

India- Armenia Relations

Overview

India recognized Armenia on December 26, 1991, and India's Ambassador in Moscow was concurrently accredited to Armenia. The Protocol on establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Armenia was signed on 31 August 1992 in Moscow. From September 1992, India's Ambassador in Kiev (Ukraine) was given the concurrent charge of Armenia. India opened its Resident Mission in Yerevan at the level of Charge d' Affaires on 01 March 1999; the first Resident Ambassador (Shri Bal Anand) assumed charge in Yerevan in October 1999. Armenia, which had opened its Honorary Consulate in April 1994, established its Embassy in New Delhi in October 1999 at the level of Charge d' Affaires, followed by the arrival of the first Resident Ambassador (Armen Baibourtian) in May 2000.

Historical background:

Historians have suggested that when Assyrian warrior queen Semiramis invaded India in 2000 BC, some Armenians accompanied her as they probably did Alexander the Great in 326 BC. According to literary evidence, there were Indian settlements in Armenia established by two Indian Princes (Krishna and Ganesh escaping from Kanauj) who along with their families and large retinue had arrived in Armenia as early as 149 BC and were allotted land in Taron region (now in Turkey) by the then rulers of Armenia. Thomas Cana is said to be the first Armenian to have landed on the Malabar Coast in 780 AD. The first guidebook to Indian cities in Armenian was written in the 12th century. By middle ages, the Armenian towns of Artashat, Metsbin and Dvin had become important centers for barter with India which exported precious stones, herbs and stones to Armenia and imported hides and dyes. A few Armenian traders had come to Agra during the Mughal Empire. Emperor Akbar, who was believed to have an Armenian wife Mariam Zamani Begum, highly appreciative of the commercial talents and integrity of the Armenians, granted them numerous privileges and considerable religious freedom as also an opportunity to serve in his empire in various capacities. In the 16th century, Armenian communities emerged in Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Agra, where the first Armenian Church was consecrated in 1562. Indian classical singer GoharJaan, the first to be recorded on gramophone in 1902 was of Armenian origin. The Armenian language journal "Azdarar" published in Madras (Chennai) in 1794 was the first ever Armenian journal published anywhere in the world. The vestigial Armenian community in India is now mainly settled in Kolkata. The Holy Church of Nazareth, erected in 1707, repaired and embellished in 1734 is the biggest and the oldest Armenian Church in Kolkata.

During the Soviet era, President Dr. S.Radhakrishnan (September 1964) and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (June 1976) visited the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Political Exchanges

Since 1992, there have been two Presidential-level visits from Armenia (1995 and 2003) and three visits to India at the level of Foreign Minister (2000, 2006, and 2010). The Vice President and Chairman of Rajya Sabha (Late Shri B.S. Shekhawat) led a Parliamentary delegation to Armenia in October 2005. A goodwill Indian Parliamentary delegation comprising 8 MPs from different political parties, led by Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar,

Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Parliamentary Affairs & Development of North-Eastern Region visited Armenia (29 October-01 November, 2013) and was received by Chairman, National Assembly and President of Armenia. Hovik Abrahamyan, the then Chairman (Speaker) of the Armenian National Assembly [Parliament] led an 18-member delegation to India (4-8 December 2013). He called on Hon'ble President, met Lok Sabha Speaker, EAM, then Leader of Opposition Mrs. Sushma Swaraj and other dignitaries. The Armenian Minister of Agriculture Mr. Sergo Karapetyan led a three-member delegation to India from 17-19 February 2016 at the invitation of our Minister of Agriculture Shri Radha Mohan Singh. During the visit, an inter-ministerial agreement on cooperation in the field of agriculture was signed (19 February 2016). Shri Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister of Civil Aviation visited Armenia on 12 November, 2016 and met Foreign Minister Nalbandian. Shri M. Hamid Ansari, Vice President visited Armenia from 24-26 April, 2017. He met the Armenian President, Prime Minister and Catholicos of All Armenians. Shri Ansari handed over Rashtrapati's invitation to Armenian President to visit India. Armenian Foreign Minister called on him.

Mr. Serzh Sargsyan, President of Armenia visited India from 2-4 November, 2017. He met the President and Prime Minister. Vice President called on him. Mr. Sargsyan attended the inaugural session of World Food India on 3 November, 2017 in New Delhi.

Institutional Mechanisms

Bilateral dialogue between India and Armenia is conducted through the mechanisms of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) and Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological, Cultural and Educational Cooperation (IGC), and periodic high-level interactions. The 6th IGC and 7th FOC were held in New Delhi on 25 September 2013. The 7th IGC and 8th FOC was held in Yerevan on 1 April, 2016. A few important VIP level visits from India to Armenia and vice versa are on the bilateral agenda.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

India's exports to Armenia were USD 19.1 million in 2016 and imports in the same period were USD 1.8 million. Indian exports to Armenia consist of bovine meat, agricultural products, electrical equipment, cut and polished diamonds, optical equipment, plastics, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, garments, chemical goods and cars, while Armenia's exports include non-ferrous metals and raw-rubber. Indian Group "Kalpataru Power Transmission Limited," Gandhinagar (Gujarat) won a World Bank financed contract (approx. US\$ 22 million) in November 2012 for designing, supplying and installation of high voltage transmission towers in Armenia. The work is being carried out by the company and the duration of the project is five years.

Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council (ESC) organized a visit of ten-member Indian Information and Communication Technology (ICT) delegation representing various Indian software companies to Armenia (11-14 December, 2013). A power point presentation on investment climate particularly in the IT sector in Armenia was made by the Armenian Development Agency.

Armenia participated in South Asian Tourism & Trade Event (SATTE) held in New Delhi (29-31 January, 2014).

A first ever pharma delegation comprising 24 Indian pharma companies visited Armenia (2-5 February, 2014) under the aegis of Pharmexil. A presentation on drug regulation, quality of Indian drugs and pharma products was made by the Head of the Armenia Drug Regulatory Agency.

A "Make in India" presentation was organized by the Embassy on 6 October, 2014 in Yerevan. A video film [provided by the XP Division] with subtitles in Armenian language was screened. A presentation on 100 days of the new Government and its new initiatives to attract foreign investment into the Indian economy was made by Ambassador. The event was attended by the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Agriculture and other high level dignitaries and businessmen in Armenia.

Mr. Emil Tarasyan, Deputy Minister of Economy [IT] led a 5- Armenian IT companies delegation to New Delhi to participate in the India-Soft 2015 (12 -13 February, 2015).

A 15-member group of Armenian pharmaceutical importers and officials from the Ministry of Healthcare participated in "IPHEX-2015" held on 13-15 May, 2015 in Mumbai.

A business delegation led by Shri Sandeep Kothari, MD of "KGK Jewelry" company visited Yerevan and met PM and President of Armenia.

A 7-member Armenian delegation sponsored by the FICCI participated in the "Healthcare Summit" in Delhi (8-10 October, 2015).

Two Indian consumer annual trade fairs were organized by Indian exhibitors in Yerevan in 2015 and again in 2016. These were private initiatives by Indian businessmen.

A 15-member business delegation organized by FICCI Tamil Nadu Chapter jointly with Armenian Honorary Consulate visited Yerevan (28-30 November,2015) to explore business opportunities. A B2B event was organized during the visit. A similar delegation again visited Yerevan in September, 2016.

The Embassy organized a presentation in Yerevan on 23 August, 2017 on investment and tourism opportunities in Gujarat.

A 12 member business delegation sponsored by MEA and led by CII visited Armenia from 28-29 September, 2017. Development Foundation of Armenia organized a business forum with the delegation on 28 September, 2017. CII signed a MOU with Development Foundation of Armenia and another MOU with Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Armenia.

Six delegates from the Ministry of Health of Armenia participated in the Advantage Healthcare Summit organized by Ministry of Commerce, FICCI and Services Export Promotion Council(SEPC) from 12-14 October, 2017 in Bangalore.

Cultural Cooperation

The Indian Embassy organized activities including (i) Visit of five Armenian Painters to India (November 2012); 'Indian film week' in Yerevan (January 2013; November 2014, March 2015, December 2015 and January,2017); Indian film week in Ijevan in

March, 2017; Painting Exhibition (April 2013); Book release of Indian Epic Ramayana in Armenian language (April 2013); Indian Photos Exhibition (June 2013).

A 15-member ICCR sponsored cultural troupe 'Sugar N' Spice' visited Armenia for a Bollywood dance performance on 16 September 2013. A two-member Indian classical (mandolin) musicians team led by Pandit Sugato Bhadhuri participated in the 'Silk Road' international festival on 8 October 2014 in Yerevan; Commemorating the 65th anniversary of Indian Republic Day in Armenia, an All-Armenia Essay and Painting competition among two age groups (12-14 and 15-17 years) was organized in partnership with the Armenian Ministry of Education & Science and the TUMO Centre for Technologies in December 2014. The four first prize winners visited India (16-24 March, 2015) on our M/o Tourism's sponsorship; a special publication "India – New vision, New Vigour" was released on NDA-II Government's first year achievements; a photo exhibition on Jammu & Kashmir "Paradise on Earth" was held from 27 January-7 February, 2014; 14 Armenian artists comprising dancers and singers performed at the annual Surajkund Mela [1-15 February, 2015] in Haryana. A group of Armenian artisans participated in Surajkund Mela in February, 2016. Three Armenian artists participated in Surajkund Mela in February, 2017. An Indo-Armenian Friendship Chess Tournament by Indo-Armenian Friendship NGO supported by the Embassy was organized in March 2015 and the second edition of this Tournament was held on 29 March, 2017.

An India Tourism Seminar "Incredible India" along with the Regional Tourism Office, Frankfurt was held in Yerevan on 24 September 2014.

Dr. Sergey Minasyan, Deputy Director of the Caucasians Affairs Institute visited Mumbai (November 2014) to participate in an international seminar on 'Caucasian Regional Affairs' hosted by the University of Mumbai. Dr. Alexander Iskandaryan, Director of the Caucasians Affairs Institute visited India [Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad] from 8-16 February, 2015 under IVP hosted by the ICCR. Dr. Stepan Grigorian, Director of Analytical Centre participated in the 'Raisina Dialogue' in Delhi [1-2 March, 2016].

'Vishwa Hindi Diwas' is celebrated in the Yerevan State Linguistic University (YSLU) annually. Elocution and recital of poems' competitions are held and winners given cash awards.

The first International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated in Armenia on 21 June 2015 in which over 300 Armenians from different walks of life participated. The IDY event created awareness about yoga benefits among Armenians. IDY was again celebrated in 2016 and 2017.

"Days of India Culture" were celebrated from August 31 to 5 September 2015 with the initiative by a couple of local friendship and Indian cultural promotion groups and supported by the Embassy.

The Embassy participated in a charity bazaar "Countries under one Roof" organized by a local media group on 21-22 September 2015 in Yerevan. Embassy participated in a charity bazaar in December 2016 organized by International Women's Association. The Mission supported the IAF (friendship NGO) and Indian students in organizing 'Indian Culture Flashmob' in metro tube way (14 December, 2015) and a 'Yoga Flashmob' by young Armenians (21 December, 2015) in Yerevan.

An art exhibition “Inspired by India” was organized by the Indo-Armenian Friendship NGO with the support of Embassy of India from 08-18 February 2016.

A two-member delegation comprising Shri R.S. Sinha, Director in the Ministry of AYUSH of India and Dr. M.M. Padhi, Deputy Director (Technical), Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences visited Armenia to participate in the first ever Scientific Seminar on India Traditional Methods of Medicine (24-26 November 2014). M/o AYUSH and Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) have signed a MoU on establishment of a short-term (two semester) Chair on Homeopathy in YSMU. India's eminent Homeopathy doctor Prof. Alok Pareek visited Armenia (May 2015) to participate in the 5th Homeopathy Congress organized by Association of Armenian Homeopathy.

“India Day” was celebrated at Loft Centre, Yerevan on 14 January, 2017 with Indian handicrafts, mehndi, photo exhibition, Indian dances and playing Indian songs on traditional Armenian musical instrument Khemencha. A Bollywood movie was screened on the occasion.

An exhibition “Sunny India of Aslamazyans” was organized in Gyumri on 31 March, 2017 on paintings of Aslamazyan sisters on Indian themes. A Bollywood movie was screened in Gyumri the same day.

The group led by Padam Sri Pratibha Prahlad gave a Bharatnatyam dance performance in Yerevan on 12 October, 2017. Manjari Chaturvedi gave a Sufi Kathak dance performance in Yerevan on 30 October, 2017.

Relief/Developmental Assistance

India donated USD 2.2 mn in cash and USD 1.1 mn earthquake relief in 1988; gifted 750 MT of wheat and 250 MT of rice following 2000 drought; gifted 300 Indian tractors in 2006 worth US\$ 5 million; set up an IT Centre of Excellence equipped with PARAM super computer in Yerevan worth US \$ 1.67 mn; extended assistance of US\$ 215,000 for the restoration of a dilapidated school building in Lori region; provided computer labs to 72 schools in Tavush region in 2011-12 worth US\$ 0.5 mn. The Project benefits over 14,000 students in the region. India has implemented a “Telemedicine” project in Armenia and a project on “Establishment of Computer Labs” in 50 schools of Vayots Dzor region.

Humanitarian Assistance

On 11 September 2013, in a formal ceremony arranged by the Ministry of Health of Armenia, Ambassador donated 324 boxes of ‘Kelfer Capsules’ [16200 capsules] to the State owned hospital “Muratsan”, run by the Yerevan State Medical University [YSMU]. The medicines worth Rs.1,50,000 were gifted by CIPLA, one of the Indian Pharmaceutical Companies, as a humanitarian assistance for treating 20-25 young children suffering from ‘Thalassaemia’ in Armenia. The request for donation of this medicine came from the Minister of Health of Armenia.

In March 2016, at the renewed request of the Armenian Minister of Health for donation of the medicine, the Embassy approached CIPLA Company with a request to repeat its

gesture once again. As a result, 324 boxes containing 16200 capsules have been delivered by CIPLA which were handed over to the Armenian side.

ITEC & Hindi Language

There is an overwhelming response from Armenians to join various courses under ITEC programme. Armenia utilized 22 out of 25 ITEC slots offered in 2016-17 for short and medium term courses. A Hindi Language Chair at the Yerevan State Linguistic University (YSLU) has been functioning since January, 2010 and currently around 43 students are learning Hindi taught by a Hindi teacher deputed by ICCR. Hindi is also taught by a KHS trained Armenian national in Galik College in Ijevan (150 km. from Yerevan) and around 36 students are studying at present. Armenians avail 2 annual ICCR scholarships to pursue various courses in India and 1-2 scholarships in Kendriya Hindi Sansthan (KHS). One Dr. Mariam Nalbandyan, an Ophthalmologist from Armenia attended a one month training at Dr. Shroff's Charity Hospital, New Delhi under the 'Aid to Eurasia' programme.

Indian Community

The Indian community in Armenia is small and consists largely of over 800 students pursuing medical education at Yerevan State Medical University and Yerevan Engineering & Polytechnic University. There are another 50-70 more Indians living and working/doing business and some of them are married to local Armenians. Kalpataru company is employing about 400 Indians for implementing its project in Armenia.

Indian Embassy may be reached out on following :-

www.indianembassy.am (website);

youtube - https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoUZFd9fS_fmudfkzpjYJ5A

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/IndiainArmenia>

facebook - <https://web.facebook.com/indiainyerevan/>

November 2017