

INDIA – REPUBLIC OF KOREA BILATERAL RELATIONS

India-Republic of Korea (ROK) established diplomatic relations on 10 December 1973. Consular relations were established in 1962. Both countries formed a “Strategic Partnership” in year 2010, which was elevated to “Special Strategic Partnership” in year 2015 during the State Visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Seoul. Both countries commemorated 50 years of diplomatic ties in 2023.

Historical Connect:

2. According to the 13th century Korean historical text "SamgukYusa" or “Heritage History of the Three Kingdoms”, Princess Suriratna from Ayodhya, India came to Korea in the year 48 AD, married King Kim-Suro of the erstwhile Gaya Confederacy in ancient Korea and became Queen Heo Hwang-ok. Many Koreans trace their ancestry to this lineage. Some scholars believe that Buddhism reached Korea via the maritime route with the arrival of Princess Suriratna and her brother Monk Jangyu. Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore composed a short but evocative poem titled– 'Lamp of the East' - in 1929 about Korea's glorious past and its promising bright future, which is fondly remembered by the Koreans and finds mention in Korean school textbooks.

India’s Role in Korean War:

3. India played an important role in the Korean peninsula after Korea's independence in 1945. Former Indian diplomat Shri K P S Menon was the Chairman of the 9-member UN Commission set up in 1947 to hold elections in Korea. India sent an Army medical unit - the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance comprising of 627 medical personnel, commanded by Lt. Col. A.G. Rangaraj during the Korean War as part of the UN Command, and treated about 220,000 patients. During the Korean War (1950-53), both the warring sides accepted a UN resolution sponsored by India, and the ceasefire was declared on 27 July 1953. Lt. General K.S. Thimayya of India, served as the Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission [NNRC] after the armistice and contributed to resolving the humanitarian issues arising out of the War. India dispatched one Brigade Group designated as Custodian Forces -India (CFI) comprising 5230 personnel to Korea, under Major General SSP Thorat which was instrumental in resolving the Prisoners of War issue.

4. In June 2020, PM Narendra Modi gave a video message during an event to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Korean War. An exhibition to commemorate India’s contribution to Korean War was co-organised in March 2022 by Embassy of India in Seoul.

High-Level Exchanges:

5. PM Narendra Modi paid a State Visit to ROK from 18-19 May 2015, during which bilateral relationship was upgraded to ‘Special Strategic Partnership’. On the occasion of the State Visit of President Moon Jae-in to India on 08-11 July 2018, both countries issued a statement outlining a “Vision for People, Prosperity, Peace and our Future”. First Lady of ROK Ms. Kim Jung-sook visited India from November 04-07, 2018 as Guest of Honour for

the “Deepotsav Festival” and participated in the ground breaking ceremony for construction of a memorial for Queen Suriratna at Ayodhya.

6. PM Narendra Modi paid a State Visit to ROK from 21-22 February 2019 and unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the prestigious Yonsei University. PM Modi also gifted a Bodhi sapling to Gimhae City. He received the Seoul Peace Prize for his contribution to international cooperation and fostering global economic growth. President Moon attended the special event in UN in September 2019 to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, at the invitation of PM Modi. PM Modi and President Moon had telephonic conversations in April 2020 and October 2020 and discussed cooperation in tackling COVID-19 pandemic.

7. PM Narendra Modi and President Yoon Suk Yeol had their first in-person bilateral talks on the sidelines of G7 Summit in Hiroshima, Japan on 20 May 2023. Both leaders reaffirmed commitment to strengthen bilateral ties, and agreed to deepen cooperation in areas of trade & investments, high technology, IT hardware manufacturing, defence industry, semiconductors, and culture and P2P ties. They also discussed India’s G20 Presidency and ROK’s Indo-Pacific strategy. President Yoon visited India on 9-10 September 2023 to attend G20 Summit in New Delhi. On the sidelines of G20 Summit, PM Modi and President Yoon had a bilateral meeting on 10 September 2023. President Yoon congratulated PM on India’s G20 Presidency and success of Chandrayaan-3 Mission. They also reviewed progress on various areas of bilateral Special Strategic Partnership, including trade and investment, defence production, semiconductors and EV battery technology. Both leaders exchanged congratulatory letters on the occasion of 50 years of diplomatic ties on 10 December 2023.

8. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and FM Park Jin held comprehensive discussions on political contacts, trade & investments, defence, S&T, energy, space, semiconductors, emerging technologies and cultural exchanges during their meeting on 07 April 2023 in New Delhi. They also met on the sidelines of ASEAN-related meetings in Jakarta in July 2023.

9. Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman visited ROK in May 2023 to attend ADB-related meetings, and also held bilateral talks with her counterpart Mr. Choo Kyung-ho. The two Ministers also met in Bengaluru on the sidelines of G20 Finance Ministers’ meeting in Feb 2023. CIM Shri Piyush Goyal met Trade Minister Ahn Duk-geun in November 2023 in San Francisco on the sidelines of Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) Ministerial meeting and in August 2023 on the sidelines of G20 Trade & Investment Ministers’ meeting in Jaipur.

10. Deputy National Security Advisor (NSA) Vikram Misri and 1st Deputy Director of National Security Kim Tae-hyo co-chaired the 4th India-ROK Deputy NSA-level Strategic Dialogue in August 2023 in Seoul. Secretary (East) Saurabh Kumar and 1st Vice Foreign Minister Cho Hyundong co-chaired the 5th Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue (FPSD) in January 2023 in Seoul. The 2nd Policy Planning Dialogue was held in July 2023 in Delhi. Bilateral Civil Nuclear Cooperation Senior-Officials Talks were held between Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE) in July 2023 in Seoul. The 22nd India-Korea Strategic Dialogue co-organized by Ananta Aspen Centre and Seoul Forum for International Affairs was held in November 2023 in Seoul.

11. Governor of Gyeongsangbuk-do Mr. Lee Cheol-woo and the Governor of Gyeonggi-do Mr. Kim Dong-yeon visited India in May 2023 and in July 2023 respectively. Ministerial-level delegations from Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh visited ROK to explore business tie-ups. An official delegation from Gujarat visited Seoul in November 2023 to participate in the Vibrant Gujarat Summit Roadshow.

Parliamentary Exchanges:

12. ROK National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin-pyo visited New Delhi (11-13 Oct 2023) to attend the P20 Summit. He also held a bilateral meeting with Hon'ble Lok Sabha Speaker Shri Om Birla. ROK Deputy Speaker Ms. Kim Young-joo visited India in October 2022 and met members of Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs. The Speaker of ROK National Assembly Chung Sye-kyun had visited India in March 2018.

13. A delegation from the ROK Foreign Affairs & Unification Committee of the National Assembly visited India in October 2022. A Parliamentary delegation led by Ms. Back hye-ryun, Chairperson of National Policy Committee, visited India from Nov 25- Dec 02, 2022 and had a meeting with MOS Mr. V. Muraleedharan. A Parliamentary delegation led by former Unification Minister Mr. Lee in-young visited India in Dec 2022 and had a meeting with the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs. Mr. Park Jeung, Chairperson of Environment and Labor Committee of ROK National Assembly met members of the Standing Committee on Water Resources of the Parliament of India in December 2023 in New Delhi.

Economic Relations:

14. Trade and economic relations gathered momentum following the implementation of CEPA in 2010. Bilateral trade in 2022 reached record levels of US\$ 27.8 billion. India's import volume stands at US\$ 18.8 billion, while the export volume stood at US\$ 9 billion. Bilateral trade in 2023 (January–October) stands at US\$ 20.43 billion. India's import volume stands at US\$ 14.8 billion, while the export volume is US\$ 5.6 billion. Major items of India's exports to ROK are mineral fuels/oil distillates (mainly naphtha), cereals, iron and steel. ROK's main export items are automobile parts, telecommunication equipment, hot rolled iron products, petroleum refined products, base lubricating oils, mechanical appliances, electrical machinery & parts and iron and steel products.

15. India and ROK launched an initiative 'Korea Plus' to promote and facilitate Korean investments in India. A Korea India SME and Start-up Centre was launched in September 2019 in Gurugram. ROK's total FDI to India until June 2023 stands at US\$ 8.02 billion. Investment from India to ROK are to the tune of approx. USD 5.2 billion led by Tata Daewoo and Aditya Birla Group (Novelis). There are more than 600 large and small Korean firms operating in India. Tata Motors acquired Daewoo Commercial Vehicle Company for USD 102 million in March 2004. The State Bank of India opened a branch in Seoul in January 2016 to provide wide range of services including loan services and project financing for Korean and Indian companies. Six Korean Banks have branches in India. These include KEB Hana, Kookmin, Shinhan, Woori, Nonghyup and IBK. The Indian Chamber of Commerce in Korea (ICCK) comprising Indian and Korean companies play a constructive role in promoting trade and investments linkages between the two countries.

16. Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh, Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) visited ROK from 16-18 October 2023 for investment promotion. During the visit he met with his counterpart Vice Minister Jang Young-jin, and participated in an Investment and Trade Roadshow and sector-specific roundtables. Custom authorities of India and ROK launched Electronic Origin Data Exchange Systems (EODES) in December 2023 to facilitate efficient verification of imported goods under CEPA.

Defence Relations:

17. India and ROK defence relations have strengthened in recent years. The Defence Ministers of ROK and India have been interacting regularly since 2015. Secretary-level Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) for cooperation in defence industries & logistics between Korean Defence Acquisition Programme Administration (DAPA) and India's Ministry of Defence is held regularly. Service level talks across the three arms of the military are held annually. Navy and Coast Guard ships have been visiting each other's ports on a regular basis and have also been holding joint exercises. A Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation was signed between the two countries in September 2019.

18. In recent exchanges, Navy staff talks were held in April 2023 in New Delhi. The 11th High Level Meeting between the two Coast Guards was held in April 2023 in New Delhi. ROK Army Chief Park Jeong-hwan visited New Delhi in Sep 2023 to attend the Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference. General Manoj Pande, Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) visited ROK in November 2023 and held separate bilateral meetings with General Park An-su, Chief of Staff, ROK Army and General Kim Seung-kyum, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff of ROK Armed Forces. A delegation from Korea Coast Guard visited India and participated in 9th NATPOLREX Exercise conducted by Indian Coast Guard in November 2023.

19. For the first time an India pavilion was set up at ADEX 2023, ROK's main defence expo to represent India's defence manufacturing capabilities among the foreign defence players. Indian participants also attended the Seoul Defence Dialogue held in October 2023. A delegation from National Defence College visited ROK in June 2023 on a study tour.

Cultural Relations:

20. An Indian Cultural Centre (renamed later as Swami Vivekananda Culture Centre (SVCC)) was established on July 1, 2011 as a cultural wing of the Embassy of India, Seoul. An India Centre for promotion of India focused activities in the Busan University of Foreign Studies (BUFS) was inaugurated on June 27, 2022. SARANG, the festival of India in Korea has been organised every year by the Embassy since 2015, to showcase India's diverse art and music in various regions of ROK. In September 2023, "India Cultural Center" on BUFS metaverse platform was launched.

21. A bust of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was unveiled in Seoul in May 2011. A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled at the Hongbeop-sa temple in Busan in July 2014. A Bodhi Tree sapling and a bust of Mahatma Gandhi installed at Yonsei University, Songdo Campus, Incheon were gifted by PM Modi during his State Visit to ROK in 2019. A statue of Mahatma Gandhi was installed at the Yeonji Park in Gimhae, a section of which has been developed

as India-Korea Friendship Park based on the life experiences of Mahatma Gandhi. As part of the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, a Korea-India Peace Park was unveiled on June 3, 2019 and 150 trees planted at the historic Independence Park, Seodaemun district in Seoul. A statue of Lord Buddha was gifted by ICCR to the Tongdo-sa Temple in May 2021. A group of around 100 Korean Buddhist monks of Jogye order, completed a 43 days walking pilgrimage to sacred Buddhist sites in India in Feb-Mar 2023.

22. 9th International Day of Yoga celebration event was held on 17 June 2023 at the iconic Olympic Park in Seoul where more than 600 yoga enthusiasts and practitioners joined in. IDoY events were also held in other cities viz. Gurye, Jeju, Busan and Gwangju in June 2023. The Indian Embassy hosted a special event in September 2023 to launch the English edition of the book titled, "Gaya Buddhism, Unlatching the Gate" by Monk Domyeong, Chief Monk of Gimhae's YeoYeo Jung Temple. The 2023 Korea-India Artist Camp was held in ROK from Sep-Nov 2023 with the participation of 10 artists from each country. Their artworks were displayed across various cities in India and ROK.

23. A Bharatanatyam dance troupe from India visited ROK in October 2023 and performed in various cities as part of SARANG, the annual flagship cultural festival of India. The 11th Indian Film Festival was held in Seoul in November 2023 showcasing award winning and critically acclaimed Indian movies. An Indian Street Food festival was organized in collaboration with Korea Food Promotion Institute in November-December 2023. Embassy hosted a special event on 13 December 2023 to commemorate 50th anniversary of India-ROK diplomatic ties. The International Year of Millets was celebrated in association with local partners.

Indian Community:

24. The total number of Indian nationals living in ROK is estimated to be around 15,000. A large number of Indian scholars are pursuing post-graduate and Ph.D programmes, mostly in pure sciences. During the past few years, many professionals mainly in the areas of IT, shipping and automobile have come to ROK. They are working mostly with companies like Samsung, LG, Hyundai TATA Daewoo, TCS, Coupang etc. There are also significant number of Indian students and academicians in the universities. Several diaspora associations are active in the Republic of Korea.

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