On 5 October 2013, Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina inaugurated Bangladesh-India inter-grid power connectivity in Kushtia. Indian PM Dr. Manmohan Singh joined the inaugural ceremony through videoconference. A number of Cabinet Ministers of Bangladesh, notably Finance Minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith and Foreign Minister Dr. Dipu Moni were present on the occasion. Indian Minister for New and Renewable Energy Dr. Farooque Abdullah attended the function as the special guest. PM Sheikh Hasina said that the power connectivity between Bangladesh and India would introduce a new horizon in energy trade among the countries of the region and harnessing cooperation in other areas. In his speech, the Indian PM said that he was extremely delighted for embarking upon the new partnership with Bangladesh in power sector.

Under the project, 500 MW of power will be imported from India. For this purpose, 98.5 kms transmission line have been constructed-71 km in India and 27.5- km on Bangladesh side. A 400 KV HVDC grid station has also been set up in Bangladesh. This grid station has the capacity to transmit 1000 MW of electricity.

(Source: Embassy of Bangladesh, Bangkok & Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi)
External Affairs Minister (EAM) Salman Khurshid visited Colombo on 7-8 October 2013. During his visit, EAM met with the Minister of External Affairs of Sri Lanka Prof. G.L Peiris. A number of MoU/Agreements were signed during the visit including MoU for Technical Assistance in support of the 10 year National Plan for a Trilingual Sri Lanka. Prof. Peiris conveyed Sri Lanka’s appreciation for the substantial Indian assistance of around US$ 1.5 billion provided for a range of development projects throughout Sri Lanka in sectors such as rail and road, infrastructure, port development, agriculture, housing and healthcare etc. and applauded the assistance being provided by the Government of India for construction and renovation of 50,000 housing units.

(Source: Ministry of External Affairs, India)

Thai Smile, the sister airline of Thai Airways, has started its operation to Colombo since 20 August 2013 with 4 round-trip flight per week. Also, the Airlines increased its flights to 5 times per week in October 2013. The new operation will expand THAI’s regional market by serving an increased number of Thai and international passengers requiring travel to and from Colombo as well as the passengers from Colombo who transit at Suvarnabhumi Airport. THAI Smile used brand new Airbus A320-200 aircrafts for the direct flight between Thailand’s and Sri Lanka. The aircraft has 150 seat ‘Smile’ Economy Class and 16 seat short haul business class ‘Smile Plus’.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand)

The Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad meeting the Minister of Health, Bhutan, Mr. Lyonpo Tandin Wangchuk, in New Delhi on September 13, 2013.

(Source: Embassy of India, Bangkok)

Minister of Commerce, Thailand, Niwattumrong Boonsongpaisan met the Minister for Commerce & Industry, India Anand Sharma, in New Delhi on October 23, 2013.

(Source: Embassy of India, Bangkok)
Sri Lanka-Thailand: Two Nations, One Family Photograph Exhibition

Royal Thai Embassy, Colombo, with support from Lowepro, Jetwing Travels, Sri Lanka Airlines and Greenlanka Shipping, organized “Sri Lanka-Thailand: Two Nations, One Family” an exhibition of 60 photographs by Miss Jiratha Narapittayanart, a young photographer from Thailand, on 6-10 September 2013, at Harold Pieris Gallery, Lionel Wendt Art Centre, Colombo.

The photographs displayed in the exhibition, which came from the photographer’s journeys in Sri Lanka and Thailand, showcase the unbelievably close ties and similarity on Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Thailand. This proves the longstanding bond between the two nations, when Siam (now known as Thailand) received Lankavamsa from Sri Lanka almost a thousand year ago and later returned her gratitude by assisting the establishment of Siam Nikaya in Kandy Kingdom in 1573.

Delegation from Bangladesh’s National Defense College Visits Thailand

On 4 September 2013, Mr. Tomvit Jarnson, the Deputy Director – General of the Department of South Asian, Middle East and African Affairs of Thailand welcomed and gave a briefing on Thailand – Bangladesh relations to a delegation from Bangladesh’s National Defense College (NDC), which consisted of high – ranking military officers, course members, and staff officers who are studying on Armed Forces War Course of Bangladesh’s National Defense College (NDC).

The delegation was on its study tour from 2 - 6 September 2013 to various important civil and military organizations in Thailand and other places of historical, social, economic and political importance in Thailand.

Thai Medical team visits Bangladesh

A 60-member Thai medical team from Prostheses Foundation of HRH the Princess Mother visited Bangladesh on 19-29 September 2013 for limb prosthesis of injured persons who lost their limbs in accidents at different parts of the country including the victims of a building collapse in April 2013 at Savar, Dhaka. During the visit, a 10-member delegation led by the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Bangladesh Her Excellency Madura Pochanattraong paid a courtesy call on the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 21 September 2013 at her official residence Gonobhaban. Bangladesh Health and Family Welfare Minister Prof. AFM Ruhal Haque was also present on the occasion.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand & Embassy of Bangladesh, Bangkok)
Thailand-Myanmar Reaffirms Close Ties and Mutual Cooperation

On 4 September 2013, U Khin Aung Myint, Speaker of the House of Nationalities of Myanmar paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister and Defense Minister Yingluck Shinawatra in Bangkok on the occasion of his visit to Thailand as guest of the Thai Parliament. PM Yingluck welcomed the Speaker of Myanmar’s House of Nationalities on his official visit to Thailand which is significant in strengthening legislative relations between the House of Representatives of both countries. Both parties were pleased with constant development of mutual relations, and agreed to reinforce the development of close cooperation for mutual interests.

Speaker of Myanmar’s House of Nationalities expressed his hope for the completion of the border demarcation in order to ensure security and further development along the border areas. PM Yingluck endorsed the matter in hope to facilitate the expansion of trade and investment of the private sector along the border. Speaker of Myanmar’s House of Nationalities also thanked PM Yingluck for her cooperation on Myanmar labors and marveled her for being able to overcome diverse challenges. PM Yingluck also stated that Thailand pledged support for Myanmar to host SEA Games 2013 and to be the president of ASEAN next year, as well as the support in its democratic development and reconciliation process.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand)

Myanmar’s Supreme Commander Pays Tribute to PM Yingluck

On 18 September 2013, Myanmar’s Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing paid tribute to Prime Minister and Defense Minister Yingluck Shinawatra during his visit to Thailand, while calling for more cooperation on drug crackdown. Both parties agreed that Thailand and Myanmar had had strong diplomatic relations and economic partnership. The two also agreed that the Dawei project was massive and that both countries would have to work hand in hand to ensure its success.

During the meeting Gen Min told Miss Yingluck that Myanmar would welcome Thai investors, and expressed his interest in helping Thailand eradicate the problem of illegal workers.

General Min, on behalf of his government, people, and nation, also thanked the Thai government for its support in the development of democracy in Myanmar.

(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Thailand)
Thai Trade Fair in Kathmandu

The Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP) of Thailand in association with the Royal Thai Embassy in Kathmandu and Nepal Thailand Trade Cooperation (NTTC) organized the first “Thailand Trade Fair 2013” during 29 August – 1 September 2013 in Kathmandu. This event is aimed to promote Thailand’s quality products and tourism as well as business sourcing and matching. The products at the display included apparels, leather products, cosmetics, construction related goods, healthcare and baby products and decorative items. The 4-day event attracted a large number of Nepalese visitors. Moreover, representatives from Thai companies who participated in the said event were also invited to dinner hosted by the Embassy.

(Source : Royal Thai Embassy, Nepal)

ADB to help import power from Bhutan

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) would help Bangladesh import power from hydro-power-rich Bhutan, with the setting up of a regional power transmission line for cross-border electricity trading, an energy expert at the Bank’s headquarters said.

"If both Bangladesh and India are linked through the Indian power market, power trading opportunities can be explored in the South Asia region," Len V. George, Energy Specialist, South Asia Department of the ADB, told the Financial Express.

ADB has financed the cross-border transmission line aimed at expanding a regional power transmission grid in the near future under the South Asian Sustainable Economic Cooperation (SASEC) programme. Dhaka has already signed a 1000-megawatt power import deal with New Delhi. When asked on ADB’s possible help in Bangladesh-Bhutan power trade, Len V. George said: “Setting up of the regional grid connecting Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Myanmar over the medium term allows greater investment and more optimal utilization of regional energy resources, e.g. hydropower resources in the region.” Bhutan and Nepal have huge hydropower potential as the countries have a prospect of 23,000mw and 42,000mw of electricity generation from water resources respectively.

(Source: Financial Express)

SpiceJet Connects Pune and Bangkok

Low-cost Indian carrier SpiceJet has started flying to Bangkok from Pune and Bangalore from 27 October 2013. The two cities will have a frequency of four flights a week. Bangkok is Spicejet’s tenth international destination. Air connectivity between India and Thailand is growing with over 160 flights per week, reflecting rapidly growing passenger traffic between the two countries. Bangkok is now connected by air to 10 Indian destinations.

(Source: Embassy of India, Bangkok)
BIMSTEC Upcoming Activities

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On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Embassy of India, Bangkok in collaboration with the UNESCAP celebrated the International Day of Non-Violence on 2 October 2013 at the UN Conference Centre, Bangkok. Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of UNESCAP read out the message of Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the UN. Ambassador Anil Wadhwa in his address underlined significance of Mahatma Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violence in today’s interdependent world. Dr. Rajni Bakshi, Senior Gandhi Peace Fellow at Indian Council for Global Relations, Mumbai delivered a special talk titled, “a Force More Powerful: Non-violence For Our World Today”.

Compiled by the Embassy of India, Bangkok on behalf of the BIMSTEC Working Group.