

India-Cambodia Bilateral Relations

Historically, India-Cambodia relations dates back to the beginning of C.E. or perhaps even before when Hindu and Buddhist religious and cultural influences emanated out of India to Cambodia & greater region of South East Asia. Cambodians are predominantly Buddhist but they retain a strong influence of Brahminical rituals and mythology. The magnificent structure of Angkor Wat temple, built between 12th to 14th centuries, is a glorious testimony of pervading influence of temple architecture of India. Indian influences are also seen on the earlier temples of Cambodia such as Preah Vihear dedicated to Lord Shiva built from late 9th century onwards, Angkor Thom, Bayon, Ta Phrom, Sambor Prei Kuk and other historical sites.

Political Relations

India and Cambodia enjoy warm and cordial relations. In the 1950s, India was associated with the International Control Commission on Indo-China. India's contribution as Co-Chairman of this Commission came in for widespread appreciation in Cambodia. After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime, India was the first country to recognize the new government and reopened its Embassy in 1981. The Embassy had been closed during the Khmer Rouge regime. Post Khmer Rouge phase (1979-91), India offered legitimacy to the regime and helped building capacity of the leadership. India also responded to an appeal by the Cambodian Government to send a team of experts from Archaeological Survey of India in 1986 for the restoration of the famous Angkor Wat temple.

There exists abundance of goodwill for India in Cambodia, which has been sustained by regular interactions of political leaders, exchange of bilateral visits, aid and assistance, capacity building, cultural exchanges, concessional loans for developmental projects and restoration and conservation of old temples in Cambodia.

In the context of India's '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, social security projects and capacity building in defence.

The bilateral relations have been reinforced by several high level visits. Post colonial era, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Cambodia in 1954. Subsequently, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Cambodia in April 2002 and November 2002. President of India Smt. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil visited Cambodia in September 2010. Other high level visits to Cambodia included PM Dr. Manmohan Singh in November 2012, Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari in September 2015. In 2018, there had been three high level visits from India.

Commerce Minister Shri Suresh Prabhu visited Cambodia in May,2018, Raksha Mantri Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman in June, 2018 and External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj in August 2018.

From Cambodian side, Prime Minister Hun Sen has visited India many times; the recent being in January 2018 when he paid a state Visit to India and also participated in the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit and as Guest of Honour at the Republic Day Parade 2018 along with other ASEAN Leaders.

Assistance & Aid Projects:

India and Cambodia have signed various Agreements and MoUs in the fields of bilateral cooperation, trade & commerce, cultural exchanges, capacity building, concessional loans for developmental projects and restoration and conservation of old temples in Cambodia.

Government of India had sent experts from Archaeological Survey of India for restoration and conservation of Angkor Wat temple from 1986-1993. The excellent work carried out by Indian experts is still appreciated by Cambodia. Restoration of another temple complex at Ta Prohm has been a major ongoing project. In 2018, India committed to help part restoration of ancient temple of Preah Vihear.

India had been assisting Cambodia in diverse fields for its economic and social growth and is continuing to do so. In the past, India had gifted medicines, rice, indelible ink to Cambodia. Lines of Credit have been extended for Water Resource Development, Transmission Line and Supply of water pumps. India also assisted in the project for redevelopment of India-Cambodia Friendship school in 2015.

Under the Mekong Ganga Cooperation(MGC) initiative, India helped in establishment of the Asian Traditional Textile Museum at Siem Reap. The museum, one of its first kind in Cambodia, was completed in December 2011. It is headed by an Indian Director appointed by ICCR. It has exhibits on textiles from the Mekong Ganga region along with interactive facilities. It also has a training center and workshop in textiles; a fashion design and development center using traditional ethnic designs; and various children activities in the center.

Also under MGC initiative, beginning from 2015-16 India has been assisting Cambodia with small Socio-Economic projects known as Quick Impact Projects in the fields of agriculture, health, women empowerment, capacity building, sanitation, environment and information technology every year. These Projects have received overwhelming response and created a distinct and visible impact among beneficiaries.

As a major initiative towards capacity building, in addition to the existing schemes of training of Cambodians under ITEC programme & ICCR scholarships for students, India has also committed to offer assistance in setting up a Centre of Excellence in IT and IT-enabled services in Cambodia.

The cooperation has been continuing in defence sector with the conduct of annual training capsule for Royal Cambodian Armed Forces in Peacekeeping and Demining modules; defence courses under ITEC; goodwill visits by Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard ships and exchange of official delegations. India has also gifted fifteen sniffer dogs to Cambodia for demining activities.
