

India- Laos Relations

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Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India had a telephonic conversation with the Prime Minister of Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR).



- Both the leaders exchanged views on the health and economic challenges posed by the global **Covid-19 pandemic**.
- They agreed on the need for international cooperation, and for sharing of best-practices and experiences, in order to prepare for the post-Covid world.
- India's Prime Minister highlighted India's historic and cultural links with Laos and expressed satisfaction at being involved **in the restoration of the Vat Phou hindu temple complex (world heritage site)**.

He also reiterated India's commitment to continue its development partnership with Lao PDR, a valued partner in **India's extended neighbourhood**.

- Lao Prime Minister thanked India's support for Lao's development programmes, in capacity building and for scholarships.

Relations Between the Countries

- **Political Relations:**

- Based upon historical and civilizational foundations, India and Laos enjoy long standing, friendly and mutually supportive relations.
- Political relations between both the countries were established in February 1956.
- Laos has been supportive on major issues of regional and international concerns to India, including **India's claim for permanent membership of the UN Security Council.**

- **Defence Cooperation:**

- Since 1994, under **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** Agreement, a two-member Indian Army Training Team has conducted training for Lao defence personnel in English, Computers and Basic Tactics.
The Indian team is the only foreign training team besides the Vietnamese and the Chinese.
- Indian Army had also conducted three training capsules on Unexploded Ordnance (Bomb) (UXOs) and De-mining in Laos in 2011, 2012 and 2013.
De-mining is the process of removing land mines from an area.

- **Economic Cooperation:**

- Bilateral trade between both the nations in 2017-18 has reached to 193.63 US million dollars. Although the trade balance is heavily shifted in favour of Laos.
- India has supported development of Laos by extending Lines of Credit for infrastructure projects in the fields of transmission line, hydropower project, conversion of diesel to electric driven pump sets, and irrigation projects.

- **Cultural Relations:**

The two countries share age-old civilisational ties best symbolised by:

- The relic of the Buddha encased in the That Luang Stupa, the national emblem of Lao PDR.
- The Vat Phou Temple Complex, an ancient Shiva temple, whose earliest structures date back to the 5th and 6th Century AD, and which is currently being renovated and restored by the **Archaeological Survey of India.**

- **Human Resource Development:**

- The Government of India has been providing nearly 140 scholarships annually to Lao nationals under various schemes.
- The **Lao-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre (LIEDC)** set up in November, 2004, trains Lao entrepreneurs for setting up small and medium scale businesses.
- Agreement for setting up of **Centre of Excellence in Software Development and Training (CESDT)** in Vientiane under **ASEAN Framework** was signed in 2015.

Note: Line of Credit is a 'soft loan' provided on concessional interest rates to developing countries, which has to be repaid by the borrowing governments. The projects under LOCs are spread over different sectors like agriculture, infrastructure, telecom, railway, transmission/power, renewable energy, etc.

Source: PIB