

## **India-Georgia Relations**

### **Overview**

India recognized Georgia's independence on 26th December 1991 and established formal diplomatic relations on 28th September 1992. Presently, there is no Indian Resident Mission in Georgia. Ambassador to Armenia with residence in Yerevan (Armenia) is concurrently accredited to Georgia. The Georgian side had first set up its Honorary Consulate in Delhi in 2005 which was upgraded to full fledged Embassy subsequently in 2009. The first Resident Georgian Ambassador arrived in New Delhi on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2010.

### **Historical Background**

There is enough literary and folklore-based evidence to suggest that links between India and Georgia and awareness of India in Georgia have existed from very early times of human civilization. Fables from India's Panchtantra are believed to have influenced the Georgian folk legends. Those links were further strengthened in medieval ages by missionaries, travelers, and traders. The Knight in 12<sup>th</sup> century pre-eminent Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli's classic "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" came from India. Georgians are said to have served at the Mughal Courts and some of them are believed to have risen to the positions of Governors. The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's wife Udaipuri Begum was of Georgian origin. Archeological investigations are at hand in pursuance of the Georgian conviction that the body of their Queen St. Ketevan (who attained martyrdom in 1624 in Shiraz, and has since been elevated to Sainthood) is buried in St. Augustine Tower in Goa (where the Portuguese had managed to transfer her body).

During the Soviet era, Prime Minister Pt. Nehru visited Tbilisi in 1955; Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited Tbilisi (1976). Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Georgia (June 1978) as EAM.

### **Important visits**

The Georgian Foreign Minister Irakli Menagarishvili and EAM Shri Jaswant Singh met in New Delhi on 11 May 2000. During that visit, a Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations was concluded. Shri Parvez Dewan, Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, visited Tbilisi during 26-28 May 2012 to represent India at Georgia's first 'Day of Diaspora'. JS[ERS] Shri Ajay Bisaria visited Tbilisi in July 2013 for fourth round of Foreign Office Consultations. Hon'ble Central Election Commissioner Dr. Nasim Zaidi visited Batumi in February 2015 to participate in an International Conference of Election Commissioners. Ms. Tamar Zhvania, Chairperson of the Election Commission of Georgia visited New Delhi on 13 July 2015 and an MoU for cooperation in the field of election management and administration was signed. A three member delegation from the Election Commission of India led by Shri O.P. Rawat, Election Commissioner, visited Georgia (Kakheti province) from 15-18 February, 2016 to participate in a multilateral event on electoral practices and related aspects. Georgia's Deputy Economy Minister Ketevan Bochorishvili visited India to present the 'Film in Georgia' project to leading local directors, producers and film-production companies in April 2016. A five-member

delegation from India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) visited Tbilisi (Georgia) to conduct training in Election Commission of Georgia in June, 2016. Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary(West) visited Georgia from 24-27 July, 2016 for IGC and FOC. Shri Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister of Civil Aviation visited Georgia from 9-11 November, 2016. He met the President, PM, Deputy PM and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development and Foreign Minister. Zviad Gonadze, Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister visited India from 23-24 December, 2016 and met Shri Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister of Civil Aviation and Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary(West). Giorgi Gakharia, Georgian Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development visited India from 10-11 April, 2017 and met, Minister of Shipping, MOS(IC) for Tourism, MOS for Commerce and Industry, Railways Minister and Minister of Civil Aviation. An Air Services Agreement between India and Georgia was signed during the visit. A joint feasibility study was launched to sign a FTA between India and Georgia.

### **Institutional mechanisms**

The first and second rounds of Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) were held in December 2004 in Tbilisi and in March 2010 in New Delhi respectively. The third round of FOCs was held on 15-16 July 2013 in Tbilisi. The Indian side was led by Shri Ajay Bisaria, Joint Secretary (ERS) and the Georgian side by Mr. David Jalagania, Deputy Foreign Minister.

The first session of the IGIGC was held in Delhi on 29 April 2014 at Secretary [West] Shri Khullar/ DFM Jalagania level. The IGC Session was followed by a Business Forum at FICCI at which presentations were made on trade and investment opportunities that exist in each country. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was signed.

The second IGC and fourth FOC were held in Tbilisi from 25-26 July, 2016. The Indian delegation was led by Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary(West).

The third IGC and fifth FOC were held in New Delhi on 14 September, 2017. The Indian delegation was led by Mrs. Ruchi Ghanashyam, Sujata Mehta, Secretary(West). The Georgian delegation was led by Mr. David Jalagania, Deputy Foreign Minister.

### **Trade and Economic Relations**

Bilateral trade was USD 99 million in 2016. (Exports from India were USD 77 million and imports USD 22 million) Steel, infrastructure, agriculture farming and service sectors are among few sectors of large Indian investment which amounts to over USD 400 million. Individual investors from India, mostly from Punjab (around 150) have acquired agricultural land for cultivation in Georgia at an average of 10 hectares per investor. However, only 5-10 have actually started active farming activity. TATA Power has invested USD 166mn jointly with other majors in Europe in a hydro power project worth USD 416mn.

The first ever visit by an Indian pharma delegation comprising 24 Indian pharmaceuticals companies to Georgia took place in February 2014, under the aegis of Pharmexcil. The

delegation had fruitful B2B session and visited various pharmaceutical plants and laboratories in Georgia. Ambassador inaugurated the 'Best of India' Trade Fair which was put up in Tbilisi by ANM Corporation with the assistance by the Indian Embassy in July, 2015 in Tbilisi. The Mission organized 'India Tourism' Seminar [together with Tourism Office in Frankfurt] in Tbilisi on 26 September 2014. The Mission is working on the idea of a possible visit by Indian Tea /FICCI affiliated companies [jointly with M/o C&I].40 Indian companies led by Indian Chamber of Commerce participated in Caucasus Build, exhibition of construction, ceramics and building material in Tbilisi from 16-19 May, 2017.

A 12 member business delegation led by CII visited Georgia from 25-26 September, 2017. The Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized a business forum with the delegation on 25 September.

Two delegates from the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia 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.

### **ITEC & ICCR**

Georgian nationals visit India for various short term courses under ITEC scholarships; ICCR Scholarships are offered to Georgian nationals to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Indian Universities; Kendriya Hindi Sansthan (KHS) offers scholarships to study Hindi in India. An ICCR Chair of Contemporary Indian Studies was established at the Tbilisi State University (TSU) where Prof. R L Hangloo from India taught for one year (2011-12). The Chair is no more in existence.

A 15-member ICCR sponsored Bollywood Group, 'Sugar N' Spice' gave a dance performance in Tbilisi on 18 September 2013, which was organized by the Embassy of India in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia. A 'Gandhi Foundation Georgia' was launched in Tbilisi on 30th June, 2014 at the Institute of Multi Task Diplomacy in Tbilisi with the co-operation of Gandhi Foundation, India. A seminar dedicated to 'non-violence' and 'Jan Satyagraha' was organized by this institute in which representatives of Canadian and Indian Gandhi Foundation gave lectures. The Foundation has also opened its branch in the second important city Batumi and has been actively involved in organizing various programmes propagating Gandhi's philosophy of 'Truth and Non-Violence' in Georgia. A Gandhi Conference on non-violence was organized by the Gandhi Foundation from 25-30 July, 2016.(ICCR contributed USD 10,000for this Conference)

A group of Georgian artists comprising dancers and singers performed at the 'annual SurajkundMela' [1-15 Feb,2015] in Haryana.

The first International Day of Yoga(IDY) was celebrated in Tbilisi on 21 June 2015 in which over 200 people participated. The Georgian side was represented by the Deputy Mayor of Tbilisi. The second and third IDY were celebrated in Tbilisi on 25 June, 2016 and 25 June, 2017. 'Days of Indian Culture' comprising live concert by 'Bharat Folk Dance Academy', screening of three Indian films and exhibition of photos on the State of

Jammu & Kashmir' were organized in Tbilisi (20-22 November 2015). Noted Kazakh Bharatnatyam dancer AkmaralKainazarova gave a performance in Tbilisi on 1 November, 2016. A screening of three Bollywood films was held in Tbilisi from 19-21 January, 2017.

39 members of Georgian National Ballet-Sukhishvili group participated in Synergy-An International Cultural Festival held in India from 5-20 September, 2017.

The group led by Padam Sri PratibhaPrahlad gave a Bharatnatyam dance performance in Tbilisi on 14 October, 2017. ManjariChaturvedi gave a Sufi Kathak dance performance in Tbilisi on 1 November, 2017.

**Useful Resources:**

Embassy of India, Yerevan website:

<http://indianembassy.am/>

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