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BILATERAL RELATIONS

INDIA - LAOS

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. 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.

Bilateral relations with Laos have been long-standing, friendly, and mutually supportive since diplomatic relations were established in 1956. There remains deep regard and respect for India and its modern development story. In 2026, India and Lao PDR marked the historic milestone of 70 years of bilateral relations, celebrating seven decades of close cooperation across political, economic, cultural, and development sectors.
India continues to support Lao PDR through strategic development assistance and robust capacity-building programmes. Key areas of partnership include:

- **Human Capital:** Cooperation in education and human resource development has significantly strengthened people-to-people links.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Joint cultural exchanges continue to honor a shared Buddhist and civilizational heritage, anchored by India's ongoing support for the preservation and restoration of important Buddhist and cultural heritage sites in Lao PDR.
- **Global Alignment:** The two nations maintain close coordination in regional and multilateral forums, particularly within ASEAN-related mechanisms.

These deep-rooted historical, cultural, and diplomatic connections provide a resilient foundation for the ongoing evolution of India–Laos relations.



BILATERAL VISITS

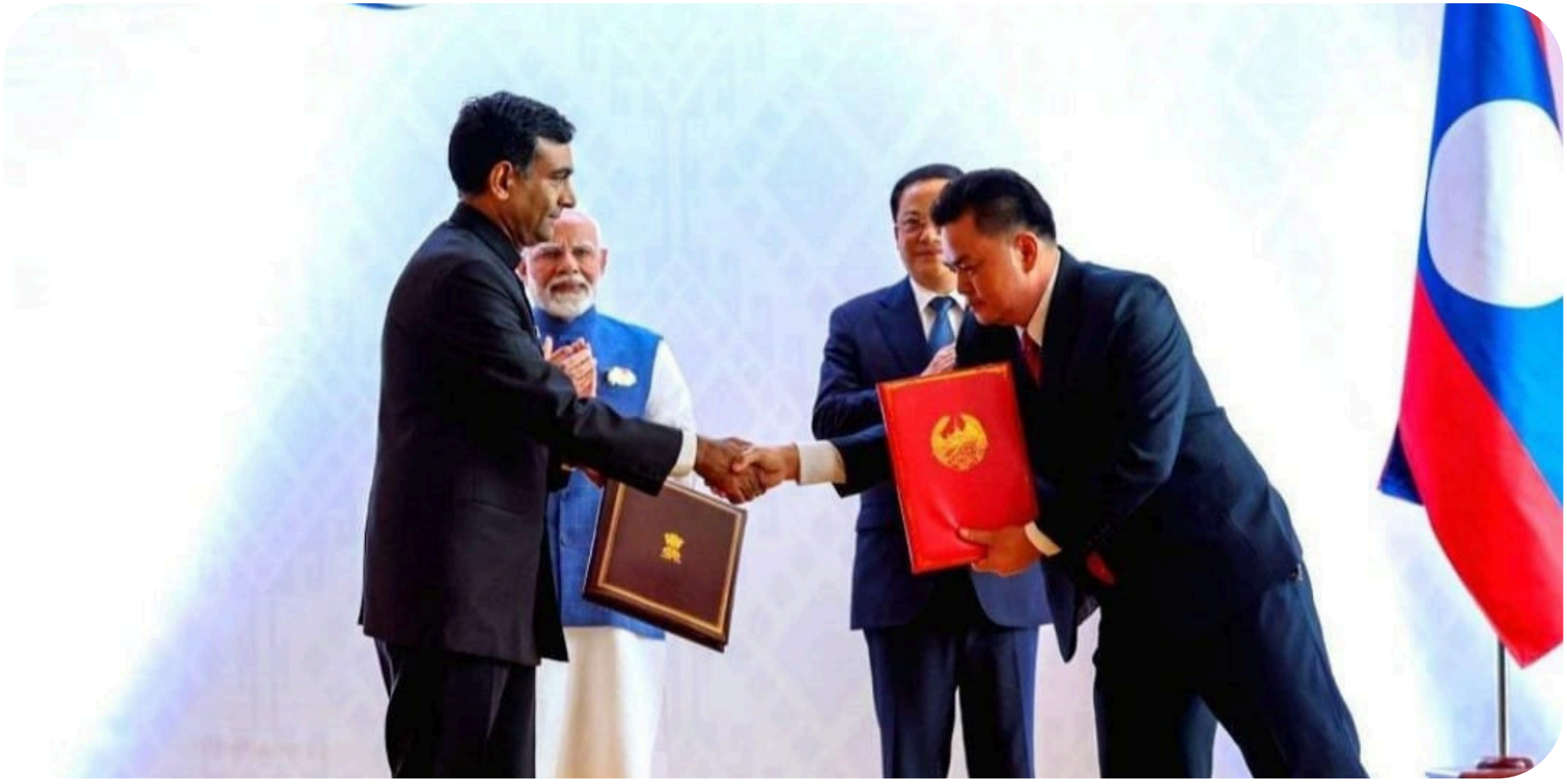
At the invitation of Mr. Sonexay Siphandone, Prime Minister of the Lao PDR, Prime Minister (PM) Shri Narendra Modi visited Vientiane, Lao PDR, on 10-11 October 2024. PM attended the 21st ASEAN-India Summit and the 19th East Asia Summit hosted by Lao PDR as ASEAN Chair for 2024. Dr. S. Jaishankar, EAM, visited Lao PDR from July 25-27, 2024 for the ASEAN-India, EAS and ARF Foreign Ministers Meeting.

Thongphane Savanphet, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, visited India on 1-3 May 2024 to attend ASEAN-INDIA SOM meetings in New Delhi. Dr. Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, MOS, paid an official visit to Lao PDR from 22-26 June 2022. These high-level visits contributed to strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation between India and Lao PDR. The visits provided opportunities to review the entire range of bilateral relations and identify new areas of cooperation. The leaders also discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest, including ASEAN and Indo-Pacific cooperation. High-level exchanges strengthened political understanding and people-to-people contacts between the two countries. Such regular interactions continue to provide momentum to the India–Lao PDR partnership.



STRATEGIC TIES

India and Lao PDR are marking 70 years of establishment of bilateral relations in 2026. Laos has been supportive of India on major regional and international issues, including India's claim for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The two countries continue to strengthen cooperation through institutional mechanisms and bilateral agreements. In 2024, India and Lao PDR signed an MoU on cooperation in digital transformation and agreements on customs cooperation, broadcasting and defence cooperation. Defence cooperation remains an important area of bilateral engagement. The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation framework also contributes to India's engagement with Lao PDR. India further supports Laos through development assistance, capacity building and Quick Impact Projects. India and Lao PDR also cooperate in the fields of education, health, agriculture and information technology. Cultural and civilizational ties, particularly the shared Buddhist heritage, continue to strengthen people-to-people relations. Economic cooperation is being promoted through greater trade, investment and business-to-business linkages. Both countries work closely through ASEAN, the East Asia Summit and other regional and multilateral platforms. These areas of cooperation continue to contribute to the further strengthening of the long-standing and friendly India–Lao PDR relationship.



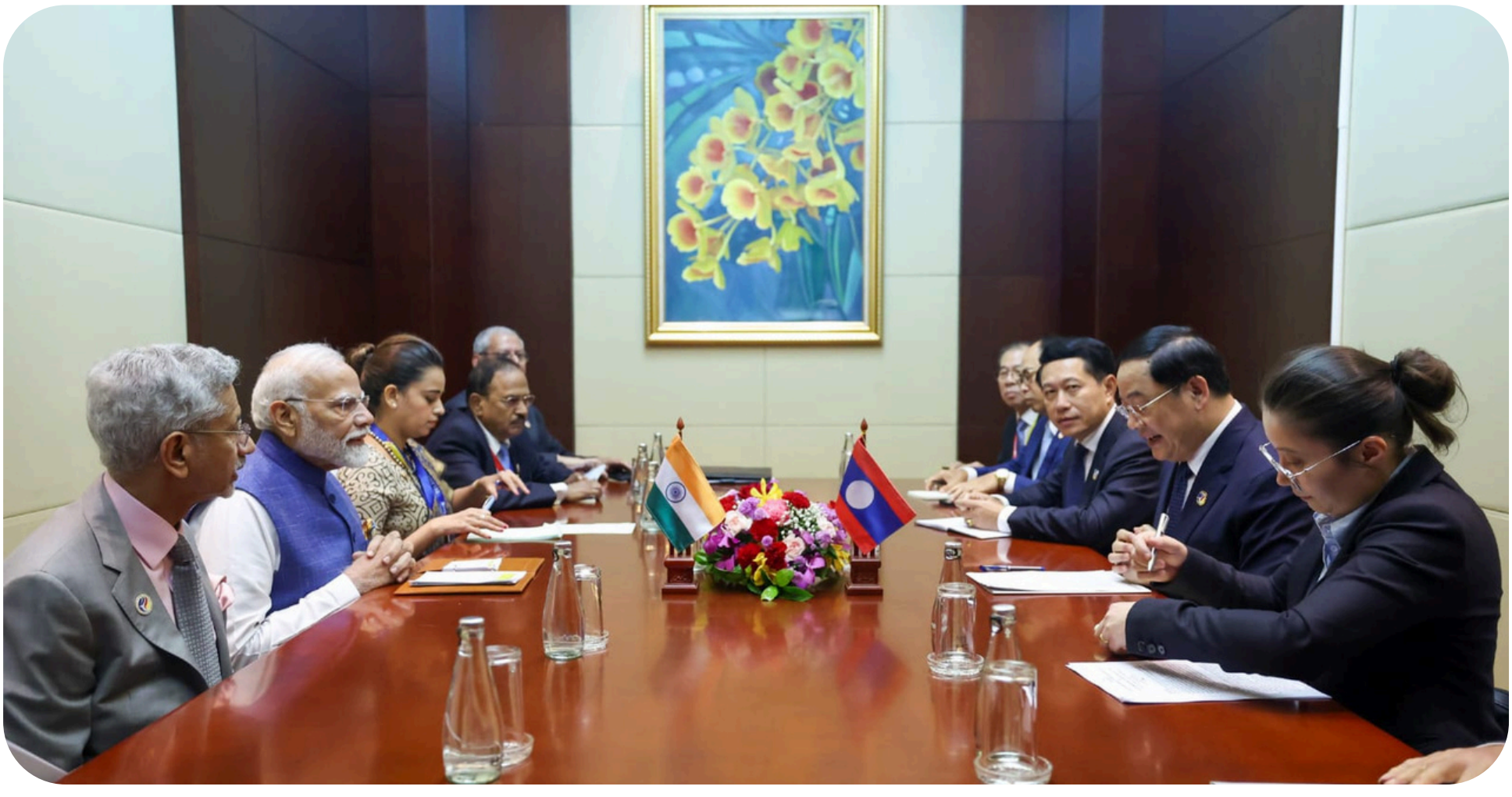
ECONOMIC TIES

Economic relations between India and Lao PDR have continued to strengthen, with bilateral trade registering 23.4% growth in 2023–24 over the previous year. Total bilateral trade reached US$112.62 million in 2023–24, with Indian exports at US$12.88 million and imports from Lao PDR at US$99.73 million. India has accorded Lao PDR Duty Free Tariff Preference, providing duty-free access to 94% of India's total tariff lines. The India-Laos Business Forum was organised in Vientiane on 12 February 2024, with participation from more than 170 business leaders representing over 100 companies. An MoU was also signed to promote business linkages between the business chambers. Since 2008, 77 projects have been registered by Indian entrepreneurs in Laos, with total investment of approximately US$48 million.



AGREEMENTS

The Embassy of India, Vientiane lists several important bilateral agreements between India and Lao PDR. Key agreements include the India–Laos Cultural Agreement (1994), the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation (2000), and the Agreement on Cooperation in Defence (2002). Other significant agreements cover cooperation in drug demand reduction, visa exemption for diplomatic and official passport holders, conservation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Wat Phou, and the establishment of the Centre for English Language Training. More recently, India and Lao PDR signed an MoU on Digital Transformation on 27 July 2024, an MoU on Customs Cooperation on 11 October 2024, an MoU between Prasar Bharati and Lao National TV on 11 October 2024, and an MoU on Defence Cooperation on 11 October 2024. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Lao PDR in October 2024, the two sides further strengthened cooperation through these agreements and MoUs. The agreements cover important areas including trade, economic cooperation, defence, customs, digital transformation, broadcasting and cultural heritage. These arrangements provide an institutional framework for expanding bilateral cooperation between India and Lao PDR.

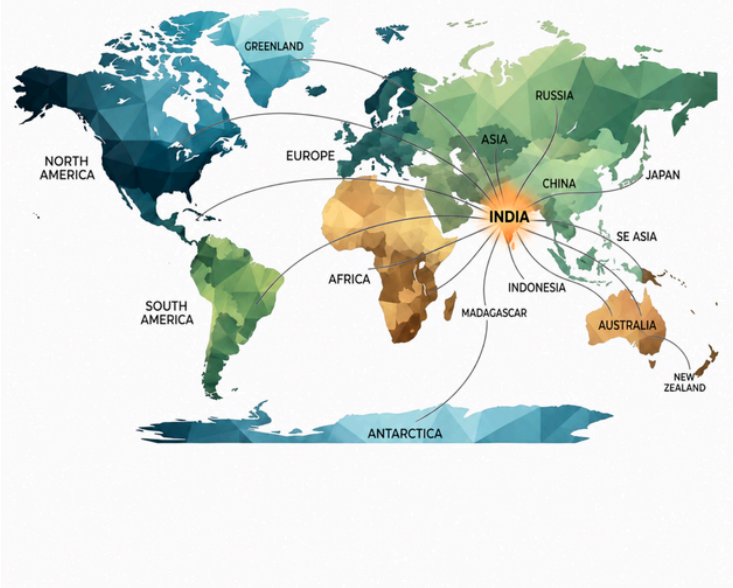


BILATERAL TRADE

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, current bilateral trade for 2023–24 was USD 112.6 million, with India's imports at USD 99.7 million and exports at USD 12.9 million. Following a decline during Covid-19, bilateral trade registered 23.4% growth in 2023–24 over the previous year. India's major exports to Lao PDR include pharmaceutical products, vehicles, machinery and mechanical appliances, while major imports include precious metals and articles thereof, and wood and articles of wood. India has accorded Duty Free Tariff Preference Scheme (DFTP) to Lao PDR, providing duty-free access to a large majority of India's tariff lines. The Embassy, along with ICC, LNCCI and AIBC, organised the India-Laos Business Forum on 12 February 2024 in Vientiane. The forum saw participation from more than 170 business leaders representing more than 100 companies. An MoU was also signed between ICC and LNCCI and between ICC and AIBC to promote business linkages. These initiatives seek to strengthen commercial engagement and promote greater business-to-business cooperation between the two countries. India and Lao PDR continue to encourage increased trade and investment and greater participation of their business communities. Economic and commercial cooperation remains an important component of the broader bilateral relationship.



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