

India – Republic of Korea Bilateral 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' as well as "Act 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), which 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 on 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. The 'Joint Statement for Expansion of Strategic Partnership' issued during the visit, unveiled a blue print for further expanding the political, security, defence, economic, scientific & technological, IT, cultural and people-to-people relations.

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. 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.

The high level interaction continued with the visit of Mr. Manohar Parrikar in April 2015 to co-chair Defence Ministerial meeting with his Korean Counterpart Gen Han Min-Koo, Ms. Smriti Zubin Irani, Minister for Human Resource Development from 18 to 22 May 2015, Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu from 9 to 12 September 2015 and Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Harsh Vardhan on 6 November 2015, to co-Chair the 3rd India-Korea Science & Technology Steering Committee Meeting.

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 from 15 to 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 2016 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 side, Korean Deputy NSA Kim Kyou-hyun visited India in March 2015, National Assembly Speaker Mr. Chung Ui-hwa, visited India from 8-10 May 2015, Mr. Je Jeong-boo, Minister of Government Legislation, visited India during 9-11 September 2015, 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. RoK also participated as the sole country at the Maritime India Summit 2016 held in Mumbai from 14-16 April 2016.

In 2017, Vice Foreign Minister Lim Sung-nam visited India on 27-29 March to review bilateral relations and Minister for Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) visited India on 22 April to conclude an MoU on cooperation in shipbuilding agreed during the visit of PM Modi to South Korea.

The relationship witnessed new momentum following the inauguration of President Moon Jae-in's administration. PM Modi was the 4th international leader to congratulate President Moon on his election victory. In his addition, PM Modi's congratulatory tweet in Korean language was well appreciated by President Moon, Korean media and common people. President Moon reciprocated by sending Mr. Chung Dongchea, former culture minister, as his special envoy to India, first such instance in the bilateral relationship, and through subsequent announcement to upgrade the relationship with India equivalent to four traditional partners under the "New Asia Community Plus" framework. In parallel, timely visit of Finance and Defense Minister Arun Jaitley from 14 to 16 June 2017 provided an opportunity to conclude the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF), an MoU between EXIM banks of two countries and review ongoing defence relationship between the two countries in addition to meeting the new leadership. This was followed by a bilateral meeting between PM Modi and President Moon Jae-in on the sidelines of G-20 Summit in Hamburg on 8 July 2017.

Commercial relations

Trade and economic relations have started to gather momentum again following the implementation of CEPA in 2010 and the bilateral trade in 2011 crossed USD 20.5 billion registering a 70% growth over a two-year period. A revised trade target of USD 40 billion by 2015 was set by PM Singh and President Lee on 25 March 2012. However, bilateral trade has since declined to USD 18.13 billion in 2014-15, USD 16.56 billion in 2015-16, USD 16.82 billion in 2016-17, which finally recovered and posted a positive growth of 30% in the first seven months of 2017. According to Statistics Korea, Indian exports to Korea accounted for USD 2.91 billion and imports accounts for USD 8.707 billion during January-July 2017, marking a growth of 26% and 30.1% respectively. As mandated by both leaders in 2015, both countries initiated negotiations to upgrade the CEPA to enhance bilateral trade between the two countries. Accordingly, both countries held two rounds of Director General level discussions and recently on 23 September 2017 a Ministerial Level Joint Committee Meeting on CEPA was co-Chaired by Mr. Suresh Prabhu, CIM and Mr. Kim Hyun-chong, Trade Minister of South Korea.

Major items of India's exports to Korea are mineral fuels/oil distillates (mainly naphtha), cereals, iron and steel. Basic materials comprise the bulk of India's exports to Korea with Naphtha accounting 23.9% in 2016. Korea's main export items are

automobile parts, telecommunication equipment, hot rolled iron products, petroleum refined products, base lubricating oils, nuclear reactors, mechanical appliances, electrical machinery & parts and iron and steel products.

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. Following that, revision of India-ROK Bilateral Air Services Agreement in October 2015, tripling the number of flight connections to 19 per week and organisation of the 1st India-Korea Business Summit, jointly by Chosun Group, Korea's leading media group, and CII in New Delhi from 14-16 January 2016 created a conducive environment for trade and businesses between the two countries. 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.

The visit of Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to South Korea from 14 to 17 June to co-Chair the 5th India-Korea Financial Dialogue also resulted in signing of the agreements to establish USD 9 billion in concessional credit and USD 1 billion in ODA funding for infrastructure development projects in India. Following which, Chief Minister of Maharashtra visited South Korea from 26 to 27 September and concluded an MoU with South Korean Ministry of Land, Transport and Energy seeking Korean investments in infrastructure projects in Maharashtra, especially Nagpur-Mumbai Expressway project. In addition, State Governments of Chhattisgarh and Telangana visited South Korea in 2017 exploring business ties and Korean investments in their respective states.

Major Korean conglomerates such as Samsung, Hyundai Motors and LG have made significant investments into India, estimated at over \$4.43 billion (as of March 2017). Recently, Kia motors, a sister company of Hyundai Group, announced an investment of USD 1.1 billion to set up a manufacturing unit in Andhra Pradesh and Samsung Electronics announced a USD 760 million investment to expand production facilities in India. In addition, there are 603 large and small Korean firms, which have offices in India. From the Indian side, investments in ROK is nearing USD 3 billion. Novelis, a Hindalco subsidiary, acquired a Korean aluminium company by investing about \$600 million. 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.

The Indian Chamber of Commerce in Korea comprising Indian and Korean companies play a constructive role in promoting trade and investments linkages between the two countries and assist Embassy in organising seminars and events on business promotions.

Cultural relations

To further enhance cultural exchanges between India 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 Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was unveiled in Seoul by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha Smt. Meira Kumar in May 2011.

In order to boost people-to-people relations and travel between the two countries, India extended visa-on-arrival (VoA) facility for Korean tourists from 15 Apr 2014. As a gesture of friendship and goodwill to the Korean people, Prime Minister of India gifted a sapling of the sacred Bodhi Tree under which Lord Buddha had attained enlightenment. The sapling was handed over by the Ambassador to ROK Forest Minister Shin Won-sop, at a formal ceremony at Korea's National Arboretum on 19 Mar 2014. 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 diverse 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 rounds of Dialogue have been held till date, with the last one in November 2016 in Seoul. Ananta Aspen Centre will be coordinating the 16th round of Dialogue from Indian side, which is scheduled in November 2017.

The Institute for Indian Studies Korea (IISK) was established at Korea International Trade Association (KITA) on 3 December 2013, which 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.

Good air connectivity between the two countries has been established with Air India, Asiana Airlines and Korean Air operating flights. The bilateral civil aviation agreement of 1994 was finally revised in November 2015 increasing weekly flights between the two countries to 19, which resulted in new operations by Korean Airlines which started direct flights to Delhi. In 2016, total 49180 visas were issued by the Mission as compared to 46,118 in 2015, 52,052 in 2014, 70,713 visas in 2013 and 79,028 in 2012. The decline in number of visas issued by the Mission is mainly due to issuance of E visas for Koreans (which is not accounted by Mission) as also issuance of large number of long-term multiple entry visas to facilitate business exchanges. In February 2016, Korean Air reached a code-sharing agreement with Jet Airways covering six international routes such as those linking New Delhi with Bangkok.

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. Prominent associations of expatriate Indians in RoK include the Annapurna Indian Women's Association (AIWA), Indians in Korea (IIK) - comprising mostly of professionals, Indian Student Association in Korea and Indian Merchants' Association (IMA). The Associations function under the aegis of the Mission and undertake various cultural as well as social activities every year including organizing Holi and Diwali functions which provide the community an opportunity to socialize with other members and stay in touch with Indian culture.

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

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