

High Commission of India
Brunei Darussalam

INDIA-BRUNEI BILATERAL RELATIONS

Political Relations

Diplomatic relations between India and Brunei were established on 10 May 1984. Indian Mission in Brunei was established on 18 May 1993. Before 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, headed by an Acting High Commissioner. Prior to that, Brunei's High Commissioner in Malaysia, was concurrently accredited to India.

Brunei and India share close relations based on their strong traditional & cultural linkages and common membership of UN, NAM, Commonwealth, ASEAN etc. The Sultan and Yang di-Pertuan of Brunei, Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah, has been amongst the strongest votary of close relations with India and, has supported and ensured the welfare of Indian community in Brunei. Brunei Government has been supportive of India's 'Look East Policy' and 'Act East Policy' for expansion and deepening of cooperation with ASEAN. Brunei, as Country Coordinator for India in ASEAN from July 2012 till June 2015, played an important role in bringing India closer to ASEAN. Brunei has been generally supportive of India and its candidature for elections to various international organisations.

Exchange of visits by Head of State/Government:

From Brunei:

1. The Sultan of Brunei Haji Hassanal Bolkiah undertook his first State Visit to India from 15-18 September 1992.
2. The second State Visit of the Sultan was on 20-23 May 2008. During the visit, five MoUs/Agreements were signed: (i) Agreement on Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments; (ii) MoU on Cooperation in Information and Communication Technology; (iii) MoU on Cooperation in the fields of Culture, Arts and Sports; (iv) MoU on the Establishment of Joint Trade Committee; (v) Renewal of MoU on Cooperation in the Operation of the Telemetry Tracking and Command (TTC) Station for Satellite and Launch Vehicles and for Cooperation in the field of Space Research Science and Applications.
3. The Sultan visited India to participate in the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit to mark 20 years of India-ASEAN Partnership Dialogue on 20-21 December 2012.
4. On 24-26 January 2018, the Sultan went to India on his fourth visit for the Commemorate Summit to mark 25 years of India-ASEAN Partnership Dialogue. The Sultan also witnessed the Republic Day Parade on 26 January along with the Heads of State and Governments of the other ASEAN Member States.

Members of the Royal Family:

1. HRH Princess Masna, Sultan's sister and Ambassador-at-Large in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, visited India in April 2000.

2. HRH Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, visited India to attend the ASEAN-European Ministerial Meeting (ASEM) held in New Delhi in November 2013.

From India:

1. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visited Brunei to participate in the 11th ASEAN-India Summit and the 8th EAS Summit held in Brunei on 9-10 October 2013. This was first-ever visit of Prime Minister of India to Brunei. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh had earlier met the Sultan of Brunei on the side-lines of 10th India-ASEAN Summit held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 18-20 November 2012.

2. Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister, and the Sultan first met on the sidelines of 25th ASEAN Summit at Nay Pyi Taw on 12 November 2014. The two leaders also met on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit on 14 November 2017 in Manila.

3. Hon'ble Vice President Shri M. Hamid Ansari visited Brunei on 1-3 Feb 2016. It was the first high level bilateral visit from India to Brunei. Three MOUs on Cooperation in Defence; Health; and Youth Affairs & Sports were signed during the visit.

Exchange of Ministerial and Senior Official level visits:

From India (2016 onwards):

1. Minister of State, Smt. Pramila Rani Brahma, Minister of Environment and Forests, Government of Assam, visited Brunei in December 2017 to invite Dato Ali Apong, Minister for Primary Resources and Tourism to attend the Global Investors' Summit - 'Advantage Assam' in February 2018, in Guwahati.

2. Minister of State, Shri Kailash Choudhary, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India, visited Brunei in October 2019 to attend the 5th ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry (AIMMAF).

Visits by Senior Officials from India:

1. A 12-member delegation led by Shri Arvind Mehta, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce attended the 11th round of RCEP Negotiations in Brunei in February 2016.

2. Smt. Meenakshi Sharma Joint Secretary (Tourism), Ministry of Tourism and Smt Kanchan Kukreja, Director, Regional Tourism Office, Singapore visited Brunei in July 2018 to attend the ASEAN-India JWG on Tourism.

3. Shri Rajneesh, JS (FT-ASEAN) and Smt. Indu Nair, Director (FT-ASEAN), Department of Commerce, visited Brunei to attend the 1st Joint Trade Committee Meeting in September 2018.

4. Shri Gyan Bhusan, Economic Adviser, Ministry of Tourism visited Brunei to attend the 23rd ASEAN - India Tourism Working Group Meeting in January 2020.

Visits by Defence Officers / Delegations:

1. A 16-member delegation, led by Major General Sunil Srivastava from the National Defence College (NDC) visited Brunei in May 2017.

2. Indian Navy Cdr Prakash Ayyagari and Cdr Venkatesh Prabhu visited Brunei to attend the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) 2019 held in Brunei in April-May 2019.

From Brunei (2016 onwards):

1. Pehin Haji Awang Abu Bakar, Minister of Home Affairs accompanied by an official delegation attended the First Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) in New Delhi in November 2016.
2. Pehin Lim Jock Seng, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade II, Pehin Yasmin, Minister of Energy & Industry and Amin Liew, Deputy Minister of Finance visited India in November 2016.
3. Dato Erywan, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade attended the Delhi Dialogue IX in New Delhi in July 2017.
4. Pehin Lim Jock Seng, Bruneian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade II visited India as part of the official delegation headed by the Sultan for the Commemorative Summit in January 2018.
5. Dato Paduka Haji Matsatejo bin Sowkiaw, Deputy Minister for Energy and Industry visited New Delhi in April 2018 to attend the 16th International Energy Summit.
6. Dato Paduka Abdul Mutalib, Minister for Communications visited India in July 2018 to participate in the 10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue. During the visit, the Minister signed an MoU on Cooperation in the field of Telemetry Tracking and Training with EAM Smt Sushma Swaraj.
7. Dato Haji Erywan, Minister of Foreign Affairs II, visited India June 2022 for the Special ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting and the XII Edition of the Delhi Dialogue to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-India Dialogue Relations.

Visits by Senior Officials from Brunei:

1. Mr Zakaria Serudin, Permanent Secretary; Ms Siti Ajar Haji Yusop, Acting Assistant Director; and Ms Rosmah Hj Mohamad Shah, Senior Medicinal Chemist in the Ministry of Health, in April 2017.
2. Mrs. Siti Norishan, Permanent Secretary (Bilateral) in MoFA led a delegation to attend the 7th round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) Meeting in New Delhi in June 2019.
3. Mrs. Emaleen binti Abdul Rehman Teo, Permanent Secretary (ASEAN) in MoFA visited India in December 2019 to attend the 11th Delhi Dialogue.
4. Mrs. Emaleen binti Abdul Rehman Teo, Permanent Secretary (ASEAN) in MoFA visited India in June 2022 for the 24th AISOM, which preceded the SAIFMM.

Visits by Senior Defence Officers:

1. Deputy Minister of Defence, First Admiral (Rtd) Dato Abdul Aziz attended the Defexpo India 2016 in Goa in March 2016.

2. Major General Pehin Dato Paduka Seri Aminan, Commander of Royal Brunei Armed Forces visited India in August 2019 and held meetings with Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Air Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, Chief of Army Staff, General Bipin Rawat and Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Karambir Singh.

Joint Committee Meeting: A decision to establish a Joint Committee Meeting for Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) to exchange views on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern, 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. Seven meetings have since been held; four in New Delhi in February 1995, February 1998, May 2005 and June 2019; and three in Brunei in May 1996, March 2002 and December 2011.

On 18 February 2021, H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, Hon'ble Minister for External Affairs, held a Bilateral Relations Review Meeting, on virtual platform, with Daro Erywan, Minister of Foreign Affairs II of Brunei Darussalam, and discussed areas of mutual interest including cooperation in ICT, IteS, agri products, S&T, education, energy and health care.

On 23 June 2021, the 1st JWG on Health was held virtually. Both sides discussed areas of mutual cooperation including the subject of 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 as also to hold the 2nd JWG meeting in 2022.

MOUs/Agreements: The two countries have signed various MOUs and Agreements. 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 many MoUs/Agreements under discussion.

Joint Trade Committee: The 1st Meeting of the bilateral Joint Trade Committee was held in Brunei in September 2018. The 2nd meeting took place in March 2022.

Defence: 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. Officials of the Defence Ministries from both countries had held a virtual meeting in January 2021. The MoU on Defence Cooperation was renewed for a further period of five years in 2021.

Visit of Indian Navy Ships: INS Rana and INS Kulish in June 2006; INS Gharial and INS Kulish in October 2008; INS Airavat and INS Khukri in 2009; INS Ranvir and INS Jyoti in May 2011; Indian Coast Guard Ship ICGS Sagar in June 2011; INS Airavat in July 2011; INS Gharial in June 2013; 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.

Visit of Royal Brunei Navy Ships to India: A 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.

Defence Exhibitions in India: Brunei delegations participated in DEFEXPO 2010, 2012, 2016 & 2018 and in AERO INDIA in 2015 and 2017.

Participation in Defence Courses: The officers from Indian armed forces have regularly attended the Royal Brunei Armed Forces Command Staff Course at Staff College, Brunei. So far, seven officers from the Indian Armed Forces have participated in these courses; Three officers of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces attended the senior officers' course at the National Defence College (NDC) of India in 2001, 2009 and 2014. Squadron Leader K. Simpi, an Indian Air Force Officer, attended the 11th Command & Staff Course 2021 (Jan-Oct 2021). Major Brijesh Kumar attended the 12th Command & Staff Course 2022.

Telemetry, Tracking and Command (TTC) Station: A bilateral agreement was signed in August 1997 for the setting up of ISRO's TTC Station in Brunei which was established in the year 2000 and has been functioning since then. From time to time, scientists from ISRO visit Brunei to track the path of the satellites launched by ISRO. Over the years, 35 ISRO missions have been successfully supported and data monitored from the TTC Station. The latest MoU was signed July 2018.

Events held to mark Silver Jubilee of India-ASEAN Partnership: A number of events were organised in Brunei, in other ASEAN capitals and in India to mark 25 years of ASEAN-India Dialogue Partnership. Notable events featuring Brunei were ASEAN-India Youth Summit in Bhopal; ASEAN-India Artists' Camp in Udaipur; ASEAN-India Music Festival in New Delhi; Visit of INS Satpura to Brunei; ASEAN-India Network of Think-Tanks in Jakarta; ASEAN-India Regional Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in Singapore; ASEAN-India Ministerial Meeting on Agriculture and Forestry in New Delhi; Visit of ICCR sponsored 14 member pop group 'Sugar n Spice' to Brunei; ASEAN-India Students' Exchange Programme in Mumbai and New Delhi; ASEAN-India Business and Investment Meet by CII in New Delhi; ASEAN-India business Council Meeting by FICCI in New Delhi; ASEAN-India Textile Meet in New Delhi; and ASEAN-India Ramayana Festival in New Delhi and Kolkata.

Commercial Relations

India-Brunei Bilateral Trade (as per Brunei Department of Economic Planning and Development)

(US \$ million)

| | 2020 | | | 2021 | | | <u>Growth % of Export</u> | <u>Growth % of Import</u> |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | <u>Export</u> | <u>Import</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Export</u> | <u>Import</u> | <u>Total</u> | | |
| Brunei's trade with India | 349.8 | 75.1 | 424.9 | 474 | 48.7 | 522.7 | 35.5 | -35.2 |
| Brunei's total global trade | 6607.6 | 5342.5 | 11950.2 | 11058 | 8574.6 | 19632.6 | 67.4 | 60.5 |

(USD \$ million)

| Year | Export | Import | Total Trade |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 2015 | 624.0 | 40.6 | 664.7 |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 2016 | 464.93 | 58.5 | 523.4 |
| 2017 | 558 | 51.5 | 609.5 |
| 2018 | 490.4 | 70.1 | 560.5 |
| 2019 | 602.2 | 102.9 | 705.1 |
| 2020 | 349.8 | 75.1 | 424.9 |
| 2021 | 474 | 48.7 | 522.2 |

India's main exports to Brunei consist of automobiles, transport equipment, rice and spices. India is one of the largest importers of crude oil from Brunei and had been importing crude oil worth approximately USD 500-600 million every year.

A few Bruneian businessmen have participated in trade fairs in India in the health and IT services sectors. The most recent Bruneian participation was by the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Bruneian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry who visited New Delhi in February 2019 to participate in the 4th ASEAN-India Expo and Summit 2019. Indian participation in Bruneian trade fairs has been sporadic. The latest was the participation of Indian businessmen from the Textile and Handicrafts sector in the Brunei International Trade Expo in December 2019.

Virtual meetings between (i) the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) of India and the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (MPRT) of Brunei on 27 April 2021 and (ii) Federation of Indian Export Organization (FIEO) of India, and the local Chambers of Commerce/business entities and the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE) of Brunei on 25 May 2021, to promote bilateral trade between India and Brunei were organized by the Mission. On 26 August, Engineering Exports Promotion Council of India (EEPC) organised on virtual platform a country session with Brunei as part of its mega event "India-ASEAN Engineering Partnership Summit". On 8 October 2021, Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Mohd Amin Liew bin Abdullah, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Minister of Finance and Economy II participated in the 'Indo-ASEAN Business Summit and Expo' organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) vide a pre-recorded message. Bruneian officials also participated in events organised by ASEAN-India Centre (August 2021) and a FICCI-organised event 'FICCI-Heal' (October 2021). Activ8 BN Digital Solutions, an IT company in Brunei, participated in the Software EPC event held in October 2021.

Two ITEC slots are allotted to Brunei each year. Over the years, 37 Bruneian 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 months course on Design of Nano Satellite in ISRO from Oct-Dec and in the 13th Special Course for Diplomats from ASEAN countries in November. In October 2020, 14 officials of the Ministry of Development of Brunei attended a 3-days 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 Bruneian officials attended e-ITEC programmes.

At the ASEAN-India online Hackathon, held on 1-4 February 2021, Brunei was represented by 6 students and 2 mentors. Education Minister of Brunei, Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Hamzah, participated in the concluding session of the event vide a pre-recorded message. Some senior officials of the Ministry of Education of Brunei had also participated in the Hackathon.

Cultural Relations

There have been frequent 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 23rd January 2021 in the capital city. 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 has been organising a range of events. These include blood donation drives, tree planting, free medical camp, beach cleaning drive, screening of Hindi movies, etc. The Mission has also provided some relief to the members of the Indian community whose means of earnings had been severely hampered by the 2nd and the 3rd waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit Brunei on 7 August 2021.

Between July 2020 and April 2022, Mission had organised 19 chartered flights, operated by Royal Brunei Airlines, to facilitate repatriation of more than 2600 Indian nationals who were stranded in Brunei due to Covid-19 induced global travel restrictions.

Mr. Norhidayat bin Haji Ahim and Ms. Khairunnisa Ash’Ari represented Brunei in the 2nd Group of ‘Gen-Next Democracy Network Programme’ organised by ICCR in May 2022. Ms. Nargis binti Mohamed Ali, a senior journalist visited India in June 2022 as part of ASEAN-India Media Exchange Programme, organised by XP Division of MEA.

Indian Community in Brunei Darussalam:

The discovery of oil in 1929 brought a number of 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%) with the rest from other States. Late Shri Mohinder Singh, a Bruneian citizen of India origin, was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) 2010 in recognition of his outstanding contribution in community service. Mr. Nazir Ahmed Zakaria, President, Indian Chamber of Commerce, was also awarded the Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award in 2017.

Indian socio-cultural associations, namely, Bandar Seri Begawan Indian Association (BSBIA), Indian Association of Belait (IAB) and Malayali Association (MA) organise 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 also 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.

There are many health-care workers from India including doctors, nurses, lab technicians and paramedics working in Brunei. Other professionals from India include teachers, engineers, IT professionals etc.

In May 2021, the Indian diaspora contributed 1050 cylinders (45-50 L) filled with compressed medical oxygen, in two lots as Covid relief to strengthen India's efforts to tide over the 2nd wave of Covid-19 pandemic. Out of these, 600 cylinders were ferried to India by INS Jalashwa which departed Brunei on 12 May while the remaining 450 cylinders were ferried by INS Airawat from Singapore on 29 May 2021.

Indian Chamber of Commerce was established in Brunei in July 1972 which currently has over 100 Indian business establishments as its members. Indian businesses in Brunei are mainly in the retail sector such groceries and food product stores, textiles, automotive, sports goods, footwear, hardware, restaurants, drapers, hair dressers, etc. Some of the significant investments by Indian companies and Indian nationals in Brunei include: (i) Atoll Oxygen Sdn Bhd, an industrial use oxygen manufacturing company; (ii) M/s Polygel an industrial adhesives manufacturing company; (iii) Serikandi Group a JV which is into oil & Gas, IT, agriculture & retail and catering business, (iv) Nazmi Textiles; and (v) YMRM Textiles. Till some years back, two major Indian automobile companies, namely, M/s Tata Motors and Mahindra's were represented in Brunei. Currently, only the latter has a local distributor, M/s United Motors Sdn Bhd. M/s AWINCO is the exclusive dealer in high-end Jaquar sanitary-ware fittings. Other Indian businesses in Brunei are of lesser profile and include 6-7 construction companies, retail outlets in textiles, groceries, sports goods, restaurants, electronics, hardware, shoes, small and medium departmental stores, mini-marts, hairdressers, mechanics etc.

Useful Links:

Mission's Website - <http://www.hcindiabrunei.gov.in/>
Facebook Page - @IndiainBrunei
Twitter Handle - @hicomindBrunei
Instagram Page - @IndiaBrunei
Youtube Channel - @High Commission of India Brunei Darussalam

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