

India – Republic of Korea Relations

India-Republic of Korea (RoK) relations has made great strides in recent years and has become truly multidimensional, spurred by a significant convergence of interests, mutual goodwill and high level exchanges. Bilateral consular relations were established in 1962 which was upgraded to Ambassador-level in 1973. In course of time, RoK's open market policies found resonance with India's economic liberalization and 'Look East Policy'. Consistent Indian support for peaceful reunification of the two Koreas has been well received in this country.

According to "SamgukYusa" or "The Heritage History of the Three Kingdoms" written in the 13th century, a Princess from Ayodhya (Suriratna) came to Korea, married King Kim-Suro, and became Queen Hur Hwang-ok in the year 48 AD [wife of former President Lee Myung-bak (Mrs. Kim Yoon-ok), former President Kim Dae-jung, former President Kim Young-sam and former PM Kim Jong-pil, inter alia, trace their ancestry to the royal couple]. Korean Buddhist Monk Hyecho (704–787 CE) or Hong Jiao visited India from 723 to 729 AD and wrote travelogue "Pilgrimage to the five kingdoms of India" which gives a vivid account of Indian culture, politics & society. The travelogue was rediscovered in China in 1908 and was subsequently translated into different languages, including Hindi, under the aegis of UNESCO. The original fragment is now owned by the National Library of France. Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore also composed a short but evocative poem – 'Lamp of the East' - in 1929 about Korea's glorious past and its promising bright future.

Political relations

India played an important and positive role in Korean affairs after Korea's independence in 1945. Mr K P S Menon of India was the Chairman of the 9-member UN Commission set up in 1947 to hold elections in Korea. During the Korean War (1950-53), both the warring sides accepted a 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, which won appreciation from all quarters. A delegation of Indian Parliamentarians visited ROK on 26-27 July 2013 to participate in the events to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Armistice Agreement.

The State Visit to RoK by President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, in February 2006 heralded a new vibrant phase in India-RoK relations. It inter alia led to the launch of a Joint Task Force to conclude a bilateral Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). CEPA was operationalized on 1st January 2010. President Lee paid a landmark visit to India, as Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations on 26 January 2010, when bilateral ties were raised to the level of Strategic Partnership. It was followed by President Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil's State Visit to RoK from 24-27 July 2011 when the Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation Agreement was signed. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh paid an official visit to Seoul from 24-27 March 2012 for

both bilateral and Nuclear Security Summit when visa simplification agreement was signed. Traditionally close bilateral relations were elevated to a qualitative higher level, with the state visit to India of President Park Geun-hye from 15-18 January 2014.

EAM paid an official visit to South Korea from 28 to 30 December 2014, and co-chaired the 8th session of India-ROK Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) with her counterpart Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se. EAM and Korean FM comprehensively reviewed the developments in bilateral relations, with EAM inviting Korea to become an important partner in the 'Make in India' initiative.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a state visit to Korea during 18-19 May 2015, taking place within the first year of his government. During the visit the bilateral relationship was upgraded to 'special strategic partnership'. In the 'Joint Statement for Special Strategic Partnership' PM and President Park Geun-hye agreed to establish a 2+2 consultation mechanism at Secretary/Vice Minister of Foreign Office and Defence Ministry.

Earlier Defence Minister Shri A.K. Anthony visited RoK in September 2010. Korean Minister of Defense Mr. Kim Kwan-jin visited India from 28 Nov to 1 Dec 2012. National Security Advisor (NSA) Mr. Shivshankar Menon paid a visit to Seoul from 30 June-2 July 2013 as Prime Minister's special envoy. It was a first bilateral visit by an Indian NSA to RoK. Korean Deputy NSA Kim Kyou-hyun visited India in March 2015 and held discussion with our Deputy NSA. Defence Minister, Mr. Manohar Parrikar, accompanied by Defence Secretary and an Indian Defence industry delegation, paid a 3-day visit to ROK from 16 April 2015 and co-chaired the India-Republic of Korea Defence Ministerial meeting with his Korean Counterpart Gen Han Min-Koo.

Other high level visitors in 2015 included Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, Minister for Human Resource Development on 18-22 May, Railway Minister Shri Suresh PrabhakarPrabhu on 9-12 September and Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, to co-Chair the 3rd India-Korea Science & Technology Steering Committee Meeting. Additionally, Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, Shri Sukhbir Singh Badal, and Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan, respectively, visited Korea in September and October 2015.

Republic of Korea participated as the sole country at the Maritime India Summit 2016 held in Mumbai from 14-16 April 2016. Foreign Secretary visited Seoul on 17 May 2016 for bilateral meetings with Foreign Minister Mr. Yun Byung-se and Senior Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the President and First Vice Foreign Minister Lim Sung-nam. Chief Justice of India T.S. Thakur, accompanied by Supreme Court judges visited South Korea on 15-18 May 2016 to attend Incheon Trade Law Forum.

PM Modi and President Park had bilateral meetings on the sidelines of East Asia Summit on 8 September at Vientiane, Laos and discussed progress made in the bilateral relations. Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, Speaker of the Lok Sabha accompanied by five Members of Parliament visited South Korea from 28 September to 2 October 2016.

From ROK, Mayor of Busan Mr. Suh Byung-soo and his wife accompanied by an official and business delegation visited Delhi, Chennai and Bengaluru during 12-15 March 2015 under Ministry's Distinguished Visitor Programme (DVP). Korean National Assembly Speaker Mr. Chung Ui-hwa, visited India from 8-10 May 2015. Speaker Chung met the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and also called on Prime Minister. Mr. Je Jeong-boo, Minister of Government Legislation, visited India during 9-11 September 2015. Mayor Pohang Mr. Lee Kang-deok along with a business delegation visited Delhi, Agra and Mumbai from Feb 10-15, 2016 under DVP and participated in Make in India event. Mr. Chang Myoung-jin, Minister of the Defence Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA), ROK visited Goa on 27 March 2016 to co-Chair the Joint Committee Meeting with Department of Defence Production and to participate at the Defence Expo India 2016.

Commercial relations

Trade and economic relations have started to gather momentum again following the implementation of CEPA in 2010 and the bilateral trade reached \$18.8 billion in 2015. India became the 15th-largest trade partner of Korea. The Prime Minister's visit led to a positive focus on India, with shipbuilding, automobile, electronics, textiles, food processing and manufacture being sectors of particular interest. Separately, an updated India ROK Bilateral Air Services Agreement was revised in October 2015 in New Delhi, tripling the number of flight connections to 19 per week. An Indian Chamber of Commerce in Korea was established in January 2010 to help Korean companies interested in doing business with India.

The Chosun Group, the leading Korean media group, and CII organized the IndiaKorea Business Summit in New Delhi from 14-16 January 2016. The leadership from the top Korean conglomerates as well as Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Vice Minister for Trade, Industry & Energy attended the summit meeting, which also included an exclusive roundtable meeting with the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

India and South Korea launched an initiative 'Korea Plus', as proposed by Prime Minister Modi in June 2016 in India to promote and facilitate Korean Investments in India. To give it much wider outreach and publicity, Embassy of India organized a 'Korea Plus' event to introduce the initiative to Korean businessmen and investors in South Korea in November 2016. In addition, both countries also initiated negotiations to review the CEPA in October 2016 and agreed to continue the discussions for its early conclusion.

Major Korean conglomerates such as Samsung, Hyundai Motors and LG have made significant investments into India, estimated at over \$3 billion. Indian investments in ROK have already exceeded \$2 billion. There are officially 603 large and small Korean firms, which have offices in India. Novelis, a Hindalco subsidiary, acquired a Korean aluminium company by investing about \$600 million (Their total investment in ROK is nearing the \$2 billion now). Mahindra & Mahindra acquired a majority stake in SsangYong Motors, the country's 4th largest auto manufacturer, in March 2011, with an

investment of about \$360 million. Tata Motors acquired Daewoo Commercial Vehicle Company for \$102 million in March 2004. Other Indian companies present in India include IT majors, Indian Overseas Bank, State Bank of India etc.

Cultural relations

To further enhance cultural exchanges between Indian and Korea, an Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) was established in Seoul in April 2011. Another Culture Centre was established in Busan in December 2013 on Public Private Partnership mode. A bust of Rabindranath Tagore was unveiled in Seoul by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha Smt. Meira Kumar in May 2011. A bust of Mahatma Gandhi, presented by ICCR, was unveiled at the Hongbeop-sa temple in Busan on 21 July 2014.

ICC in Seoul and Busan offers regular classes on yoga and dance, both contemporary and classical for promotion of Indian culture. Classes on Hindi, Tabla and cooking have also been started with local teachers as part of outreach activities. Lectures, exhibitions and performances are arranged periodically by ICC. An annual festival of India in Korea titled SARANG was initiated in 2015 and held in 2016, showcasing divers' Indian culture and art forms in various parts of South Korea.

Various institutional arrangements between organisations and entities continue to promote people-to-people exchanges. This includes MoU between FSI and Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA) signed in March 2012, JNU's MoUs with Yonsei University, Korea University, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) and Busan University of Foreign Studies. DU also has signed an MoU with Korea University. In addition, HUFS in Seoul, and Busan University of Foreign Studies have Indian Studies Departments and JNU & DU offer programmes in Korea Studies and Korean Language Courses respectively. Madras University has also opened a Department of Korean Studies encouraged by the sizeable presence of Koreans including Hyundai Motors in Tamil Nadu. Recently Central University of Jharkhand (CUJ) started offering five-year integrated postgraduate degrees in Korean language. Manipur University and Madras Christian College are offering Diploma courses in Korean Language.

In 2012 Seoul National University established a New Department of Asian Languages and 4 Civilizations wherein they are offering a major on Indian Studies. Various other Universities in Korea offer degree courses in Indian Philosophy, Yoga and Ayurveda.

Seoul Forum for International Affairs and Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations have been jointly organizing the India-Korea Dialogue that makes recommendations on policies and practical measures to strengthen bilateral relations between the countries. Fifteen round of Dialogue were held till date with the last one in November 2016 in Seoul.

The Institute for Indian Studies Korea (IISK) was established at Korea International Trade Association (KITA) on 3 December 2013. Headed by Dr Lee Ok-soon, IISK is a platform that brings together large number of Korean academics,

economists and business representatives. 'India Fortune' has been organizing 'India Advanced Management Programme' for MPs, senior Korean officials, and CEOs covering Indian economy, corporate environment and Indian culture. The participants are always taken to India on a familiarization tour. This is a private business promotion initiative by a Korean scholar Dr. Oh Hwaseok.

Exchange of youth delegations between India and RoK has been taking place on an annual basis for several years now. Government of India offers scholarships and fellowships to Korean nationals for various programmes and disciplines covering research work and non-formal courses every year to study in India. Ayush Scholarship Scheme facilitates courses in Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Yoga and Homeopathy, while Hindi language scholarship is being offered by the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra. RoK Government also offers scholarships to Indian nationals each year to study Korean Language and Literature at Masters and PhD level at select Korean Universities.

Indian community

The total number of Indian nationals living in ROK is estimated to be around 11,000, which includes 120 PIOs. Around 1,000 Indian scholars are pursuing post-graduate and Ph. D programmes, mostly in pure sciences in Korea. During the past few years, many professionals mainly in the areas of IT, shipping and automobile have immigrated to ROK. They are working mostly with Samsung, LG, Hyundai TATA Daewoo and TCS. There is also significant number of students and academicians in the universities.

With the aim of bringing the Indians into closer coordination, the Mission brought various Indian Associations in ROK onto a common platform as part of a Coordination Committee. The Committee has proved to be an effective platform for dissemination of information and coordinating cultural events/activities.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Seoul website: <http://www.indembassy.or.kr/>

Web page of Indian Chamber in Korea: <http://www.indochamkorea.org/eng/>

Webpage of Indian Culture Centre: <http://indoculture.org/>

Facebook: India in Republic of Korea (Embassy of India, Seoul)
https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInSouthKorea/?ref=page_internal

December 2016