

India-Cambodia Relations

India-Cambodia relations goes back to the 1st 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.

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 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. Furthermore, Government of India 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.

Contemporary times have witnessed expansion of cooperation in diverse fields such as institutional capacity building, human resource development, extension of financial assistance in infrastructure projects, security and defence. On the political front, there has been regular exchange of high level visits. From India, prominent high-level visits included Vice President (2001), Prime Minister (2002 and 2012), External Affairs Minister (2003 and 2012), Commerce & Industry Minister (2003 and 2012), Minister of State for External Affairs (2006), Water Resources Minister (2008 & 2010), Panchayati Raj Minister (2009), President (Sept 2010) and Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas (2012). Cambodian Dy. PM and Foreign Minister Hor Namhong paid an official visit to India in 2007 and 2012. Cambodian PM Hun Sen had visited India many times and the last one was in December 2012 to take part in the 20th anniversary of ASEAN-India dialogue partnership, held in New Delhi. From Cambodia, other prominent recent visits to India included a multi-party parliamentary delegation (2010), Commerce Minister (2008, 2011) and Minister of Cults & Religion (2010). The first round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Cambodia was held in Phnom Penh on 29 November, 2011.

Total bilateral trade in the year 2011-12 was US\$ 107.07 million (Indian export of US\$ 99.45 million and import of US\$ 7.62 million). A beginning has been made in the year 2011 of Indian private sector investment in Cambodia with a US\$ 85 million project to establish sugar plantation, sugar factory, power plant, rice milling facility etc. Potential exists for enhanced economic engagement between the two countries. A number of trade delegations visited Cambodia during last year to explore business opportunities and held buyers-sellers meets. In order to promote trade with Cambodia, India has extended duty free tariff preference scheme to Cambodia since June 2009. Bank of India opened its branch in Phnom Penh in May, 2009. The Embassy has helped establish an Indian Chamber of Commerce to promote bilateral trade and investment ties. Recently, "Small Business-Big Opportunities: A Business Event on SME Cooperation" was organized jointly by the Federation of Association for Small and Medium Enterprises of Cambodia (FASMEC) and the Embassy of India in Phnom Penh

on December 8, 2012. A large business delegation from Cambodia participated in the ASEAN-India Business Forum in December 2012.

India has been contributing to capacity building in Cambodia and has set up in Phnom Penh a Cambodia-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre (CIEDC) in February, 2006 and Cambodia-India Centre for English Language Training (CICELT) in August, 2007. Cambodia is a major recipient of India's ITEC programme and has utilized around 1000 civilian training slots and about 100 defence training slots till date. Taking note of increasing demand for civilian training courses, slots for Cambodia under ITEC have been enhanced to 100 from 2011-12. Separately, 15 education scholarships are offered every year, 10 under MGC and 5 under GCSS. An Indian expert in water management was deputed for one year period from June '09 to June '10 under ITEC to assist APSARA Authority at Siem Reap. Work on establishing India-Cambodia Center of Excellence & Talent Development (ICCETD) has begun. These Centers will be established at Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville.

There have been regular exchanges of cultural troupe performances. Indian TV serials (Zee TV and Star Plus) and Hindi movies (dubbed in Khmer) are quite popular. A Chair on Buddhist & Sanskrit Studies has been set up at Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University and has been operational from Oct 2010. Dr. Karan Singh, during his visit in 2011, was conferred the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters by the Preah Sihanouk Raja Buddhist University. An ICCR-sponsored International Conference on Buddhism Heritage in South East Asia was organized at Phnom Penh on 3-4 December, 2010 with participation of scholars from India, Cambodia, China, Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia. Recently, the 2nd ASEAN-India Car Rally visited Cambodia from 5-6 December, 2012 and to celebrate the occasion, the Indian Embassy in Cambodia arranged a successful cultural event CHARISHNU, attended by over 1200 people over 2 days, at the Chaktomuk Theatre in Phnom Penh on 4-5 December. The Embassy also organised performances by Shwaas, a world music band from India twice at Phnom Penh and once at Sihanoukville to capacity audiences.

India has extended bilateral financial assistance to Cambodia through Grants and Lines of Credit. Since December, 2003, a team of ASI has been working for restoration of Ta Prohm Temple in Siem Reap with funds provided under ITEC programme. Several projects under India's Lines of Credit in the areas of electric transmission lines (US\$ 30 million) and irrigation projects (US\$ 30 million) are under implementation. India made a bilateral contribution of US\$ 1 million for the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, the first country to pledge a cash contribution to Cambodia's national share of the court of the Tribunal. Proposal for installation of 1500 hand-pumps at a cost of US\$ 8.48 million in rural Cambodia under grants-in-aid is under process. India is providing financial assistance of approx. US\$ 1.772 million for setting up of the MGC Asian Traditional Textiles Museum at Siem Reap under Mekong Ganga Cooperation (MGC) initiative, for which construction of the building has been completed in end December 2011. India has also provided disaster relief and humanitarian assistance to Cambodia when needed. During 2002, India gifted medicines and 10,000 tonnes of rice. India gifted 26,000 jars of indelible ink to Cambodia for the general elections in July, 2003. India provided a cash donation of US\$ 100,000 to provide relief for the victims of the floods in 2011.

In the last few years, there has been a steady enhancement of defence cooperation between the two countries. Exchange of visits of defence officials, goodwill visits by Indian Naval Ships (*most recently on 12-15 January 2012, Indian Sail Training Ship – INS SUDARSHINI visited Sihanoukville Port of Cambodia*), gift of medical equipments & other stores and imparting of training courses to RCAF personnel in

demining and peace keeping operations (*the 6th annual three-week demining training course and the second UN peacekeeping training course was conducted on 18 July to 7 Aug 2012*), are some of the activities undertaken by the two countries. On the security front, India and Cambodia have signed an Agreement on Combating International Terrorism, Organized Crimes and Illicit Drug Trafficking in December, 2005.

India and Cambodia cooperate in a number of multilateral and regional fora. Cambodia has consistently supported India's candidature in the UN and other international organizations. 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 'Look East' policy and the ASEAN, Cambodia is an important interlocutor and a good partner.

Cambodia has been a strong proponent of enhanced interaction between India and the ASEAN, and played a pivotal role in achieving the goal of the ASEAN-India Summit, held for the first time in Phnom Penh in November 2002. Cambodia supported India within the ASEAN for participation in the first East Asia Summit meeting held in December 2005 in Kuala Lumpur. Within ASEAN, Cambodia's interaction with India has enhanced substantially since July 2009 when Cambodia took over as Country Coordinator for India for a three years period. The first meeting of the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group (AIEPG) was held in Phnom Penh on 3 August, 2011. The AIEPG have put forward visionary recommendations on moving forward and deepening the India-ASEAN cooperation which was adopted at the ASEAN-India Summit in Nov 2012 in Phnom Penh. Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation Hor Namhong led a high level delegation to India from 13-14 February, 2012 to attend Delhi Dialogue-IV under the theme: "India and ASEAN: Partners for Peace, Progress and Stability". The 14th ASEAN-India Senior Officials' Meeting was held in Phnom Penh on 27 May, 2012. Shri S.M. Krishna visited Phnom Penh from 10-12 July, to attend the 10th ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting, the 2nd East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers Meeting and the 19th ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting. Cambodian Minister of Commerce Cham Prasiddh visited Guwahati and New Delhi in December 2012 to attend the ASEAN India Business Forum.

There have been regular high level meetings between the Prime Ministers of both countries. Premiers of the two countries held a bilateral interaction on 18 November, 2011 at Bali on the sidelines of ASEAN and EAS Summits. Dr. Manmohan Singh accompanied by his wife Smt. Gursharan Kaur led a high level delegation to Cambodia on 18-20 November 2012 to participate in the 10th ASEAN-India Summit and the 7th East Asia Summit held in Phnom Penh. Cambodian PM Hun Sen travelled to New Delhi to attend the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in December 2012.

There are about 1500 Indian nationals working in various fields in Cambodia. Most of them are based in the capital city, Phnom Penh. The Indians in Cambodia have formed an association called 'Indian Association – Cambodia' and are very active, organizing various events and celebrating Indian festivals through the year. Phnom Penh has a street named after Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. A bust of Mahatma Gandhi, gifted by India, has been installed at a prominent location in Phnom Penh.

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