

Brief on India-ROK bilateral relations

India and the ROK established Consular relations in 1962. Thereafter, both formally established diplomatic ties on 10 December 1973. Bilateral ties were elevated to a 'Strategic Partnership' in 2010 and further upgraded to "Special Strategic Partnership" during the State Visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Seoul in 2015.

Historical overview

2. India and ROK share deep-rooted cultural and civilisational linkages. According to the 13th-century Korean text *Samguk Yusa* ("Heritage of the Three Kingdoms"), Princess Suriratna from Ayodhya travelled to Korea in 48 AD and married King Kim Suro of the Gaya Confederacy, becoming Queen Heo Hwang-ok. A large number of Koreans trace their ancestry to this lineage. It is also believed by some scholars that Buddhism reached Korea through maritime routes associated with Princess Suriratna and her brother, Monk Jangyu. In 1929, Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore composed "*Lamp of the East*", a poem reflecting Korea's cultural legacy and its bright future, which continues to enjoy enduring popularity in the ROK and is included in school curricula.

India's role in Korean War

3. India played a constructive role on the Korean Peninsula following ROK's independence in 1945. In 1947, Former diplomat Shri K.P.S Menon served as Chairman of the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), mandated to oversee elections in Korea. During the Korean War (1950–53), India sponsored a key UN resolution accepted by both sides, which contributed to the ceasefire on 27 July 1953. India also deployed the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance under the UN Command, comprising 627 medical personnel, which treated over 220,000 patients. Post-armistice, Lieutenant General K.S. Thimayya Chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC), facilitating the resolution of humanitarian issues. Besides, India deployed the Custodian Force India (CFI), comprising 5,230 personnel under Major General S.S.P. Thorat, which played a critical role in addressing the issue of Prisoners of War.

Leaders' Exchanges

4. High-level exchanges have provided sustained momentum to bilateral ties. President Park Geun-hye paid a State Visit to India in January 2014, followed by PM Narendra Modi's State Visit to the ROK in 2015, during which relations were elevated to a *Special Strategic Partnership*. During President Moon Jae-in's State Visit to India in July 2018, both issued a Joint Statement outlining a "Vision for People, Prosperity, Peace and our Future". First Lady Kim Jung-sook visited India as the Guest of Honour for the "Deepotsav Festival" in November 2018, and participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the Queen Heo Memorial in Ayodhya. In February 2019, Hon'ble PM Narendra Modi visited ROK, unveiled a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at Yonsei University and gifted a Bodhi sapling to Gimhae City. He was conferred the Seoul Peace Prize in recognition of his contributions to international cooperation and global economic growth.

5. The year 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations, coinciding with India's G20 Presidency. The year witnessed sustained high-level engagement, including two meetings between Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Yoon Suk Yeol (on sidelines of the G7 Summit in Hiroshima and G20 Summit in May and September respectively). In 2024, the two leaders continued their engagements on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Lao PDR and the G20 Summit in Brazil in October and November.

6. The momentum was sustained in 2025, which marked the 10th anniversary of the India-ROK Special Strategic Partnership. President Lee Jae Myung met PM Modi on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in June 2025 in Canada shortly after assuming office, followed by another meeting at the G20 Summit in Johannesburg in November 2025. A Presidential Special Envoys delegation led by former Prime Minister Kim Boo Kyum also visited India in July 2025. It is noteworthy that President Lee was the Chair of India-ROK Parliamentary Friendship Group.

High-level and Ministerial Engagements

7. Foreign Ministerial engagements have remained frequent and substantive. In recent years, exchanges have been sustained through bilateral visits, Joint Commission Meetings (JCM), and regular interactions on the sidelines of major multilateral forums. EAM visited Seoul and co-chaired the 10th India–ROK JCM with Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul in March 2024. The trajectory has continued in 2025-26. FM Cho Hyun visited India in August 2025 for delegation-level talks in August 2025. The Ministers also met during UNGA (September 2025), ASEAN meetings in Kuala Lumpur (October 2025), and the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in France (26 March 2026). Both additionally held telephone conversations on 28 July 2025 and 10 March 2026. *FM Cho served as Ambassador to India (2015-17) and wrote a book titled “Korean Ambassador’s report on India-Incredible India” reflecting his experiences and insights into India-ROK relations.*

Other Ministerial engagements and Parliamentary exchanges

8. The two Finance Ministers have held meetings on the sidelines of IMF-World Bank meetings and G20 Finance Ministers’ Meeting in recent years. Commerce and Trade Ministers have engaged to advance CEPA upgradation and address broader trade issues. Recently on 13 March 2026, ROK Trade Minister visited India for bilateral meeting with CIM Sh. Piyush Goyal. Both again met on the sidelines of 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation on 26 March 2026 in Cameroon, exchanging views on trade facilitation and WTO reforms.

9. Besides above, other sectoral engagements include the visit of Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Hardeep Singh Puri to the ROK in November 2025 to explore collaboration in the shipbuilding sector. ROK Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Science and ICT Mr. Kyung Hoon Bae visited India in February 2026 for the AI Impact Summit. On the sidelines of the visit, he held discussions with Minister of Electronics and IT Sh. Ashwini Vaishnaw.

10. ROK National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin-pyo visited New Delhi (October 2023) to attend the P20 Summit and held a bilateral meeting with Hon’ble Lok Sabha Speaker Shri Om Birla. The then Minister of State Shri Rajkumar Ranjan Singh attended the Summit for Democracy Ministerial (March 2024) hosted by ROK

Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul in Seoul. In May 2025, an All-party Indian parliamentary delegation led by MP Mr. Sanjay Kumar Jha visited ROK to highlight the global significance of Operation Sindoor. The delegation engaged with Korean lawmakers, the Foreign Minister, MOFA officials, think tanks, corporate groups, media, dignitaries, and the Indian diaspora, fostering deeper bilateral understanding. MOS for Information & Broadcasting, Dr. L. Murugan, led India's first Ministerial delegation to the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) in September 2025. The Bharat Pavilion was set up at the Asian Contents & Film Market (ACFM) alongside the BIFF in Busan. The Bharat Pavilion highlighted the Government's WAVES Bazaar initiative.

11. Further engagements included visits by Korean Representatives Gyeongjong Mo and Yongtae Kim to India to explore cooperation in renewable energy in July 2025; Member of the Culture, Sports, and Tourism Committee of the National Assembly of ROK Ms. Jaewon Kim's visit to Goa and Delhi in Nov 2025 to participate in the 56th International Film Festival of India. As "Guest of Honour" for the Waves Film Bazaar, she performed a rendition of *Vande Mataram*, symbolizing the cultural connection between the two nations. Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Lee Hack-young visited India in January 2026 and met the Hon'ble Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Shri Harivansh.

12. To institutionalize parliamentary engagement, the Lok Sabha has recently established an India-Korea Parliamentary Friendship Group.

Vice-Ministerial and Senior level Official exchanges

13. Both sides have in place an institutionalised framework of Vice-ministerial and senior official-level dialogues to steer the Special Strategic Partnership, such as Bilateral Civil Nuclear Cooperation Talks between the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE); India-ROK Deputy NSA-level Strategic Dialogue; India-ROK Consultations on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation; India-ROK Cyber Dialogue at the Director General level; India-ROK Consular Dialogue at the Director General level; and India-ROK-Japan Trilateral Policy Planning Dialogue, among others.

14. Vice-Ministerial exchanges continued in 2025, including the meeting between Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs at ROK, MOFA Mr. Kim Hee-sang, and Secretary (East) in April in Delhi and Secretary, Department of Fisheries's visit to ROK in November 2025. Most recently, the 6th round of the Foreign Policy and Security Dialogue (FPSD), co-chaired by Secretary (East) and the 1st Vice Foreign Minister, was held in Seoul on 13 February 2026, followed by India-ROK Consultations in New Delhi on 20 March 2026. During his visit to India, 1st Vice Foreign Minister also called on Hon'ble EAM.

State-level delegations

15. Ministerial-level delegations from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, and Rajasthan visited ROK in 2023–2024. Chief Ministers of Assam (January 2025), Chhattisgarh (August 2025), and Punjab (December 2025) also visited Seoul to attract investment.

Think-tank engagements

16. Think tank and institutional exchanges have fostered deeper policy dialogue and intellectual collaboration. Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) held its 5th Policy Dialogue with Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA) in March 2024; and also participated in the 2nd 2+2 Policy Dialogue alongside RIS and Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), focusing on development partnerships in the Global South; the next edition of this dialogue is scheduled to be held in New Delhi on 07 April 2026.

17. The 24th India–ROK Strategic Dialogue was convened in Seoul by the Ananta Centre in partnership with MEA, Korea Foundation, and the Seoul Forum for International Affairs in December 2025, featuring a keynote address by ROK Foreign Minister Cho Hyun. India–ROK Track 1.5 Dialogue was held during the Raisina Dialogue 2026 in New Delhi from 05-07 March 2026, focusing on bilateral cooperation.

18. Indian defence experts participated in the Seoul Defence Dialogue in September 2024, contributing to discussions on regional and global security

challenges. Further, the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA) hosted the Delhi Defence Dialogue in November 2025, which focused on emerging and new-age defence technologies, with participation from both sides.

Trade and Economic Relations

19. The India–ROK Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), in force since 2010, has strengthened bilateral economic engagement. Bilateral trade has grown from USD 14.2 billion at the time of its implementation to USD 26.89 billion in 2024–25, an increase of nearly 90%. Of this, India’s imports from the ROK account for approximately USD 21 billion, while exports stand at about USD 5.8 billion. Both sides have held 11 rounds of CEPA upgradation negotiations, with the latest round in July 2024. The newly appointed Chief Negotiators met in February 2026 to advance the process.

20. India’s key exports to the ROK include light oils and related preparations, aluminium (not alloyed), ferro-chromium, refined lead, mineral fuel distillates (primarily naphtha), cereals, and iron and steel products. Major imports from the ROK comprise automobile parts, telecommunication equipment, hot-rolled iron products, refined petroleum products, base lubricating oils, mechanical appliances, electrical machinery and parts, and iron and steel products.

21. ROK is India’s 13th largest FDI investor, with cumulative investments of USD 6.91 billion since 2000. Investment flows have accelerated significantly in the post-CEPA period, rising from USD 523 million to USD 6.386 billion, with a strong sectoral focus on metallurgy, automobiles, electronics, and manufacturing.

22. Institutional investors have also emerged as important stakeholders. Korea’s National Pension Service (NPS), ROK’s largest social security organisation and the world’s third-largest pension fund, has invested approximately USD 4.3 billion in India, comprising around USD 3 billion in direct investments and USD 1.3 billion through indirect routes. In the telecommunications sector, NPS has partnered with Jio as part of its India portfolio.

23. Korean commercial presence in India includes over 650 firms operating across sectors. The financial sector footprint has also deepened, with six Korean banks—KEB Hana, Kookmin, Shinhan, Woori, Nonghyup, and IBK—maintaining a combined 20 branches in India. The Korea Investment Corporation (KIC) established its first India office in Mumbai in April 2024. KB Securities also marked its entry with an office in Mumbai in December 2025. Corporate activity has also remained robust. In October 2025, LG Electronics India launched a USD 1.4 billion IPO, one of the largest public offerings of the year, reflecting strong investor confidence in the Indian market.

24. Institutional mechanisms have complemented this expanding economic engagement. The Indian Chamber of Commerce in Korea (ICCK), comprising both Indian and Korean companies, continues to promote trade and investment linkages while facilitating resolution of business concerns. In this context, the India–Korea Fast Track Mechanism (FTM), launched in August 2024, has emerged as an effective platform to address investor issues and enhance ease of doing business; it has convened two meetings so far, the latest in November 2025.

Defence Relations

25. India–ROK defence relations have witnessed steady growth in recent years, underpinned by a range of institutional mechanisms including interactions between armed forces exchanges, Defence Policy Dialogue, and Industry Cooperation. Regular service-level talks across the three arms of the military are held biennially. Maritime cooperation is another pillar of defence engagement. A recent development was the inaugural India–ROK bilateral naval exercise conducted in the ROK from 13–16 October 2025, involving INS Sahyadri and ROKS Nojeokbong. Coast Guard cooperation has also continued. Both sides signed an MoU on “Cooperation in Maritime Search and Rescue” on the sidelines of the 13th High-Level Meeting in July 2025.

26. India–ROK defence industry cooperation is guided by the 2005 MoU on Defence Industry and Logistics Cooperation, the 2010 MoU on Defence R&D Cooperation, and the 2020 MoU on the Roadmap for Defence Industry Cooperation.

DRDO and Seoul National University signed an MoU in November 2025 for the co-development of a high-power microwave system. Efforts to deepen industrial collaboration have also been reflected in greater participation in defence exhibitions and ongoing co-development initiatives. An India Pavilion at Korea Army International Defence Industry Exhibition (KADEX) 2024 showcased India's growing defence manufacturing capabilities to global stakeholders. Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) signed an MOU with Hyundai Heavy Industries in Nov 2025 for jointly designing and constructing Landing Platform Dock (LPD) for Indian navy. BEML Limited signed a strategic MoU with Hyundai KSOE to jointly design and build next-generation maritime and port cranes system in India in Dec 2025.

Cultural Relations, S&T, Education and Tourism:

27. Civilisational and cultural linkages between India and the ROK continue to find expression through a range of people-centric initiatives. In March 2014, a Bodhi Tree sapling was presented to the ROK at a ceremony held at the Korea National Arboretum. The same year saw the unveiling of a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at Hongbeop-sa Temple in Busan. In 2019, a statue of Mahatma Gandhi was installed at Yeonji Park In Gimhae, where a dedicated India-Korea Friendship Park has since been developed, inspired by his life and philosophy. Commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, a Korea-India Peace Park was inaugurated in Seoul's historic Seodaemun Independence Park in June 2019, accompanied by the planting of 150 trees.

28. Cultural and spiritual exchanges have also remained vibrant. In May 2021, ICCR gifted a 3.3-foot bronze statue of Lord Buddha to Tongdo-sa Temple, the head temple of the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism. Reflecting enduring Buddhist linkages, groups of monks from the Jogye Order have undertaken pilgrimages to India, including a 43-day walk covering key sacred sites in early 2023, followed by another pilgrimage in January-February 2026.

29. Cultural cooperation is further institutionalised through formal agreements and sustained partnerships. The Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP), signed in 2018 continues to guide bilateral cultural engagement. The 2015 Agreement on

Audio-Visual Co-production has also provided a platform for expanding collaboration in film and media. Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC), Seoul has actively forged partnerships with universities, cultural institutions, and city administrations. A notable initiative includes the tripartite MoU signed in 2021 between SVCC, Gimhae City, and ICCR for the establishment of the Gimhae India Cultural Exchange Centre, with ongoing discussions on the contribution of artefacts. Additional MoUs with cultural institutions such as the Seongdong Foundation of Arts and Culture and Samsung Welstory (2024), as well as the Eunpyeong Foundation of Arts and Culture and Busan University of Foreign Studies (2025), have further broadened avenues for collaboration.

30. Cultural outreach has also been actively promoted through flagship events. In October 2025, the 11th edition of *Sarang – The Festival of India in the ROK* showcased a diverse array of art exhibitions, classical dance and music performances, films, and culinary experiences, organised in collaboration with local partners. This was followed by the 13th Indian Film Festival in November 2025, held across multiple cities including Seoul, Busan, Incheon, Gwangju, Yangsan, and Miryang. Our Mission also hosted the 21st edition of “Celebrating India” in partnership with the North-East Institute of Fashion Technology (NEIFT), highlighting India’s rich cultural diversity.

31. Tourism remains an important facet of bilateral engagement, supported by both policy initiatives and growing people-to-people exchanges. The number of Indian tourists visiting the ROK has seen a notable rise, with 176,668 Indian visitors in 2024, an increase of 44% over 2023. This upward trend has continued, with the Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) reporting over 187,000 Indian arrivals between January and November 2025. Travel flows in the other direction also remain steady, with approximately 112,000 Korean tourists visiting India in 2024, according to the Ministry of Tourism.

32. Participation in major travel fairs remains active, including the Seoul International Travel Fair (SITF) 2025, and organised targeted tourism seminars and roadshows—both virtual and in-person—in collaboration with State Governments such as Assam, Goa, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh. These efforts are

complemented by regular outreach to leading universities and institutions to promote student exchanges, as well as academic and research collaborations. Special emphasis is also placed on promoting India's Buddhist circuits, which continue to resonate strongly with Korean visitors.

Indian Community:

33. The Indian community in ROK is estimated at around 18,000, comprising primarily students, scholars, professionals, and their families. In recent years, there has been a steady influx of Indian professionals, particularly in sectors such as information technology, shipping, and automobiles. Many are employed with leading companies including Samsung, LG, Hyundai, Tata Daewoo, TCS etc. The academic segment forms a significant component of the diaspora, with a large number of Indian students and researchers enrolled in Korean universities. Most are engaged in postgraduate and doctoral programmes, predominantly in STEM disciplines. Several Indian diaspora associations remain active across the ROK, contributing to community welfare and fostering cultural and social engagement.

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