

## **India-Brunei Darussalam Bilateral Brief**

India and Brunei Darussalam (Brunei) enjoy a warm and friendly relationship which is marked by mutual respect. The two countries are linked by history, culture and tradition spanning a millennium. The diplomatic ties between the countries were established on 10 May 1984, following Brunei's independence from the British. This year marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of our relationship.

2. The relationship between India and Brunei is based on strong traditional and cultural linkages and common membership of UN, NAM and Commonwealth. The Sultan and Yang di-Pertuan of Brunei, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah has paid State Visits to India in 1992 and 2008 and attended the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summits in 2012 and 2018.

3. Brunei is India's key partner in the ASEAN region and in India's vision of the Indo-Pacific. Brunei is also a participant country in India's Nalanda University endeavour. Brunei, as Country Coordinator in ASEAN-India relations from July 2012 till June 2015, played an important role in India's engagement with ASEAN.

4. Our bilateral ties are reflected in our diverse cooperation sectors including in the domains of energy and space cooperation. Bilateral trade between the countries was at USD 286.20 million in 2023-24. There exists vast potential for economic cooperation between the countries. An MoU for implementation of defence cooperation was signed between India and Brunei in 2016, which was renewed in 2021.

5. Malai Haji Abdullah Bin Malai Haji Othman, founder of the Society for Management of Autism Related issues training, education, resources in Brunei was awarded Padma Shri for Social Work in 2018.

### **Political Relations**

6. Following establishment of diplomatic relations in 1984, Indian Mission in

Brunei was established on 18 May 1993. Prior to this, the Indian Mission in Kuala Lumpur was concurrently accredited to Brunei. Brunei's resident High Commission was established in India on 12 August 1992, which was headed by an Acting High Commissioner. Prior to that, Brunei's High Commissioner in Malaysia, was concurrently accredited to India.

### **Exchange of visits by Head of State/Government**

#### **From Brunei:**

7. The Sultan of Brunei Haji Hassanal Bolkiah undertook his first State Visit to India from 15-18 September 1992. The second State Visit of the Sultan was on 20-23 May 2008. The Sultan also visited India to participate in the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to mark 20 years of India-ASEAN Partnership Dialogue on 20-21 December 2012. On 24-26 January 2018, the Sultan visited India on his fourth visit for the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to mark 25 years of India-ASEAN Dialogue Partnership. The Sultan also witnessed the Republic Day Parade on 26 January 2018 as Chief Guest along with the Heads of State and Governments of other ASEAN Member States.

#### **From India:**

8. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the Sultan of Brunei first met on the sidelines of ASEAN related Summits at Nay Pyi Taw on 12 November 2014. The two leaders also met on the sidelines of the ASEAN related Summits on 14 November 2017 in Manila.

9. The first-ever visit of Prime Minister of India to Brunei was in October 2013 for ASEAN-related Summits. Vice President visited Brunei on 1-3 February 2016.

10. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Dato Haji Erywan on the sidelines of the ASEAN meetings in Vientiane, Laos on 26 July 2024 and launched a logo celebrating 40 years of diplomatic relations of both the countries. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Dato Haji Erywan participated virtually in the Foreign Ministers' Session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Voice of Global South

Summit on 17 August 2024.

### **Major Mechanisms**

11. Foreign Office Consultations: A decision to establish a Joint Committee Meeting for Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) to exchange views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest, was made in February 1995, through a Joint Statement during the visit of Pehin Lim Jock Seng, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to India. Eight meetings have since been held; four in New Delhi in February 1995, February 1998, May 2005 and June 2019; and four in Brunei in May 1996, March 2002, December 2011 and July 2023. 8th Foreign Office Consultations between India and Brunei were held in Bandar Seri Begawan on 25th July 2023 which were co-chaired by Secretary (East) and Permanent Secretary, MoFA.

12. On 23 June 2021, the 1<sup>st</sup> JWG between India-Brunei on Health was held virtually. Both sides discussed areas of mutual cooperation including in pharmaceuticals and capacity building & training; and HR related issues. The two sides also agreed to renew the bilateral MoU on Health for a further period of 3 years.

13. Joint Trade Committee: The 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the bilateral Joint Trade Committee was held in Brunei in September 2018. The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting took place in March 2022 and was conducted in the virtual format.

### **MOUs/Agreements**

14. India and Brunei have various Agreements/MoUs. These include i) Air Services Agreement; ii) Cooperation in Culture, Arts & Sports; iii) Cooperation in Defence; iv) Cooperation in the operation of Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TTC) Station for satellite and launch vehicles and for Cooperation in the field of Space Research, Science and Applications; v) MoU on establishment of Joint Trade Committee Meetings; and vi) MoU on Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with Respect to Taxes. In addition, there are several MoUs/Agreements under discussion.

## **Defence Cooperation**

15. Defence relations between the two countries have been expanding. The cooperation is by way of regular official level defence exchanges, visit of naval and coast guard ships, training and joint exercises and participation in each other's defence exhibitions/ expositions etc. The MoU on Defence Cooperation was renewed for a further period of five years in 2021.

16. Visit of Navy Ships: Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS "SAGAR" in March 2014; INS Shakti in August 2014; INS-Airavat in May 2016; INS Satpura in November 2017; Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS 'Shaunak' in January 2019. INS Jalashwa visited Brunei in May 2021 to ferry to India Covid relief donated by the Indian diaspora. INS Shivalik & INS Kadmatt visited Muara Port in August 2021 for Passex with Brunei. Bruneian ship, 'KDB Darulaman', participated in MILAN 2012 (Andaman); and Royal Brunei Navy's Ship 'KP 80 DARU TTAQWA' visited India (Mumbai) in August 2014.

## **Space Cooperation**

17. Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TTC) Station: A bilateral agreement was signed in August 1997 for setting up of ISRO's TTC Station in Brunei. This was established in the year 2000 and has been functioning since. The latest MoU was signed in July 2018.

## **Capacity building**

18. Two ITEC slots are allotted to Brunei each year. Over the years, 37 Brunei nationals have attended various ITEC courses in India and 26 in virtual format. In 2019, India's capacity-building assistance to Brunei saw the participation of two candidates each in a 3 month course on Design of Nano Satellite in ISRO from Oct-Dec and in the 13<sup>th</sup> Special Course for Diplomats from ASEAN countries in November. In October 2020, 14 officials of the Ministry of Development of Brunei attended a 3-day online-course on Housing-related topics conducted by the Housing Settlement Management Institute under the e-ITEC programme, the first such online course with Brunei. In 2021-22 and 2022-23, twelve Brunei

officials attended e-ITEC programmes.

### **Indian Community**

19. The discovery of oil in 1929 brought several Indians to Brunei to work in the hydrocarbon sector and allied services. Currently, there are approximately 14000 Indian nationals living and working in Brunei, of which a majority are from the States of Tamil Nadu (over 40%), Uttar Pradesh (over 15%) and Kerala (over 10%). Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) awardees from Brunei include Late Shri Mohinder Singh for community service (2010), Mr. Nazir Ahmed Zakaria, President, Indian Chamber of Commerce (2017) and Dr. Alexander Maliakal John, Gastroenterologist (2023).

20. Indian socio-cultural associations, namely, Bandar Seri Begawan Indian Association (BSBIA), Indian Association of Belait (IAB) and Malayali Association (MA) organize cultural events to celebrate Indian festivals and National Days. The associations also undertake welfare activities such as blood donation camps, health camps, beach cleaning drives etc. There is a Brunei-India Friendship Association (BIFA), which was established in 2009. An Indian Overseas Professionals Network (IPON), an outreach platform for Indian Overseas Professionals residing in Brunei, was launched in December 2021.

21. There are many healthcare workers from India including doctors, nurses, lab technicians and paramedics working in Brunei. Other professionals from India include teachers, engineers, IT professionals among others.

22. Indian Chamber of Commerce was established in Brunei in July 1972 which currently has over 100 Indian business establishments as its members.

### **Cultural Relations**

23. There have been visits by ICCR sponsored cultural troupes from India to Brunei. In 2019, an ICCR-sponsored 8-member "Punjabi Sabhyachar Kender" troupe visited Brunei and gave five performances on the occasion of Independence Day of India. Under the Government of India's initiative of 'Promotion of Cultural Ties with Indian Diaspora' the High Commission

organised a cultural event “Utsav...the Celebration” on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2021 in the capital city, Bandar Seri Begawan. The second staging of the cultural programme was organised in Kuala Belait on 30 January 2021. As part of the “Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav” India@75 celebrations, High Commission had organized a range of events. These include blood donation drives, tree planting, free medical camp, beach cleaning drive, screening of Hindi movies, etc.

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