

## **India-Cambodia Relations**

India-Cambodia relations go back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD when Hindu and Buddhist religious and cultural influences emanated out of India to various parts of South-East Asia. Cambodians are today predominantly Buddhist but retain a strong influence of Hindu rituals, idolatry and mythology. The pervading influence of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Indian architecture are borne out by the magnificent structures at Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, Bayon, Ta Phrom and other religious and historical sites in Cambodia.

### **A. POLITICAL RELATIONS:**

India-Cambodia bilateral relations are warm and cordial. In the 1950s, India was associated with the International Control Commission on Indo-China. After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, India recognized the new government and re-opened its Embassy in Phnom Penh in 1981 when much of the world shunned Cambodia. This factor along with India's association with the Paris Peace Accords and their finalization in 1991 is fondly remembered by the Cambodian leadership. India also committed military and non-military personnel for the conduct of the UNTAC-sponsored elections in 1993. India was one of the original contributors to UN de-mining operations in Cambodia. The Government of India also responded to an appeal by Cambodian Government to undertake the conservation of the famous Angkor Wat temple during the period 1986 to 1993 at a cost of US\$ 4 million, at a time when peace in the country was yet to be settled.

India and Cambodia cooperate in a number of multilateral and regional fora. PM Hun Sen formally declared his country's open support in favour of India for permanent membership of the UNSC at the South Summit Conference in Havana in April 2000. Cambodia has time and again reiterated this support at various international fora and during bilateral interactions. In the context of our 'Act East' policy and the ASEAN, Cambodia is an important interlocutor and a good partner.

Contemporary times have witnessed expansion of cooperation in diverse fields such as institutional capacity building, human resource development, and extension of financial assistance in infrastructure projects, security and defence. On the political front, there has been regular exchange of high level visits.

Bilateral defence cooperation between two countries has been continuing with the conduct of annual training capsule for Royal Cambodian Armed Forces in Peacekeeping and Demining modules; defence training programmes under ITEC and ship visits by Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard. In November 2016, Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Samrat' visited Sihanoukville on a goodwill visit. Indian side has gifted 15 mine sniffer dogs to Cambodian side in November 2016. A 15-member team of Defence Officers from Army War College, Mhow visited Cambodia as part of their study tour in September 2016.

In September 2016, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed by both sides to promote parliamentary exchanges in the administrative branch and to jointly promote human resource development through exchange of experiences, knowledge, expertise and study visits.

### **Exchange of high level visits:**

- Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee paid an official visit to Cambodia from April 9-11, 2002 and again, from 4-6 November, 2002 for the 1<sup>st</sup> ASEAN-India Summit. These visits had an excellent impact and reinforced bilateral ties. Bilaterally, various agreements were signed and many initiatives were announced.

- President of India Smt. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil accompanied by high level delegation including 40 business people paid a six-day state visit to Cambodia from September 13-18, 2010. She visited temples of Bayon, Ta Prohm & Banteay Srey, Elephant Terrace & Angkor Wat in Siem Reap. She also laid the foundation stone for the MGC Asian Traditional Textiles Museum at Siem Reap.
- Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh led a high level delegation to Cambodia from 18-20 November 2012 to participate in the 10th ASEAN– India Summit and the 7th East Asia Summit held in Phnom Penh. During his visit, Dr. Singh paid homage to the late King father Norodom Sihanouk on November 19.
- Vice President of India led a high level delegation to Cambodia from 15-17 September 2015. During his visit, Vice President Ansari held official level talks with Prime Minister Hun Sen and met the Presidents of the National Assembly and the Senate. Two MOUs were signed during the visit – (i) Promotion of Tourism Cooperation and (2) Implementation of Quick Impact Projects under Mekong Ganga Cooperation initiative. Vice President Ansari also handed over the completion certificate of India-Cambodia Friendship School to the Prime Minister Hun Sen. He also visited Siem Reap to see the world heritage sites of Angkor Wat and Ta-Prohm temples.
- Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and delegation visited India from 8-10 December 2007. A fresh impetus was provided to India’s relations with Cambodia by the state visit of Cambodian PM. During the visit, seven Agreements/MOUs relating to Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Credit Line, Defence Cooperation, Water Resource Management, Agricultural Development, Oil and Gas sector and Foreign Office Consultations were signed. A line of credit of US\$35.2 million on concessional terms was offered to Cambodia.
- Cambodian Prime Minister Mr. Hun Sen further led a high level delegation to India to participate in the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN – India dialogue partnership on December 19, 2012. PM Hun Sen held bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in New Delhi and requested for US \$ 57 million concessional loan from India for two development projects and also urged India to consider direct flights to Cambodia.

### **Second Joint Commission Meeting:**

The Second India-Cambodia Joint Commission Meeting held in New Delhi on 8 July 2016. This was chaired on the Indian side by General Dr. V.K. Singh (Retd.), Hon’ble Minister of State for External Affairs and on the Cambodian side by Mr. Long Visalo, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Kingdom of Cambodia. The Commission reviewed the full gamut of bilateral cooperation which covered areas of Agriculture, Water Management, Energy, Education and Skill Development, Defence and Security, Culture and Conservation and Restoration of Temples in Cambodia. Both sides identified Tourism and Civil Aviation as a new area of cooperation and also agreed to strengthen bilateral trade and economic cooperation including facilitation of Indian investments in Cambodia. Both sides appreciated the support to each other in international fora. Cambodia reiterated her support for India’s permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council.

### **B. ASSISTANCE & AID PROJECTS:**

- Restoration of Angkor Wat Temple: In response to an appeal by the Cambodian Government to save the famous Angkor Wat temples, GOI responded favourably and it was the first country to offer such assistance. Various teams of Archaeological Survey of India worked from 1986 to 1993. The Project, financed by

the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) was the single largest project with the cost of around US\$ 4 million, and is still appreciated by Cambodia.

- ii. Restoration of Ta Prohm Temple: On Cambodia's request, India also agreed to restore Ta Prohm temple in Siem Reap. ASI team commenced its work in December 2003 and utilized advanced 3D laser scanning techniques in coordination with Elcome Technologies Limited. Restoration of temple complex at Ta-Prohm has been a major ongoing project and work by the ASI team has been widely appreciated. Phase II of the project was completed in July 2015. The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of restoration project with a cost of Rs.29.32 crore (US\$ 4.5 million appx.) has commenced in November 2016.
- iii. Aid & Assistance: During 2002, India gifted medicines and 10,000 tonnes of rice. India gifted indelible ink to Cambodia for the General Elections in July, 2003. Medicines, Equipment & Ambulances worth Rs.2.31 crores were gifted to Military Hospital in Siem Reap in August 2008. The GOI of India provided a cash donation of US\$ 100,000 to the Royal Government of Cambodia to provide relief for the victims of the floods in 2011. The aid was used to purchase foodstuff, mosquito nets and blankets to address the basic needs of the flood victims.
- iv. ITEC Training Programme: Under the ITEC programme, over 1400 Cambodian nationals have been trained from 1981 onwards. The range of courses includes English, Computer Applications, Management, Entrepreneurship Development, Rural Development, Agro Industries, Labour Administration, Audit, Finance, Banking etc. 110 ITEC slots were allocated for Cambodia during 2016-17 and given overwhelming response from the Cambodian side, 2016-17 allocation was increased to 152 slots.
- v. Scholarships: 25 scholarships (increased from 17 to 25 in 2015) for under-graduate, post-graduate and higher studies in India are available for Cambodian students under the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation programme (10), General Cultural Scholarship Scheme (13) and Cultural Exchange Programm (02) every year. India has also offered to receive 2 Buddhist monks/scholars under Distinguished Visitor's Programme.
- vi. MGC Asian Traditional Textile Museum: Under the MGC initiative, the Prime Minister during his visit to Cambodia in April 2002 announced setting up of the "Asian Traditional Textiles Museum" at Siem Reap. The construction of the Museum building was completed in end December 2011. An Indian Director joined the museum in July 2013. MGCATTM, the first museum of its kind in Cambodia, has exhibits on textiles from the Mekong Ganga region along with interactive facilities. It also has a training centre and workshop in textiles; a fashion design and development centre using traditional ethnic designs; and various children activities in the centre. It also helps preserve the age old tradition of textiles in this region. This museum is yet another attraction for the large number of tourists coming to Siem Reap.
- vii. India-Cambodia Friendship School: Former President Smt. Pratibha Patil during her visit to Cambodia in 2010 announced a donation of US\$ 246,000 for redevelopment of India-Cambodia Friendship School in Kampong Cham province. The project has been completed successfully handed over to the Cambodian side during the visit of Vice President of India in September 2015. Provision for solar lighting in the newly constructed block has been made this year. A water purification plant has also been installed in the school.
- viii. Concessional loans and Grants: Following the visit of PM Hun Sen to India in December 2007, Government of India has so far extended Line of Credits (LOC) of

US\$ 65.20 million to Cambodia for Water Development and transmission line projects. In addition, two LOCs are being considered under the revised IDEA scheme amounting to US\$37 million and US\$20 million for two developmental projects. In December 2007, India offered a grant in aid of US\$ 8.5 million for supply and installation of 1500 Afridev hand-operated pumps to augment supply of drinking water in rural areas of Cambodia. The hand pump project, with a revised estimated cost of US\$ 12 million, was launched on 20 April 2017. Government of India has also provided grant in aid of approximately US \$ 3 million for two projects namely; Siem Reap Basin – Development of Master Plan and Study of Ground Water Resources of Kampong Speu Province.

- ix. Quick Impact Projects (QIP) under Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Initiative:  
During the visit of Hon'ble Vice President to Cambodian, an MOU was signed on 16 September 2015 with Cambodia for implementation of Quick Impact Projects under Mekong Ganga Cooperation initiative. Under QIP Scheme, Indian grant assistance of US\$ 50,000 each is granted for implementation of five projects every year. During the last two years, 10 Quick Impact Projects have been implemented in the fields of agriculture, health, women empowerment, capacity building, sanitation and environment. These projects have received overwhelming response and created a distinct and visible impact among the beneficiaries. During 2017-18, five more projects are being launched.
- x. Contribution to ECCC: In September 2016, India has contributed US\$ 50,000 to the national budget component of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), the tribunal tasked with the prosecution of the country's former Khmer Rouge commanders. India had earlier contributed US\$ 1 million to ECCC in September 2005.

### C. COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

India-Cambodia trade has been growing steadily in the last few years. The total trade between India and Cambodia stood at US\$187.36 million in 2015, which indicated a 10% increase over the corresponding figure for 2014 (total trade US \$169 million). Of this, exports from India were US \$145.57 million (a decrease of about 4.5% over 2014) and the imports from Cambodia were US \$42.36 million (an increase of 162%). While the overall trade has shown a continuous trend of growth, the trade basket remains very narrow. Our exports are dominated by Pharmaceuticals, yarn, leather and some engineering items. Cambodian exports are mostly primary products. Trade figures for the last six years are given below:

<b>Trade with India</b> (US\$ millions )	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2016</b> (Jan – Dec)
Total Trade	74.95	106.73	124.18	153.98	187.36	153.13
Exports	66.94	99.45	112.28	141.26	145.57	110.01
Imports	8.01	7.28	11.9	12.72	42.36	43.13
Growth	48.12	42.40	16.35	24	10	----

India has extended Duty Free Tariff Preference Schemes to Cambodia since August 2008, which has encouraged exports of Cambodian goods to India. At present investment from India is marginal.

The exports from India via third countries including HCMC port, Vietnam is not reflected in this estimate. The high cost of handling per container at Sihanoukville port is one major reason for less direct export to Cambodia from India. The DFTP Scheme of the Government of India has been operational in regard to Cambodia since June 2009. Under

this Scheme, India unilaterally provides preferential market access for exports from Cambodia. The Scheme covers 94% of India's total tariff lines.

The principal commodities exported from India are: drugs and pharmaceutical products, organic chemicals, yarn, woven fabric, leather, man-made staple fibers, tobacco, vehicle parts, machinery and cosmetics. Whereas the main exports from Cambodia are non-ferrous metals. The trade basket can be however expanded by sourcing lentils, yellow maize, black eye beans, chick peas, black pepper, palm oil, shellac, eucalyptus chips/pulp, cashew nuts, turmeric, sesame seeds etc. being produced in large quantities in Cambodia. With a view to provide an institutional framework for increasing investments, Vice President during his visit in September 2015 had suggested conclusion of a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT). Both sides are looking forward for early signing of the treaty.

#### **D. CULTURAL RELATIONS**

There exists a Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between the two countries. The CEP was signed during Prime Minister Hun Sen's visit in February 2000. This was renewed during the visit of Secretary, Ministry of Culture in June 2013. Both sides are working for renewal of CEP for a further period.

An MOU on the Establishment of ICCR's Chair on Buddhist & Sanskrit Studies at Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University was signed with Cambodian Ministry of Religions & Cults on 04 July, 2011. The MOU has been renewed for a further period of 3 years upto 2019 during the visit of ICCR President to Cambodia in May 2016.

India has been appointed co-chair of the prestigious International Coordinating Committee (ICC) on Preah Vihear, a world heritage site and one of the oldest temples and pilgrimage site of Lord Shiva. For the restoration of Preah Vihear Temple, Indian side has conveyed its willingness to carry out restoration and conservation work of Gopura-5 and some segments of Gopura-1 of Preah Vihear.

The Third International Yoga day was celebrated in three cities of Cambodia in June 2017 which was attended by around 2700 participants. The event was organized by the Embassy with the support of Cambodian Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. There was very good response from all quarters. This year delegates of Asia Cooperation Dialogue attended the yoga event for the first time at Siem Reap in front of Angkor Wat Temple. Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen sent a special message to Prime Minister of India conveying that this year celebration will contribute to increasing more international attention and understanding about the essence of Yoga, whose inherent philosophy and practice stand for achieving peace, internal and external harmony and happiness.

A Bharatnatyam teacher has also been deputed to the Mission who is conducting dance classes at Royal University of Fine Arts and at the Embassy. Besides, a Teacher to teach Indian culture has also been appointed by ICCR and is being deputed shortly.

Embassy with the support of Ministry of Culture organized a month long Festival of India in Cambodia during January-February 2017. The festival also marked 25th Anniversary of India-ASEAN dialogue partnership. The Festival included Ramayana Classical Dance performance, Kathak dance, Manganiar and Kalbelia Folk Dance, Buddhist Festival and Food Festival. This was the first time that Ramayana episodes were performed in front of historic Bayon Temple in Angkor Archeological Park. All the events saw overwhelming response from a wide spectrum of local population including a large number of students from different universities and schools. Shri Ram Nath Kovind, Hon'ble Governor of Bihar led a delegation from Nav Nalanda Mahavihar to participate in Buddhist Festival in February 2017.

## **E. TOURISM COOPRATION**

A new MOU on Tourism Cooperation between Indian and Cambodia was signed on 16 September 2015 during the visit of Hon'ble Vice President of India to Cambodia. First JWG meeting on Tourism held in New Delhi on 28 April 2016 in which both sides have signed a work plan on tourism cooperation. Both sides have agreed to (i) facilitate movement of tourists between the two countries (ii) exchange experience in the areas of promotion and marketing, destination development and management (including participation in Tourism Exhibitions/Road-shows and events) (iii) cooperation in Human Resource Development (iv) Exchange visits of tour operators/media personnel/opinion makers. Both sides have further agreed to encourage promotion of tourist destinations and circuits considering demand of Buddhist related spiritual sites. Cambodia has agreed in-principle for the conclusion of 5<sup>th</sup> freedom traffic rights between Cambodia and India. The civil aviation authorities of the two sides held bilateral air services talks on 14-15 September 2016 and signed a memorandum of Understanding on 15 September 2016. Lanmei Airlines (Cambodia) Co. Ltd. has been designated by the Cambodian side to operate scheduled services on the specified route.

## **F. INDIAN COMMUNITY**

There are about 1500 Indian nationals working in various sectors in Cambodia. Most of them are based in the capital city, Phnom Penh. Many of them are employed with international organizations and agencies. There are some Indians working as advisers in some of the Cambodian Ministries. There are also a few doctors, working with WHO & other international organizations. There is a group of small traders hailing from Uttar Pradesh, who sell clothes and mosquito nets in the countryside.

The Indians in Cambodia have formed an Indian Association-Cambodia. The Association has been collaborating effectively with the Indian Embassy, and holding get-togethers on festivals and important occasions.

In addition, an Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has also been established since 2012. The ICC organizes seminars, business events, etc. mostly in collaboration with the Indian Embassy and works towards solutions for common problems faced by Indian businessmen in Cambodia.

### **Useful Resources:**

*Embassy of India, Phnom Penh:* <http://www.indembassyphnompenh.org/>  
*Facebook page of the Embassy:* <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInCambodia?ref=hl>  
*Twitter handle of the Embassy:* [@indembcam](https://twitter.com/indembcam)

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