

## **India-Belarus Bilateral Relations**

### **Political Relations**

India's relations with Belarus have been traditionally warm and cordial. India was one of the first countries to recognize Belarus as independent country in 1991. Formal diplomatic relations were established and the Indian diplomatic mission in Minsk was opened in 1992 and Belarus opened its Mission in New Delhi in 1998. Belarus has an Honorary Consulate in Kolkata and Mumbai.

India and Belarus enjoy good understanding and commonality of views on various matters and cooperate with each other in multilateral fora on issues of mutual interest. Belarus has been supportive of India's candidature for a permanent seat at the UNSC. Belarus supported India's candidature for the non-permanent seat of UNSC for the years 2011-12. Belarus also supported India at the NSG Session in Seoul in June 2016. India supported Belarus for its membership in the NAM and other international and multilateral fora like IPU. India's supportive stand on various Resolutions in Geneva and New York targeting Belarus for violation of human rights and restrictions on freedom of expression has been appreciated by Belarus. Belarus recognizes India as an emerging global power and seeks to develop a "strategic relationship" with India.

India and Belarus have maintained high level contacts. Late PM Rajiv Gandhi visited Minsk in 1985 when Belarus was still a part of the Soviet Union. There have been several high level visits from both sides including visits of President Alexander Lukashenko to New Delhi in 1997 and again in 2007 and the Vice President of India to Minsk in 2005 apart from other ministerial level visits and parliamentary exchanges. EAM visited Minsk in Sept 2009; MoS (Communications & IT) came to Belarus in Jan 2012 to inaugurate the Digital Learning Centre in Minsk. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mrs. Meira Kumar visited Belarus in May 2013 and MoS (Commerce & Industry) in 2006, 2012 and 2015. Industry Minister of Belarus visited India in July 2013 for the IGC meeting in New Delhi and Mumbai in Feb 2016 to participate in the 'Make in India' conference. Belarusian First Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Vladimir Semashko accompanied by the Belarusian Minister of Industry visited India to participate in the 4th Global Ministerial Level Conference on Renewable Energy in New Delhi in Oct 2010. Belarusian Foreign Minister visited India in April 2015 for bilateral discussions. In May 2016, a Belarusian Parliamentary Delegation led by Mr. Mikhail Myasnikov, Chairman of the Council of the National Assembly of Belarus visited India. Recent high level interaction was a meeting between Hon'ble PM and Belarusian President in Tashkent on June 24, 2016 on the sidelines of the 15<sup>th</sup> Summit of SCO Heads of State.

In 2015, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Hon'ble President of India paid a successful visit to Minsk in June- the first ever Presidential visit from India to Belarus. A number of documents for cooperation in broadcasting, standardization, textiles, securities and a Roadmap for future cooperation were signed during the visit. Also signed were business agreements and MoUs for cooperation in the field of education. India's decision to grant **Market Economy Status** to Belarus and a **US\$ 100 million Line of Credit** were announced during the visit.

The 5th meeting of India-Belarus Foreign Office Consultations (FoC) was held in Minsk on November 22, 2016. Secretary (West), MEA Ms. Sujata Mehta led the Indian delegation to the FoCs. Secretary (West) also met Belarusian FM Vladimir Makei.

### **Commercial Relations**

India and Belarus maintain **comprehensive partnership**. Both countries have established mechanisms for exchanging views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues through Foreign Office Consultations, Inter-governmental India-Belarus Commission on Cooperation in Science and Technology (IGC), Commission on Military Technical Cooperation and Commission on S&T cooperation. The 7th IGC meeting was held in Minsk in Sept 2015. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State (I/C) for Commerce and Industry led the Indian delegation to the meeting. The 7th meeting of India-Belarus Intergovernmental Commission on Cooperation in Science and Technology was held in April 2016 in Hyderabad. The first meeting of India-Belarus Joint Working Group on Textile was conducted on 11th May 2016 in New Delhi. A high level delegation led by Industry Minister, Mr. VitalyVovk visited India to participate in the 8<sup>th</sup> India-Belarus IGC Session held in New Delhi from July 3-4, 2017.

Two countries have signed a number of Agreements/MoUs on various subjects, namely, trade and economic cooperation, cultural, educational, media and sports, S&T, foreign office consultations, IGC, Avoidance of Double Taxation, Promotion and Protection of Investments and defence and technical cooperation.

Bilateral trade between the two countries remains modest. Two-way bilateral trade in 2016 amounted to US\$ 402 million approximately. The trade balance remains in favour of Belarus primarily on account of imports of Potash. Indian PSU, BHEL, was awarded a contract worth US\$ 55.5 million for the supply and installation of equipment and machinery for the Grodno Power Project. India extended a Line of Credit for the project. The project was successfully completed in 2013 and is running well. In 2011,

BelAZ signed an MoU with an Indian company Enrika for establishing a joint venture for servicing the Belarusian dumper trucks in India. Belarus participated in the India International Trade Fair in November 2012 as 'Partner Country' and Belarus was the focus country in the India International Trade Fair (IITF) held from 14-27 November 2016.

Department of Commerce sponsored Pharmexcil and Assocham delegations visited Minsk in February and March 2016 respectively – Pharmexcil for a Buyer-Seller Meet with Belarusian pharmaceuticals companies and Assocham delegation for participation at Belarus Medica 2016 where India was invited as 'guest of honour'. Again, an Assocham delegation participated in Belarus Medica 2017 in Minsk in May 2017. The first meeting of India-Belarus JWG on Pharmaceuticals was held in New Delhi in January 2017. Belarusian delegation was led by its Deputy Health Minister.

A 2-Member delegation of Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd (M&M) visited Belarus in January 2017 and held discussions with Minsk Tractors works concerning export of M&M engines to Belarus and market their products in Belarus and in third countries.

Two scientists from DMRL (DRDO) visited Belarus from February 13-17, 2017 in connection with the contract between DMRL and Powder Metallurgy Institute (PMI) Minsk.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of India- Belarus Joint Commission on Military & Technical Cooperation was held in Minsk from May 2-4, 2017. BEL and HAL participated in Defence Exhibition, MILEX 2017 (May 2017).

### **Cultural Relations and Indian community**

The Embassy, in association with the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus, organized performances by ICCR sponsored Kalbelia Folkdance Group (Dance group from Rajasthan State in India) in Minsk and Molodechno on 30<sup>th</sup> and 31 August 2016 respectively.

India has been assisting Belarus in its human resource development under Gol's ITEC program. So far, over 290 Belarusian officials and others have been benefitted from this program. For 2017-18, 15 ITEC training slots have been allotted to Belarus.

A diplomat from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus participated in the FSI conducted 62<sup>nd</sup> Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) from 27 July to 26 August 2016.

Ms. Anastisia Bulankova, a Belarusian national who studied Hindi in Moscow and later at the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra, participated in the Regional Hindi Conference held from 26-27 October 2016 organized by the Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Center, in Moscow.

A 4-member Belarusian painters' delegation led by Sitnitsa Grigory, Chairman of Union of Artists of Belarus visited India in February 2017. The visit was entirely funded by ICCR.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Day of Yoga 2017 was celebrated in Gorki Park in Minsk on 17 June 2017 with over 300 participants.

As a mark of celebration of the 25th anniversary year of bilateral relations with Belarus, Ambassador presented ICCR gifted two pieces of Indian artefacts to the National Art Museum of Belarus, Minsk in July 2017.

The Indian community in Belarus is minuscule with around 100 Indian nationals and 350 students, mostly studying medicine in Belarusian medical universities.

The links to facebook page and website of the Mission are as under: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInBelarus/>  
<http://www.indembminsk.in/>

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