

INDIA-LAO PDR BILATERAL RELATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

India and Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) have historical and civilizational links reflected in common heritage of Buddhism and Ramakien (Ramayana). According to a legend, emissaries of King Asoka brought a relic of the Buddha to Laos, which are believed to have been placed underneath That Luang, Laos' national monument, in Vientiane. The ancient Shiva temple of Bhadreswara, now known as Vat Phou, is a ruined Khmer Hindu temple complex in southern Laos. Ramayana (local version is called Ramakien or the Story of Phra Lak Phra Ram) is popular and revered in Laos and is performed on auspicious occasions.

2. India played a key role as the Chairman of the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) for Laos which was established following the Geneva Agreements of July 1954 for cessation of hostilities in Indo-China and withdrawal of French colonial power.

II. POLITICAL

3. Bilateral relations with Laos have been long-standing, friendly and mutually supportive since diplomatic relations were established in 1956. There is regard and respect for India and the India story of development. India and Lao PDR are marking 70 years of establishment of bilateral relations in 2026.

4. Laos has been supportive of us on many major issues of regional and international concerns to India, including our claim for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. Laos also supported India's candidature to non-permanent UNSC seat for the term 2021-2022 in exchange for support of Lao candidature for the membership of UN Economic and Social Council for the term 2023-2025. Laos has also extended support of India's candidature for non-permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the term 2028-29.

5. Institutional consultative mechanisms include FOCs (the 3rd FOC was held in Vientiane on 27 July 2023) and JCM (the 8th JCM was held in New Delhi on 10 August, 2015 and the 9th JCM was held on 23 November 2018 in Vientiane).

High level visits:

	Visits from India	Visits from Lao PDR
	President:	

1	Dr. Rajendra Prasad – March 1959	Prince Souphanouvong, commonly known as the Red Prince – 1975 (Before Lao Revolution in which Lao People's Revolutionary Party took control of the country)
2	Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil – September 2010	Mr. Choummaly Sayasone – 26-30 August 2008 (State visit)
	Vice President:	
1	Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari – September 2015 (Official visit)	
	Prime Minister:	
1	Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru - 1954	Mr Bounnhang Vorachit- June 15-22, 2003 (State visit)
2	Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee – November 2002 (Official visit)	Mr. Thongsing Thammavong – December 2012 (ASEAN India Commemorative Summit)
3	Dr. Manmohan Singh – November 2004 (ASEAN-India Summit)	Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith – January 2018 (ASEAN India Commemorative Summit)
4	Shri Narendra Modi – September 2016 (ASEAN-India Summit)	
5	Shri Narendra Modi – October 2024 (ASEAN-India Summit)	
	External Affairs Minister/Foreign Minister/ MOS/Deputy FM	
1	Shri Pranab Mukherjee, External Affairs Minister in Jan 1996.	Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister (DPM&FM) visited India for Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi on Sep 4, 2012.
2	Smt. Vasundhara Raje, MOS in January 1999 for 2 nd JCM in Vientiane.	Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, DPM&FM for 11 th ASEM Foreign Ministers Meeting (ASEM FMM11) in New Delhi on November 11-12, 2013.
3	Shri Jaswant Singh, EAM in November 2000 for 3 rd JCM	Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, DPM&FM for Delhi Dialogue-VI in New Delhi on March 6-7, 2014.
4	Shri Yaswant Sinha, EAM in November 2002.	Dr.. Thongloun Sisoulith, DPM&FM on 9-11 August 2015 for 8 th JCM

5	Shri E. Ahmed, MOS in May 2006 for 5 th JCM	Thongphane Savanphet, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on 15-17 June 2022 to attend Special ASEAN- India Foreign Minister Meeting and 24th ASEAN- India SOM in New Delhi.
6	Shri Salman Khurshid, EAM on November 4-7, 2012 for ASEM-9 Summit.	Thongphane Savanphet, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on 1-3 May 2024 to attend ASEAN-INDIA SOM meetings in New Delhi.
7	Shri Salman Khurshid, EAM on September 8-10, 2013 for 7 th JCM	Thongsavan Phomvihane, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs paid an official visit to India from 1-3 June 2026, to co-chair the 10 th Joint Commission Meeting between India and Lao PDR.
8	Gen. (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.), MOS on 24-26 July 2016 for 7 th MGC Ministerial meeting, and ASEAN PMC meetings	
9	Smt. Sushma Swaraj, EAM on 22-23 November 2018 for 9 th JCM	
10.	Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, MOS, paid an official visit to Lao PDR from 22-26 June 2022.	
11	Dr. S. Jaishankar, EAM, July 25-27, 2024 for ASEAN-India, EAS and ARF Foreign Ministers Meeting	

6. Engagements during Lao ASEAN Chair term for 2024:

At the invitation of Mr. Sonexay Siphandone, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR, Prime Minister (PM) Shir Narendra Modi visited Vientiane, Lao PDR, on 10-11 October 2024. PM attended the 21st ASEAN-India Summit and the 19th East Asia Summit hosted by Lao PDR as ASEAN Chair for 2024. PM had bilateral meeting with Lao PM and also met President of Lao PDR Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith. Following the talks, both PMs witnessed exchange of MoUs/ Agreement in the fields of defence, broadcasting, customs cooperation, and three Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) under the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation. Grant assistance of about USD 1 million to improve nutrition security in Lao PDR was also announced. On arrival, PM received warm welcome by Indian community in Lao PDR. PM met senior Buddhist monks for a blessing ceremony and also witnessed an episode of Lao Ramayana (called Phalak Phalam or Phra Lak Phra Ram), performed by the prestigious Royal Theatre of Luang Prabang. He also witnessed

an exhibition on restoration work by ASI of UNESCO World heritage site of Vat Phou. He also had several bilateral and pull aside meetings with other leaders.

External Affairs Minister (EAM) Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Vientiane on 25-27 July 2024 to participate in Foreign Ministers' Meetings under the ASEAN framework. EAM paid a courtesy call on PM Sonexay Siphandone and had bilateral meeting with DPM&FM Saleumxay Kommasith. Both ministers witnessed exchange of MoUs on 10 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) for Laos under MGC and an MoU for 'Cooperation in the field of sharing successful digital solutions implemented at population scale for Digital Transformation. They also launched a special stamp set celebrating shared cultural heritage of Ramayana and Buddhism. EAM also interacted with Lao PDR Ministers of Home Affairs; of Industry and Commerce; Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee of National Assembly; and Special Envoy on Myanmar. EAM also interacted with ICCR scholars from Lao PDR, and launched Common Yoga Protocol in Lao language.

Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri Piyush Goyal led Indian delegation to participate in the 21st ASEAN-India Economic Ministers (AEM-India) meeting and the 12th East Asia Summit Economic Ministers Meeting (EAS EMM) on 20-21 September 2024 . During the visit, CIM had bilateral meeting with his Lao counterpart Malaithong Kommasith.

Minister of Defence, Shri Rajnath Singh paid official visit to Lao PDR from 20-22 November, to attend the ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting Plus (ADMM- Plus). He also held bilateral meeting with his Lao counterpart, Mr Chansamone Chanyalath.

A two-member delegation led by Shri Rameswar Teli, Hon'ble Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) visited Lao PDR to attend ASEAN-Inter Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) and related meetings from 19-22 October 2024.

Media-Exchange: Under ASEAN-India media exchange programme, a media delegation visited Laos on 01-03 July 2024 for interactions with ASEAN & Press Departments, Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs & at Ministry of Information, Culture & Tourism and also visited Vat Phou World Heritage Site.

A group of 3 Lao journalists travelled to India under the Familiarisation Visit for South east asian media persons, organised by External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, India.

Other High level interactions:

Voice of the Global South Summits: For VOGSS3 held virtually on August 17, 2024, Lao PM Mr. Sonexay Siphandone joined PM Modi for the inaugural Leaders' session. In EAM-I session, Lao Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Thongphane Savanphet and in Health session, Lao Deputy Health Minister Dr. Snong Thongsna participated. For VOGSS2 held on 17 November 2023, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister (DPM&FM) Saleumxay Kommasith participated in Foreign Ministers' Session. Associate Professor Phout Simmalavong, Minister of Education and Sports participated in Education Ministers' Session of VOGSS2. He also participated in Education Ministers' session of VOGSS1 in January 2023.

Cooperation during COVID-19 Pandemic:

11. Telephonic Conversation between Indian and Lao PM : On 12 June 2020, PM Modi spoke on phone with Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, the then Prime Minister of Lao PDR. The two leaders exchanged views on the health and economic challenges posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Both leaders agreed on need for international cooperation, and for sharing of best-practices and experiences, in order to prepare for the post-COVID world.

12. Medicines gifted to Lao PDR : On 04 August 2020, a consignment of medicines and medical supplies gifted by India to Lao PDR was handed over to Minister of Health of Lao PDR to support fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

13. Covid-19 Vaccines gifted to Lao PDR: On 02 March 2023, 50,000 doses of Covovax vaccines were gifted to Lao PDR.

Flood relief emergency assistance

14. India sent emergency flood relief assistance to help Lao PDR in dealing with the floods after typhoon Yagi that have caused widespread damage and affected a large number of people. Flood relief supplies worth about USD 100,000 such as water purification tablets, blankets, mosquito nets, disinfectants, sleeping bags and a 30 KV genset were sent on-board a special aircraft of Indian Air Force on 15 September 2024 and handed over to Leepao Yang, Vice Minister of Labour and Social Welfare.

15. MoUs and Agreements

S. No.	MoU/Agreement
1.	India-Laos Cultural Agreement (17 August 1994)
2.	Agreement for setting up of Joint Commission on Trade, Economic and Scientific and Technological Cooperation (02 May 1997)
3.	Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation (09 November 2000)

4.	Agreement on Cooperation in Defence (06 November, 2002)
5.	Agreement on Mutual Cooperation on Drug Demand Reduction & Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and related matters (06 November 2002)
6.	MoU on setting up Entrepreneurship Development Centre at Vientiane (02 July 2004)
7.	Agreement on Exemption of Visa Requirement for holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports (06 November 2002)(Effective from 01 April 2005)
8.	MoU for the Conservation and Restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Wat Phou (30 May 2007)
9.	MoU for Setting up Centre for English Language Training (12 June 2007)
10.	MoU on the Establishment of Nalanda University (10 October 2013)
11.	Agreement on setting up of a Sustainable IT Infrastructure for Advance IT Training (Centre for Excellence in Software Development & Training) (10 August 2015)
12.	Agreement between India and Lao PDR regarding Indian Grant Assistance for implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) (18 September 2015) (Extended for another five years in October 2020)
13.	Air Services Agreement between India and Lao PDR (16 Jan 2019)
14.	MoU between the Foreign Service Institute and the Institute of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR(6 September 2019)
15.	MoU for Cooperation in the field of sharing successful digital solutions implemented at population scale for Digital Transformation (27 July 2024)
16.	MoU for Customs Cooperation Agreement between India and Lao PDR (11 October 2024)
17.	MOU between Prasar Bharti and Lao National TV (11 October 2024)
18.	MoU on Defence Cooperation (11 October 2024)
19.	MoU on Recognition of Indian Pharmacopoeia (3rd June 2026)
20.	MoU on Cultural Exchange Programme (3rd June 2026)

III. DEFENCE COOPERATION:

17. An Indian Army Training Team (IATT) was established on 10 Aug 1995 at Kaysone Phomvihane Academy of National Defence (KAND), Vientiane through bilateral MOU under ITEC Program. Permanent teams deployed at College of National Defence/ KAND were from (a) India, (b) China, (c) Vietnam and (d) Russia.

India and Lao PDR have recently signed a sub- agreement on re- stationing of Indian Army Training Team in Lao PDR.

Indian Army had also conducted three training capsules on UXOs and De-Mining in Laos in 2011, 2012 and 2013. Under ITEC programme, 7 officers from Laos medical military department participated in the first CLMV e-ITEC defence medical course on COVID-19 organised from 06 - 09 July 2020. Lao Army officials have also participated in capacity building and training courses in India including English language training, short course on Information Warfare and long term training courses in Army institutes such as NDA and DSSC.

IV. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

18. **Human Resource Development:** Government of India has been providing scholarships annually to Lao nationals under various schemes. Under ITEC, Govt. of India provides short-term and a few long-term training courses in various areas to Lao nationals (government officials/nominees); so far about 1500 Lao nationals have been trained under ITEC. 18 scholarships to Lao students for pursuing undergraduate, postgraduate and Ph.D degrees are also awarded under ICCR/MGC. 5 students received ASEAN scholarship to study Master's program at Nalanda University for the academic batch 2022-24.

19. 15 Lao PDR diplomats attended 2nd Special Course for diplomats at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS), New Delhi from 27 March - 05 April 2024.

In 2025, 1 Lao diplomat participated in 3rd Global South Young Diplomat's Forum organised by SSIFS. 3 Lao diplomats trained under Special course for ASEAN Diplomats in SSIFS from 20-25 April 2026.

Grant Assistance

20. LIEDC (Lao-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre) set up in November 2004, trains Lao entrepreneurs for setting up small and medium scale business. It has so far trained more than 15,000 individuals.

21. LICELT [Lao India Centre for English Language Training] set up in National University of Lao PDR, Vientiane is one of assistance projects in human resource development.

22. India set up an IT centre in Vientiane in Nov 2004, as well as a National Data Centre in May 2006. Ten Rural Telecommunication Centres have been set up.

23. Centre for Excellence in Software Development and Training (CESDT) set up under ASEAN-India cooperation was inaugurated in Vientiane in November, 2018. So

far, CESDT has imparted training to around 400 participants in different courses from different organizations of Lao PDR including government officials.

24. A food fortification project for Lao PDR, funded by grant assistance of 1 mn USD from India- UN Development Partnership Fund was inaugurated in March 2025. The Project is being implemented by World Food Programme and Ministry of Health of Lao PDR.

25. **Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)** : An umbrella agreement for Indian Grant Assistance for QIPs was signed between India and Lao PDR on 18 September, 2015 valid for 5 years, then extended for another five years in 2020 and 2025. So far, MOUs for 36 QIPs have been signed. Till date, 30 QIP Projects have been completed and 6 are under various stages of implementation .

26. **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 Phou an ancient Shiva Temple. The work on the project began in June 2009. Restoration project is currently in its second phase which commenced in November 2018 and would continue till 2028 with a financial implication of Rs. 24.8 Crore. Late Mr. Bounlap Keokangna who was the Deputy Director of World Heritage Management Office, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, Champasak Province, was awarded Padma Sri in 2018 for his contribution to the restoration project being undertaken by ASI.

Government of India has also supported preservation of performance of Phlak- Phlam drama in Luang Prabang province and shadow puppet theatre in Champassak province, both part of ancient cultural linkage of Ramayana between two countries.

Government of India is also supporting a project for preservation and restoration of Ramayana theatre performance in Vientiane capital, Lao PDR. The project is currently under implementation and is expected to be completed in 2026.

27. **Lines of Credit:** LoCs worth USD 236.23 million have been extended/offered to Laos for irrigation schemes, power transmission and distribution, and solar and hydroelectric projects as under:

V. ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL

27. **Bilateral Trade:** Following decline during Covid-19, bilateral trade registered growth of 23.4% in 2023-24 over the previous year.

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Indian exports to Lao PDR	25.08	27.34	14.65	16.98	12.88
Indian imports from Lao PDR	3.09	1.70	0.80	74.30	99.73
TOTAL TRADE	28.17	29.04	15.45	91.28	112.62

Balance of Trade	21.99	25.64	13.85	(-) 57.32	(-) 99.74
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Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India. (Figures in US \$ million)

28. The ASEAN India Business Council (AIBC) based in Malaysia has a Chapter in Lao PDR. In pursuance of the announcement made by the Prime Minister of India in April 2008, India has accorded Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme (DFTP) to Lao PDR. The Scheme grants Laos duty free access to 94% of India's total tariff lines.

29. **India-Laos Business Forum:** Embassy in collaboration with the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) and ASEAN India Business Council (AIBC) organised India-Laos Business Forum on 12 February 2024 in Vientiane. Forum was launched by Malaythong Kommasith, Minister of Industry and Commerce. Forum saw participation of more than 170 business leaders representing more than 100 companies. An MoU was signed between Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) as also between ICC and AIBC to promote business linkages.

30. **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from India:** As per Lao National Enterprise Database statistics, since 01.01.2008, there are total 77 projects registered by Indian entrepreneurs with a total investment of US \$ 48 million. India is ranked as No. 13th amongst the countries who have invested in Laos. The investment figures by Indians probably include investments by companies who may have closed their operations in Laos and sold to local companies or other foreign investors.

31. Mission has facilitated visit by some of India's leading companies such as Afcons, Kirloskar, Adani, etc & their meetings with Lao Govt. & business to explore opportunities.

32. Some Indian nationals and PIOs have set up HSMM group in Laos which is registered in Vientiane. The group has invested US \$ 13.8 million in agarwood plantations and has two factories in Vientiane and Xaysomboun Province.

33. Brookfields Coffee Co. Ltd, an Indian company has a coffee plantation over 84.46 hectares area in Paksong. It has recently divested its stake in the project.

VI. CULTURAL AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACT:

34. **Launch of special stamp set:** A special commemorative postage stamp set by Lao PDR on the theme of "Celebrating shared cultural heritage of Lao PDR and India" was unveiled jointly by EAM and Lao DPM& FM in Vientiane on 27 July 2024. A joint stamp was also released by the two countries commemorating 70 years of diplomatic relations in 2026.

35. **International Day of Yoga :** As a part of celebrations of 11th International Day of Yoga (IDY), the Mission organized flagship event in Vientiane on 21 June 2025. More

than 1,000 participants attended the event. 11th IDY events were held in nine locations in four cities of Lao PDR.

36. **7th India International Ramayana Mela** : 14 artists from prestigious and acclaimed Royal Ballet Theater, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR visited India from 15-31 Jan 2024 to participate in the 7th edition of 'India International Ramayana Mela' from 18-21 January 2024 at Purana Qila, New Delhi, and performances in Lucknow and Ayodhya organised by ICCR.

37. **Youth Exchange Programme**: A nine-member youth delegation from various universities and academic institutions of Lao PDR and four representatives of Ministry of Education and Sports of Lao PDR visited India to attend the National Cadet Corps - Youth Exchange Programme from 15-29 January 2024 and Republic Day Functions.

38. A 7 member delegation from Lao PDR participated in the 5th ASEAN- India Youth Summit that took place in Goa, India in August 2025.

39. A cultural troupe from Lao PDR participated in the 9th International Folk Festival of ICCR from 1st -10th October 2025.

40. Two social media influencers from Lao PDR participated in Familiarisation Visit to India organised by Ministry of External Affairs from 16th -26th April 2026.

VII. REGIONAL

41. **ASEAN**: Lao PDR was chair of ASEAN for 2024. Laos had also requested and received support from the friendly countries to strengthen its capacity to the host the ASEAN Summit. We have provided IT equipment of USD 14072/- to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lao PDR, and 15 Lao diplomats attended a special course at SSIFS from 27th March to 5th April, 2024. The course was also focused on Protocol related training and activities.

42. **Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC)**: MGC region is an important element of India's Act East Policy as well as Indian PM's vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR). The 12th MGC Foreign Ministers' Meeting Co-chaired by Laos and India was held in in Bangkok on 16th July 2023. Lao PDR extended support as a Country Coordinator. The Quick Impact Projects under MGC (36 so far) are delivering grass-root development. Under MGC framework, more than 30 officials attended training in various fields in India during the past year. In 2025, a trip of travel agencies to prominent Buddhist sites in India, under the MGC Plan of Action (2019-24) was organised in which 10 representatives from tourism sector of Lao PDR participated.

VIII. CONSULAR:

43. **Rescue and repatriation of Indians trapped in cyber-scam centres:** Recent months have seen a considerable decrease in the number of Indian youth trapped by dubious agents into fake job offers and illegal work in Lao PDR. It is consequent upon closing down of operations of all companies engaged in online gaming/ call centres/scamming activities in Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone by Lao authorities.

44. At our end, action has been taken by our authorities on agents on the basis of actionable information provided by the Mission, including arrests by NIA, and wide dissemination of detailed advisories by the Mission, Ministry and other authorities.

IX. INDIAN COMMUNITY:

45. About 500-strong Indian community is largely engaged in jewellery trade, the restaurant and hotel industry, manufacturing, garments, mining, plantations and agar wood. A few members work for international organizations, multinationals, consulting organizations and private businesses. It is said that the number was much higher during the sixties and early seventies. Many of them left after the Communists took over in 1975. Some of them returned after a lapse of some years. Lao-India Friendship Association and the Indian Society for Cultural Cooperation and Friendship signed an MoU In July 2022 to promote people-to people ties but this has not been activated. The ASEAN India Business Council (AIBC) based in Malaysia has a Chapter in Laos. With Mission's active support and facilitation, Indian community has for the first time started to come together for celebrating Indian cultural festivals together since 2023.

46. For the first time, a Lao National of Indian origin, Mr Soukhtavy Chowdhury was awarded with Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award by the Hon. President of India.

(As on 30th June, 2026)