

## **INDIA-LAOS BILATERAL RELATIONS**

### **Political**

India and Lao People's Democratic Republic (also called Laos) share longstanding, friendly and mutually supportive relations. Both countries' views converge on many issues of mutual interest in international forums. Laos support India's claim for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. There have been high-level visits between the two countries. President of India visited Laos in 1956 and in September 2010. Prince Souphanouvong, commonly known as the Red Prince visited India in 1975 and President of Laos visited India in August 2008. Vice President of India visited Laos in September 2015. Visits at PM level from India to Laos took place in 1956, 2002, 2004 and September 2016, while PM of Laos visited India in December 2012 and January 2018. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Foreign Office Consultations was held in New Delhi on 10 August 2015 and the 9<sup>th</sup> Joint Commission Meeting was held in Vientiane on 23 November 2018. Recent ministerial visits from Laos to India include Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs visit to attend 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of Delhi Dialogue in July 2018 and Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce visit to attend 11<sup>th</sup> Edition of Delhi Dialogue in December 2019.

**Agreements** signed between the countries include: India-Laos Cultural Agreement (August 1994), Agreement for setting up of Joint Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific Cooperation – May 1997, Agreements on (i) Trade and Economic Cooperation; and (ii) Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection (9 November, 2000), Agreement on Cooperation in Defence (November 2002), Agreement on Mutual Cooperation on Drug Demand Reduction & Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and related matters (November 2002), MoU on setting up of Entrepreneurship Development Centre (July 2004), Agreement on Cooperation in Science & Technology (June 2003), Agreement on Exemption of Visa Requirement for holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports (2005), MoU for the Conservation and Restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Wat Phou (May, 2007), MoU for Setting up Centre for English Language Training (June, 2007), Agreement on setting up of a Sustainable IT Infrastructure for Advance IT Training (Centre for Excellence in Software Development & Training) (August, 2015), Agreement between India and Lao PDR regarding Indian Grant Assistance for implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) [18 September 2015], Air Services Agreement (January 2019), Agreement

between Foreign Service Institute of India and Foreign Affairs Institute of Laos (September 2019)

**Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)** : An MoU on three projects in the field of agriculture proposed by the Lao side viz., 'Establishment of Fertilizer Analysis Laboratory' 'Promotion of Goat Raising in Lao PDR' in Jieng Village, Thoulakhom District, Vientiane Province; and 'Promoting Green Cardamom Cultivation in Paksong District, Champasak Province' was signed on 18 October, 2017. The Projects are under process of implementation.

Bilateral trade between India and Laos in 2018-19 was US \$ 40.42 mn including exports worth US \$ 39.38 mn from India to Laos and imports worth US \$ 1.04 mn from Laos to India. The major items of export from India to Laos were Electrical machinery and equipment and motor vehicles/cars while main items of import from Laos to India was plywood and allied products and shellac. In pursuance of the announcement made by the Prime Minister of India in April 2008, India has accorded the Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme (DFTP) to Lao PDR. The Scheme grants Laos duty free access to 94% of India's total tariff lines.

### **Projects under Lines of Credit:**

India has supported development of Laos by extending Lines of Credit for infrastructure projects in the fields of transmission line, hydrowpoer project, conversion of diesel to electric driven pump sets, and irrigation projects.

### **Cultural Relations:**

#### **Human Resource Development:**

The Government of India has been providing nearly 120 scholarships annually to Lao nationals under various schemes. So far, under ITEC, GOI has trained about 1500 Lao nationals. The LIEDC (Lao-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre) set up in November 2004, trains Lao entrepreneurs for setting up small and medium scale business. The LICELT [Lao India Centre for English Language Training] set up in National University of Laos, Vientiane in June 2007 is one of assistance projects in human resource development. India set up an IT centre in Vientiane in November 2004, as well as a National Data Centre in May 2006. Ten Rural Telecommunication Centres were set up in seven Provinces and three in the Ministry of Health, the Government's Office and in the office of the

Governor of Vientiane. Centre for Excellence in Software Development and Training (CSEDT) was inaugurated in Vientiane on 26 November 2018.

### **Heritage Conservation:**

An MOU was signed with the Ministry of Information and Culture in May 2007 for the restoration of the UNESCO world heritage site at Vat Phu an ancient Shiva Temple. The work on the project began in June 2009. Eight seasons of restoration work in Phase I were completed in May 2017. Phase-II of the Project has commenced from November 2018 and is likely to complete in 2027.

### **Indian Community:**

The 500-strong Indian community has grown in profile over the years. It is engaged in jewellery trade, the restaurant and hotel industry, manufacturing, garments, mining, plantations and agarwood. A few members work for international organizations, multinationals, consulting organizations and private businesses. The ASEAN India Business Council (AIBC) based in Malaysia has a Chapter in Laos.

Laos is a part of India's extended neighborhood as only one country, namely Myanmar, separates Laos from India's North East. The distance from the Lao border with Myanmar in the North to Manipur border in India is less than 2,000 kms. As the Indian presence grows and the success stories become more, India-Lao relations in different spheres are likely to grow.

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