

India-Tajikistan Bilateral Relations

Relations between India and Tajikistan have traditionally been close and cordial. There has been a regular exchange of high level visits and important agreements, which helped in cementing the relations. During the visit of Tajik President to India in September 2012, the two countries declared their relationship to '*Strategic Partnership*' encompassing cooperation in a wide spectrum of areas including political, economic, education, health, human resource development, defence, counter-terrorism, science and technology, culture and tourism.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Tajikistan in 2015 and President Shri Ram Nath Kovind in 2018. Smt Sushma Swaraj, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister led the Indian delegation to 17th SCO Heads of Government meeting, which was held in Dushanbe from 11-12 October 2018. Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs visited Tajikistan in May 2018 to attend High Level International Conference on 'Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism'. Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation visited Tajikistan in June 2018 to attend the conference on 'International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028'. From Tajik side, President Rahmon has visited India six times in 1995, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012 and 2016. Tajik Foreign Minister visited India in May 2015, Tajik Defence Minister in January 2018 and Minister of Economic Development and Trade in June 2017. Several other Ministers and senior civil and military officials have been visiting India from time to time.

During the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Tajikistan in July 2015, the two sides decided to step up cooperation in the spheres of defence, connectivity and in fight against terrorism. They signed 'Programme of Cooperation in Culture and Art' for 2016-18 and decided to set up computer labs in 37 schools of Tajikistan. Apart from this, an Agricultural Workshop was also held. During his visit to India in December 2016, President Rahmon met President Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari. President Rahmon and Prime Minister Modi had a substantive meeting during which the entire gamut of bilateral

relations was reviewed. Three new cooperation agreements/MoUs were signed during the visit. Prime Minister Modi again met President Rahmon on 24 June 2016 on the sidelines of SCO Summit in Tashkent and then on 9 June 2018 on the sidelines of SCO Summit in Qingdao, China.

During his state visit to Tajikistan from 7-9 October 2018, President Shri Ram Nath Kovind announced USD 20 million grants for projects to be mutually agreed upon. MoUs/ Programme for Cooperation in the following areas were signed – (i) Peaceful Use of Space Technology, (ii) Disaster Management, (iii) Renewable Energy, (iv) Youth Affairs, (v) Agricultural Research and Education, (vi) Unani Medicine, (vii) Programme between Foreign Ministries for 2018-21, (viii) Cultural Exchange Programme for 2019-23. Separately, MoU between Vivekananda International Foundation, New Delhi and the Centre for Strategic Researches under the President of Tajikistan was signed.

Major visits in earlier years have been – (i) Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Tajikistan in 2003, (ii) President Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil in 2009 and (iii) Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari in 2013. Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister visited Tajikistan for the Council of Heads of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Dushanbe in September 2014.

The two countries have four bilateral consultative mechanisms in the form of (a) Foreign Office Consultations (four rounds held; last in December 2018 in New Delhi); (b) Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism (three rounds held; last in June 2017 in Dushanbe); (c) Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (9th meeting held in New Delhi in June 2017); (d) JWG on Defence Cooperation (7th Meeting held on 26-27 July 2018 in Dushanbe).

Civil project Assistance: In 1995, India extended a credit line of USD 5 million to set up a pharmaceutical plant. The Government of India thereafter converted the principal amount along with the accrued interest of USD 3.37 million into a grant during the visit of Prime Minister of India in November 2003. With a grant of USD 0.6 million, a Fruit Processing Plant was established by HMTT (I) in 2005. With a grant of USD 0.6

million, an Information and Technology Centre (Bedil Centre) was commissioned in 2006. The project ran for full hardware cycle of 6 years and trained almost all first generation IT experts in government sector in Tajikistan. Similarly, with about USD 0.5 million India set up a Modern Engineering Workshop and commissioned it in June 2011. The project is running successfully. India undertook rehabilitation and modernization of a 1936 vintage Varzob-1 Hydro Power Station through Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC). After renovation, the installed capacity was enhanced to 2x4.75 MW. The rehabilitated Power Station was inaugurated on 28 December 2012 and is running successfully. A project for setting up of computer labs in 37 schools of Tajikistan announced during Prime Minister's visit in July 2015 was completed and delivered in August 2016.

Private Investments and Projects: Tajikistan has potential in hydroelectricity generation, power transport, mining, full chain of cotton processing, tourism, medical tourism to India etc. Indian private investments in Tajikistan include a 5-star hotel constructed by M/s CHL Limited, India. The hotel was inaugurated by President Rahmon in September 2014. An Indian company KEC/RPG completed the construction of 116 km. long power transmission line from Sangtuda-1 Hydropower plant to Afghan border in October 2010 under an ADB financed project. On a commercial contract, BHEL supplied a 7 MW generator to the Tajik company "Pamir Energy" in 2011. Indian Company M/s Kalpataru bagged a contract worth approx. USD 22 million for construction of electric transmission lines under ADB financing and finished the project in early 2017. The company won one more project worth USD 35 million in 2017 under CASA-1000 power transmission project. There are other small private projects/companies/ clinics, which provide healthcare and other services in Tajikistan.

Bilateral-Trade: India's main exports are pharmaceuticals, apparel and clothing accessories, handicraft, machinery and meat and meat products. Different types of ores, slag and ash, aluminum, organic chemicals, herbal oils, dried fruits and cotton are exported to India from Tajikistan. The bilateral trade figures during the last seven years are given below.

Indian Exports to Tajikistan (source Department of Commerce, GOI): in million USD

2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
21.28	35.16	54.27	53.71	22.26	20.44	23.94

Tajikistan's total import in 2017 was USD 2.78 billion according to Tajik data.

Indian Import from Tajikistan (source Department of Commerce, GOI): in million USD

2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
8.86	12.86	0.86	4.39	9.98	21.82	50.29

Tajikistan's total export in 2017 was USD 1.12 billion according to Tajik data.

Air links with Tajikistan: Tajik Air restarted its weekly direct flight to Delhi in May 2013 and has been continuously operating since then. At present medical tourism is on the rise. Privately owned Somon Air has expressed interest to operate in the Dushanbe-Delhi-Dushanbe sector. These are signs of increasing profitability and volume of traffic.

Humanitarian Assistance: India delivered major food assistance in 2001-02. To overcome a crisis caused by an unprecedented harsh winter in January-February 2008, India gave a grant of USD 2 million (USD 1 million as cash assistance and USD 1 million in kind, such as power cables, generators and pump sets). In June 2009, USD 200,000 cash assistance was given by India to overcome damage caused by floods in April-May 2009. After flashfloods in Kulyab province in May 2010, India provided USD 200,000 humanitarian cash assistance. After the outbreak of Polio in southwest Tajikistan, India provided 2 million doses of oral polio vaccine through UNICEF in November 2010. In September 2015, India granted USD 100,000 as humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for providing relief to the flood and mudslide-affected people of GBAO (Pamir) and Rasht valley. India provided USD 100,000 to Tajikistan in March

2017 as humanitarian assistance for natural disasters. In March 2018, India gifted 10 Russian-made ambulances to various regions of Tajikistan drawing substantial media coverage and appreciation from high offices.

Defence Cooperation: Defence has become a robust pillar of cooperation. From the Military Institute and Military Lyceum of Tajikistan very substantial number of officers has been further trained at the National Defence College (NDC) and the Indian Military Academy (IMA). India also set up the India-Tajikistan Friendship Hospital (ITFH) near Kurghan Teppa (now called Bokhtar), where India based doctors and medical staffs are helping civil and armed forces patients. India has so far extended substantial material help and contribution to military and security infrastructure.

Scholarships: Tajikistan is one of the larger beneficiaries of Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) and Indian Council of Cultural Research (ICCR) scholarship programmes outside SAARC. Large number of ITEC slots and ICCR scholarships are now allotted annually to Tajikistan. About 1425 ITEC slots and 360 ICCR scholarships have been utilized by Tajik candidates so far. In the financial year 2017-18, Eurasia Division financed 60 additional slots for customised training of Tajik experts in the field of remote sensing.

Cultural and Sports Exchange: There is deep-rooted liking in Tajikistan for Indian culture and films. Indian films and TV serials in Russian dubbing are routinely shown on local TV channels. Embassy includes the Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre, where India-based Tabla teacher and Kathak dance teacher and Sanskrit/Yoga teacher have been deputed by the ICCR in addition to local teachers. Hindi, Sanskrit, dance and yoga classes are held regularly at the cultural centre. ICCR funded cultural events were held in 2016 and 2017 in Dushanbe and other cities. From Tajikistan a 20-member art and cultural troupe visited India for participation in Surajkund Mela both in 2017 and 2018. With help of funds from Union Ministry of Culture to friendship societies in Tajikistan Embassy has opened a few India Study Corners in some prominent Tajik Universities/Institutions to cater to the increasing demand for study of Indian languages and yoga in Tajikistan.

Visas: Indian visa regime for Tajikistan is liberal. Visas are issued within one or two days. Vast majority of Tajiks travels on e-visa for tourism or medical treatment. Tajikistan has launched online visa regime including for Indian nationals.

International Forums/ initiatives: Tajikistan supports India's bid for UNSC permanent membership and strongly supported SCO Member status for India. India supported Tajikistan's accession to WTO in March 2013 and on 03 August 2012 a Protocol to this effect was signed in Dushanbe. India has consistently supported Tajikistan's proposals at UN on water related issues. India supported Tajikistan's candidature to ECOSOC.

Indian Community in Tajikistan: The total number of NRIs is estimated at about 1550, out of which more than 1250 are students pursuing MBBS course at the Dushanbe Medical College. The members of the Indian Embassy, business community in Tajikistan are mostly in pharmaceutical business. A few Indians are working in international organizations/banks/hotels and restaurants.

Useful Resources: i) Embassy website: eoidushanbe.gov.in
ii) Facebook: India in Tajikistan
iii) Twitter: @indiaintaj
iv) Embassy news magazine 'Oina-e-Hind'

(As on 31 December 2018)