in which three Indian Naval Ships, Shivalik, Kamorta and Jyoti participated. Vice-Admiral and Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Naval Command HCS Bisht also visited Australia during this period. (**AUSINDEX 2019** was held in April 2019) Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Vaibhav' visited Darwin, Australia in February 2017 as part of its tri-nation tour to Singapore, Australia and Malaysia. An Australian Naval ship HMAS Larrakia participated in 'MILAN' Naval exercise in Andaman & Nicobar Islands in March 2018. In 2018, Indian Air Force participated for the first time in **the Exercise Pitch Black** in Australia from 27th July – 17th August. INS Sahyadri participated in Kakadu, the biennial Exercise of the Australian Navy held from 30th August to 15th September, 2018, in which 27 nations participated. The third edition of **AUSTRAHIND** (Special Forces of Army Exercise) was held in September 2018.

Other areas of Defence Cooperation included visit of a delegation led by Secretary, Department of Defence Research and Development and Director General, DRDO to Australia during 17-21 April 2016 for **exploring collaboration in Defence Science and Technology**. The **3rd India-Australia Track 1.5 Dialogue** was held in Perth on 01 August 2016 in which Ambassador Jayant Prasad, DG, IDSA and Defence Ministry Officials held meetings with their counterparts in Australia. A delegation led by JS (D&ISA) MEA, with representatives from Ministries of Defence, Shipping and Earth Sciences, visited Canberra during 13-14 October 2016 for **Non-Proliferation/Disarmament talks and 2nd India-Australia Maritime Affairs Dialogue**.

VI) AGRICULTURE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

An Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF) has been set up; the two countries have identified a number of collaborative research projects in areas such as agricultural research, astronomy and astrophysics, environmental sciences, microelectronics, nanotechnology, renewable energy, marine sciences and earth systems sciences. The tenth anniversary of the AISRF was celebrated during the recent visit of PM Turnbull to India.

The fund, where each side contributed A\$ 65 million over a five-year period, supports large-scale research projects designed to deliver practical solutions, focussing on energy, food and water security, health and the environment. AISRF consists of **India Australia Biotechnology Fund; India-Australia Science & Technology Fund; Grand Challenge Fund and Fellowship Schemes**. This is in addition to \$ 40 million committed earlier by both sides to support joint research in the above fields and \$ 20 million for the Australian Centre for

International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) to undertake joint research in dry-land agriculture in India. **Joint Committees on S&T and Biotechnology** have been established to administer the Fund. The Australian side is also cooperating in our **Clean Ganga Project** as agreed during visit of our PM to Australia in 2014. Secretary (Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation) led a delegation to Australia during 19-25 June 2016 for bilateral cooperation on water resource management, including discussion on Ganga Rejuvenation. A high level joint delegation from Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Gang Rejuvenation & Ministry of Agriculture visited Australia from 05 to 08.12.2017 for enhancing cooperation & knowledge sharing as expressed in the MOU signed between both the countries in September 2004 on cooperation in the field of water resources management. Discussions were held on matter relating to policy and governance of National Water Management, best practices in community led management, last mile irrigation, irrigation efficiency, water efficiency & pricing, ground water management etc. Delegation was given a presentation on the management of Murray Darling Basin of Australia and the concept of trading in water access licences.

VIII) RESOURCES AND ENERGY SECURITY

Shri Piyush Goyal, the then Minister of State (I/C) for Coal, Power and New & Renewable Energy, accompanied by a business delegation, visited Australia during 08-11 February 2016 to participate in the **India-Australia Energy Security Dialogue**, jointly chaired by him and Federal Minister of Resources, Energy and Northern Australia Mr. Josh Frydenberg. He also held bilateral talks with Mr. Andrew Robb, the then Minister for Trade and Investment, NSW Premier Mr. Mike Baird and attended the five Roundtable events on Energy Security and renewable energy issues. Shri Goyal again led a delegation to Australia in October 2016 for bilateral discussion with Federal Minister for Resources Mr. Matthew Canavan and addressed the Roundtable events on Clean Energy renewables and LNG.

A Joint Working Group on Energy and Minerals was established in 1999 to expand bilateral relationship in the energy and resources sector. **The 8th JWG meeting** held in New Delhi in June 2013 discussed latest developments on trade and investment, energy and mineral policy and agreed to a new Work Programme for activities under each of the five Action Plans, viz., Mining and Minerals, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Coal, Power and Renewable Energy. As energy is the central pillar of economic cooperation, both sides agreed during the visit of our Prime Minister to Australia in November 2014 to cooperate on transfer of clean coal technology and welcomed Australia's desire to upgrade the Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad. **The 9th JWG meeting** in Brisbane in June 2015, provided the opportunity to discuss recent resources and energy policy developments and reforms, including opportunities and challenges in mining; petroleum and gas; power; new and renewable energy, as well as challenges in skills, science and innovation and infrastructure. The JWG also concluded Research agreement on beneficiation between CSIRO and NMDC and MoU on cooperation and development between CSIRO and ISM, Dhanbad. **Secretary (Coal)** led a delegation to Australia during 19-23 June 2017 to explore further cooperation in Coal Mining sector, including safety and cutting edge technology and implementation of clean coal technology. A high level delegation from Ministry of Mines, along with officials/representatives from Geological Survey of India, Indian Bureau of Mines and State Governments of Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh, visited Australia during 04-09 September 2017 to learn exploration techniques, mining technology and equipment and improvement of mining environment.

During her visit to India in July 2017, Foreign Minister Ms Julie Bishop signed a framework agreement for Australia to join the **International Solar Alliance**, led by the Governments of India and France. In December 2017, the Australian government formally ratified the agreement.

VIII) EDUCATION, SPORTS, ART AND CULTURE

The **Joint Working Group on Education** between the two countries has identified several key areas for co-operation, including collaborative research in education policy, student exchange programmes, capacity building in vocational education and distance learning in higher education. The number of **Indian students currently enrolled for studying in Australia** is around 70,000 with 50% in higher education and rest in vocational and educational training. Under the **New Colombo Plan** of Australian government, 900 Australian undergraduates have studied and completed internships in India during the period 2015-16.

Australia-India Education Council meeting: Shri Prakash Javadekar, Minister for Human Resource Development (HRM) visited Australia from June 28 to July 03, 2018 to participate in the 4th meeting of Australia-India Education Council (AIEC). The delegation included senior officials from MHRD and academicians. On June 29, HRM participated in the 4th meeting of AIEC in Adelaide along with Australian Minister for Education and Training. Ministers witnessed the signing of a number of new partnerships between Australian and Indian educational institutions, including an agreement between Western Sydney University and India's Centurion University, a joint PhD agreement between Curtin University and IIT Guwahati, and a MoU between Deakin University and the Central University of Jammu. In Adelaide, HRM interacted with Indian students at the University of Adelaide, visited 3-D Printing facility at ThinkLab of the University. During AIEC, the Australian Government committed \$5 million for the Australia India Institute to drive closer collaboration between Australian and Indian educational institutions. In the second leg of the visit, the Minister visited Melbourne from July 02-03, 2018 and had detailed discussions with faculty and educational experts at three top universities- Deakin, University of Melbourne and Monash University to further strengthen the academic & research collaboration between the two countries. MoUs between AIIMS and Deakin University and JIPMER and Deakin University were signed during the visit.

Former Minister for Education and Training, Christopher Pyne visited India during 23-25 August, 2015 for the 3rd meeting of the **Australia India Education Council (AIEC)**. He was accompanied by 40 Vice Chancellors, academics and senior officials, including former cricketer Adam Gilchrist AM as Australia's new education ambassador to India. During the visit, Mr. Pyne also inaugurated the joint IIT Bombay-Monash University campus in Mumbai. During PM's visit to Australia in November 2014, both sides welcomed cooperation between Australian and Indian Universities and in particular, Joint PhD Programme to encourage research, promote school level cooperation under which an Australian team can come and study 5-7 States in India and promote Universities tie-ups. Coinciding with the visit of Australian PM to India in April 2017, **former Education Minister Simon Birmingham** led a large delegation of Australians Vice-Chancellors, academics and educationists to India for collaboration in higher education, vocational training and skill development.

Australia has also agreed to help in establishing a world class **Sports University in India**. Secretary (Sports) Sh. Rajiv Yadav led a delegation to Australia during 07-11 October 2016 for study and discussion with Australian Sports University for setting up National Sports University in India. A MoU on Cooperation in **Sports** was signed during visit of former PM Turnbull to India in April 2017. A MoU in the field of **Tourism** was signed between the two countries during the visit of PM Modi to Australia in November 2014.

Confluence, Festival of India in Australia, consisted of 72 events by outstanding Indian Cultural troops and artists across seven cities in Australia over a period of 86 days from August to November, 2016. The Festival promoted Brand India in Australia. The response to the Festival was excellent with total footfall during the festival estimated to be 91,500, including attendance by several Australian dignitaries. **Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (I/C) for Culture and Tourism**, visited Australia during Sept. 18-19, 2016 for inauguration of Confluence Festival and bilateral engagement with Federal Minister for Communications and Arts, Senator Mitch Fifield. Following the success of the Festival, Following the success of Festival of India in Australia, **Confluence 2** was also organised in Australia during September-

October 2017. India and Australia have also been cooperating in identifying and return of stolen Artefacts, which have been illegally smuggled out of India to various galleries and cultural institutions worldwide, including Art Galleries in Australia.

IX) CONSULAR COOPERATION

The **Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) and the Extradition Treaty** between India and Australia, which were **signed in June 2008**, have been ratified by both the Governments, and have entered into force on 20 January 2011. A **Joint Working Group (JWG) on Visas, Passports, and Consular Matters** was established during the visit of Foreign Minister Stephen Smith to India in September 2008. Regular meetings of the JWG are held, with the last **5th India-Australia JWG** taking place in Canberra during 20-21 October, 2015. Issues relating to Bio-metric, Border Management and illegal migration, Extradition, MLAT, Surrogacy, Visa etc are part of the discussion between the two nations. India and Australia signed a **Social Security Agreement** on the eve of our PM's visit to Australia in November 2014. The Agreement has been ratified by both countries and came into force with effect from 1 January 2016.

X INDIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA

The Indian community in Australia continues to grow in size and importance, with the population of nearly half a million (2.1 % of the population), and another over 1,50,000 persons of Indian descent immigrated from other countries (Fiji, Malaysia, Kenya and South Africa). India is one of the top sources of skilled immigrants to Australia. There is a constant flow of students and tourists from India. The number of Indian students continue to grow with approximately 90,000 students presently studying in Australian universities. India is now the third largest source of immigrants to Australia, after UK and New Zealand and the largest source of skilled professionals for Australia. The growing significance of the community is reflected in the large scale celebration of Indian festivals in Australia, especially Deepawali. The Hindu Council of Australia celebrated Deepawali at the Federal Parliament in November 2018.

XI) FUTURE PROSPECTS OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

In coming years, the overall relationship between India and Australia will continue to grow and has the potential to assume greater prominence. The prospects for bilateral relationship are recognised in both countries as strategically useful, economically productive and aligned with each other's new agenda. The several commonalities and closely aligned values in principles of democracy, liberty, the rule of law, human rights, freedom of speech, free press and multiculturalism serve as a foundation for a closer co-operation, multifaceted interaction and enhancement of bilateral relationship.

September 2019