

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Historical background
- Commercial diplomacy
- Analysis of bilateral visits

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The relations between India and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) are not usual diplomatic relations, though, during the Cold War some commonalities did exist. The origin of the relations goes back to Korean crisis in the 1950s when the Northern part of Korea invaded the South. This invasion by North of South was condemned by the South as also by India. The DPRK joined NAM in 1976 and thereafter requested India to raise the Korean issue at the NAM summit and take up the issue of Korean reunification. India advocated that the Korean issue be resolved bilaterally between ROK and DPRK and that the upcoming NAM Summit of 1977 was not an appropriate forum for the matter. DPRK accepted India's request and trusted upon advice rendered by India. At the UN Security Council, India supported action through UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR)–82 and 83. It is interesting to note India did not support UNSCR–84, which advocated military assistance to ROK against DPRK. India aptly invoked NAM and maintained that it would not ally with any military commitments but would prefer UN action. India had established diplomatic relations in 1962 with DPRK. During Cold War, though North Korea supported NAM, India still preferred nothing more than diplomacy to adopt a hands-off approach in the Korean peninsula due to the looming Cold War politics. In 1988, DPRK Prime Minister LI Gun Mo came to India for a good will visit.

COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY

The trade relations go back to 1974 when India and DPRK concluded a trade treaty and awarded the status of the most favoured nation to each other. North Korea and India have been undertaking trade but it has declined in the recent times as North Korea has come under international sanctions for its nuclear programme. It is facing a severe financial crunch because of dwindling trade. India has been exporting cotton, fabrics, drugs, pharmaceuticals, petroleum and food items to DPRK and importing iron and steel. Another factor hindering trade is an absence of a well-defined trade route through sea as well as the reluctance of banks to guarantee payments and insurances. In recent times, India and DPRK have advanced barter trade with each other. In exchange of steel and manganese from DPRK, India ships shoes, clothes and utensils to DPRK.

India also provides training to the students of DPRK in IT and financial management

through regular student exchange programmes. India has also extended lines of credit (LOC) to DPRK and extends assistance in terms of food items including rice, wheat and also gives blankets, and so on. After the death of Kim Jong-II in 2011, DPRK faced a severe crisis. The year also saw a famine. There was a tremendous food shortage. The then North Korean ambassador to India, Kim Kye Gwan requested India for food aid. Subsequently, India, under the aegis of the World Food Programme, provided food aid to DPRK.

ANALYSIS OF THE RI SU VISIT TO INDIA—2015

In April, 2015, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su Yong visited India and met his Indian counterpart. India conveyed an intention to improve bilateral relations. There was a great symbolic change witnessed after Ri Su visit. Ri Su Yong visited to celebrate the North Korean Independence Day. India selected the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, to address the bilateral event. The Indian choice of the minister was well-planned as he belongs to Arunachal Pradesh and his participation sent a strong message to China to foil its persistent claims on Arunachal. The Indian minister addressed the bilateral event in which the North Korean flag was also displayed along with the Indian flag. This conveyed its intention to deepen trade and commerce. The gradual change of India's North Korea policy reflects a political consensus building up in India's new engagement. This is also reflected by the fact that India had sent a three-member panel of parliamentary delegation to DPRK in 2013. Since 2000, both nations have undertaken Foreign office consultations regularly. Thus DPRK and India will strengthen ties ahead.

