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No. 1

Cambodia-South Korea Relations

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Cambodia-South Korea relations have been developed for over the last decade after the two countries established official bilateral diplomatic relations in 1997. Such improvement in bilateral relations will definitely contribute to regional integration, peace, and development.

In the year of 2009, Cambodia-South Korea signed several cooperation agreements including the grant and loans for Cambodia's road rehabilitation, waste water treatment, Seim Reap River's development and cooperation in the fields of construction, energy, mines and communications. Seoul will provide US\$60 million in loans for its Economic Development Cooperation Fund the construction of new roads and sewerage in Cambodia. In which the official meeting, President Lee said South Korea will actively share its development experience with Cambodia as part of its new diplomatic campaign toward Asia and agreed to provide ODA for Cambodia's Agricultural, Medical, Industrial and Educational Development.

Look into the economic relation between the two countries. South Korea has been helping to enhance economic environment in Cambodia which a good way to reduction poverty reduction through provide jobs opportunities for Cambodia employmentsⁱ. South's Korea's investment in Cambodia from 1996 to 2007 amounts to about US\$ 1,508 million. In which South Korea provided GSP 78 items for Cambodia and plan for another exemption products 253 items but currently Cambodia did not yet ability export those products. The trade relation of both countries, Cambodia imported from South Korea US\$ 146, 40 million in 2006, US\$ 193,43 million in 2007 and the 11 months of 2008 was US\$ 270,823 million. In contract, Cambodia exported to South Korea only US\$ 3,19 million in 2006, US\$ 5,6 million in 2007 and was double increasing US\$ 12,653 million in the 11 months of the year 2008.

In the part of service sector the both relation really benefit to enhance tourist environment in Cambodia which the figure indicated that starting in the year of 2006 there were 216, 584 tourists visiting Cambodia, the amount was constantly increasing 39,3% for 301,798 in the member one tourists visited in 2007 and however it had decreasing 1.13% for 266,370 in 2008 due to world economic crisis and the border conflict between Cambodia and Thailand.

Korean language becomes popular in Cambodia. Many young Cambodians start to learn Korean language in order to work with Korean businessman, some Korean movies become very popular to all Cambodian audients and other universities, academic are providing Korean Class for students who wish to learn, such as the Royal University of Phnom Penh opened a Korean Department in January 2007 and Shihanoukville College founded by a Korean missionary also has a Korean Department. It is also improving mutual culture of the both nations through the relation can be seen in Angkor-Gyeongju World Culture Expo (AGWC EXPO), a joint cultural festival, held in November 2006 at Siem Reap, was the biggest cultural exchange event between the two countries. In addition, Korea- Cambodia Culture and Welfare Center founded in December 2006 and Korea Culture Center founded in July 2008.

As Cambodia has diplomatic ties with both two Koreas, the relation Cambodia-South Korea may resolve the long conflict Korea peninsular between North and South Koreaⁱⁱ. The former King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia has long-standing personal ties with North Koreaⁱⁱⁱ, the bilateral relations strengthened over the years through high-level visits between leaders of the two countries^{iv}. In another words, Kim-Jong-ill Chairman of the National Defense Commission of North Korean is also the close friend with the People's Republic of China and Russia^v, therefore it must be clear that the both North-South Korea diplomat relation can be re-unified while Cambodia can play a crucial role as mediator to help them.

ⁱ Cambodia is actively soliciting investment from Korean private sector for projects geared to the eradication of poverty. The four day visit will help pave "the way for Korean business to advance into the Cambodian market". The statement from the South Korean government during South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun to arrive for state visit to Cambodia, quoted from AP 2006/11/19

ⁱⁱ Noted from the official visiting of the President of South Korea to Cambodia on Monday November, 20, 2006, H.E Khieu Kanharith said, South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun on Monday asked Cambodia to act as mediator with North Korea in helping to broker better relations between the two Koreas while the diplomat relations between Cambodia and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) were fostered by His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk and the late Great Leader Generalissimo Kim II Sing.

ⁱⁱⁱ quoted from AP 2006/11/19 on South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun to arrive for state visit to Cambodia

^{iv} Cambodia Embassy in North Korea, accessed on 02/07/2009

<http://www.cambodiaevisa.com/asia/cambodia-embassy-in-north-korea/>

^v <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korea>