Daily Mains Practice Question 25 -06-2026

GENERAL STUDIES – PAPER 1
Q. Compare the revolutionary diaspora of 1940s, which funded armed liberations, with modern economic focused policy of India. Discuss how India can strategically use historic overseas networks to boost ties with Nations of Southeast Asia like Thailand through Soft power & Cultural Diplomacy. **(15 Marks, 250 Words)** **For reference click here: IAS Parliament | The Hindu**

Answer

Introduction:

From supporting the Indian National Army (INA) during the freedom struggle to driving trade, technology, and investment today, the Indian diaspora remains a key strategic asset. Reviving historic diaspora links with Southeast Asia, especially Thailand, can deepen cooperation through culture, heritage, and people-to-people ties.

Main Body

Comparison of Diaspora Policies

Aspect	Revolutionary Diaspora (1940s)	Modern Indian Diaspora Policy
Objective	Support India's freedom struggle through political mobilization and armed resistance	Promote economic growth, trade, investment, innovation, and strategic partnerships
Major Actors	Indian National Army (INA) supporters, Indian Independence League, overseas revolutionaries	NRIs, Overseas Citizen of India (OCI), entrepreneurs, professionals, startups, students, global Indian organizations
Key Regions	Southeast Asia (Malaya, Burma, Singapore, Thailand)	Global, with strong presence in Southeast Asia, North America, Europe, Gulf, Africa
Methods	Financial contributions, recruitment, logistics, propaganda	FDI, remittances, digital economy, innovation partnerships, knowledge transfer
Government Role	Limited (colonial restrictions)	Institutional engagement through diaspora diplomacy, consular outreach, investment facilitation
Outcome	Strengthened India's freedom movement	Enhances India's economic diplomacy and strategic outreach

How can India strategically use historic overseas networks to boost ties with Nations of Southeast Asia?

• **Civilizational & Cultural Diplomacy** – Leverage centuries-old ties with Southeast Asian countries –Buddhism, Ramayana traditions, Sanskrit/Pali influence, temples and festivals.

• **Diaspora as Economic Ambassadors** – Mobilize Indian-origin business communities to facilitate investments, MSME partnerships, supply chains, startups, and fintech collaborations.

• **Tourism & Spiritual Circuits** – Develop integrated circuits linking Buddhist pilgrimage sites, Thai institutions, yoga, Ayurveda & wellness tourism to boost people-to-people exchanges.

• **Education & Knowledge Diplomacy** – Expand student exchanges, joint research, scholarships, Sanskrit/Buddhist studies, and skill-development programs to build long-term goodwill.

• **Digital Soft Power** – Promote India’s digital public infrastructure, fintech, payments, AI collaboration, and startup ecosystems through diaspora-led digital diplomacy.

• **Maritime Heritage Diplomacy** – Revive Bay of Bengal connections via museum collaborations and heritage projects, linking India’s SAGAR vision with Southeast Asian engagement.

What are the key challenges India has faced?

• Strategic competition from other regional powers.

• Need for sustained cultural investments.

• Limited institutional coordination among diaspora organizations.

• Balancing economic interests with geopolitical sensitivities.

• Risk of diaspora fragmentation across generations.

Conclusion:

India's overseas networks that once funded freedom can now fuel friendship. By transforming the legacy of the revolutionary diaspora into an instrument of soft power, cultural diplomacy, and economic engagement, India can reinforce enduring partnerships with Southeast Asian nations like Thailand while advancing its Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision.



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