

India- South Korea Relations

Why in news?

The historic Camp David Summit held in August 2023 gives India and South Korea a unique opportunity to enhance their strategic partnership.

Camp David Summit

- **Countries-** It is held among the leaders of the
 - United States,
 - Japan, and the
 - Republic of Korea (ROK)
- **Need-** To consult promptly with each other during crises and to coordinate responses to regional challenges, provocations and threats affecting common interests.
- **Cooperation-** It committed to hold trilateral military training exercises annually and to share real-time information on North Korean missile launches by the end of 2023.
- The countries promised to hold trilateral summits annually as well.
- **Project-** They would launch supply-chain early warning system pilot project to expand information-sharing and fight economic coercion together.
- **Russia-Ukraine War-** The leaders agreed to continue supporting Ukraine and to maintain strong, coordinated sanctions against Russia, while aiming to curb the dependence on Russian energy.

What is the history of India-South Korea relations?

- **Historical relation-** According to the 13th century Korean historical text "SamgukYusa" or "Heritage History of the Three Kingdoms", Princess Suriratna from Ayodhya (India) came to Korea in the year 48 AD.
- She married King Kim-Suro of the erstwhile Gaya Confederacy in ancient Korea and became Queen Heo Hwang-ok. Many Koreans trace their ancestry to this lineage.
- **Buddhism-** Some scholars believe that Buddhism reached Korea via the maritime route with the arrival of Princess Suriratna and her brother Monk Jangyu.
- **Literature-** Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore composed a short but evocative poem titled '*Lamp of the East*' in 1929 about Korea's glorious past and its promising bright future.
- **Political relations-** India played an important role in the Korean peninsula after Korea's independence in 1945.
- Former Indian diplomat Shri K P S Menon was the Chairman of the 9-member UN Commission set up in 1947 to hold elections in Korea.
- In 2018, both countries issued a statement outlining a "*Vision for People, Prosperity, Peace and our Future*"
- **Diplomatic relations-** Consular relations were established in 1962. Both established diplomatic relations on 1973.
- **Economic relations-** They both formed a "*Strategic Partnership*" in 2010, which was

elevated to *“Special Strategic Partnership”* in 2015.

- **Korea plus**- This initiative aims to facilitate *Korean investments* in India.
- **Bilateral trade**- In 2022, it reached record levels of 27.8 billion dollars.
- India’s import volume stands 18.8 billion dollars, while the export volume is 9 billion dollars.
- **Defence**- In 2020, India and South Korea signed a *Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation*.
- **Cultural relations**- In 2011, the *Indian Cultural Centre* was established in Seoul to showcase India’s rich cultural heritage and promote cultural exchanges between both countries.

What is the significance of Camp David meet?

- **Regional security**- It indicates a much-needed repair in South Korea and Japan relations.
- **Strengthen US alliance structure**- The summit reflect the multipolar urges of the contemporary international system in East Asia along with groupings such as
 - **AUKUS**- U.S, United Kingdom, Australia
 - **Quad** -India, Japan, Australia, U.S
 - **CHIP 4 Alliance**- U.S., Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea
- **New strategic direction**- It has the potential to set South Korea on strategic direction in Indo-Pacific with
 - Improved relations with Japan
 - More synergy with the American view on China
 - Enhance the engagement of Indo- Pacific
- **China challenge**- It marks a strategic shift in Seoul’s traditional approach of not offending China at any cost.
- **QUAD grouping**- This summit mooted the South Korea’s keen desire to join the group, it might apply for a membership in [Quad Plus](#) in 2024.
- **New foreign policy**- The main goal is to make South Korea a “global pivotal state”.

How the summit would strengthen India-Korea relations?

- **Natural partner**- Korea is a natural partner for India in Indo-Pacific. It is due to number of reasons.
 - South Korea’s location in the Indo-Pacific, close to China.
 - It is a U.S. ally provides India with a like-minded strategic partner.
 - For both, the rise of China and its unilateral attempts at reordering the Asian security architecture are of great concern.
- **Regional partner**- For India, Seoul can be an important regional partner at a time when India is closer to the U.S. and is concerned about Chinese intentions and power like never before in history.
- **Enhance the relation** - It provides a unique opportunity for India and ROK to enhance their strategic partnership in the 50th year of their diplomatic relationship.
- **Diplomatic relations**- The partnership could also benefit from reciprocal visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Yoon to each other’s country.

What lies ahead?

- **Political cooperation**- The two sides should consider establishing an annual summit at the level of
 - Foreign Ministers Meet
 - 2+2 format dialogue

India currently has 2+2 dialogues with the U.S., Japan, Australia and Russia.

- **Foster technology**- Both could explore the possibility of negotiating a South Korea-Japan-India-U.S. initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), along the lines of the recently-concluded [India-U.S. iCET](#).
- **Defence** -South Korea's willingness and ability to cater to India's defence needs within the ambit of India's '*Make in India*' programme must be utilised.
 - Example-The K9 Vajra, a 155 mm self-propelled howitzer, built by L&T with technology from South Korea's Hanwha Defense
 - South Korean-built *K2 Black Panther* tanks could also be co-produced in India for the Indian Army or third countries.
- **Nuclear energy**- Given Seoul's remarkable track record in supplying cheaper and faster nuclear reactors India could consider purchasing Korean-built reactors so as to expand the share of nuclear energy in the country's energy basket.

References

1. [The Hindu- Finding Seoul in Indo-Pacific](#)
2. [Ministry of External affairs- Republic of Korea relation](#)

