

**Embassy of India  
Kabul  
Bilateral Brief**

**Political**

India and Afghanistan have a strong relationship based on historical and cultural links. The relationship is not limited to the governments in New Delhi and Kabul, but has its foundations in the historical contacts and exchanges between the people. In recent past, India-Afghanistan relations have been further strengthened by the Strategic Partnership Agreement, which was signed between the two countries in October 2011.

The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the two sides, inter alia, provides for assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, education and technical assistance to rebuild indigenous Afghan capacity in different areas, encouraging investment in Afghanistan's natural resources, providing duty free access to the Indian market for Afghanistan's exports support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, broad-based and inclusive process of peace and reconciliation, and advocating the need for a sustained and long-term commitment to Afghanistan by the international community.

India-Afghanistan relationship is characterized by regular high-level exchanges. Our leaders have met each other during bilateral visits as well as on the sidelines of international events.

On 4 June 2016, Prime Minister visited Herat in western Afghanistan and he along with President Ghani jointly inaugurated the Afghan-India Friendship Dam, earlier known as Salma Dam. The completion of the dam project represents culmination of years of hard work by about 1,500 Indian and Afghan engineers and other professionals in very difficult conditions. It also highlights India's continued commitment to Afghanistan's reconstruction and development.

Later on 22 August 2016, Prime Minister jointly inaugurated through video conferencing the restored Stor Palace in Kabul with President Ghani. During his speech Prime Minister said the 1.25 billion Indian people will “always” stand with Afghanistan in ensuring peace and prosperity.

On 25<sup>th</sup> December 2016, Prime Minister along with a high level delegation paid a visit to Afghanistan. During his visit he called on President Ashraf Ghani; he met Chief Executive, Dr Abdullah and Former President Hamid Karzai. During his visit he inaugurated the newly built Afghan Parliament; announced 500 scholarships for the children of the martyrs of Afghan Security Forces and gifted four Mi-25 Attack helicopters to the

Afghan Air Force. During the visit, it was also decided to conduct the second Strategic Partnership Council meeting headed by the Foreign Ministers of the both countries in the first quarter of 2017 along with four joint working group meetings.

President of Afghanistan H.E Ashraf Ghani visited India on 24 October 2017 on a one day working visit and met Rashrapatiji, PM and received EAM. Both sides reiterated their commitment to their strategic partnership.

President Ghani in 2018 paid a working visit to India on 19 September and met PM. The two leaders reviewed and positively assessed the progress of the multi-faceted India-Afghanistan strategic partnership. They expressed satisfaction at the increase in bilateral trade that has crossed the US \$ 1 billion mark. The two leaders also appreciated the successful conclusion of the India-Afghanistan trade and investment show in Mumbai from September 12-15, 2018 and expressed determination to strengthen connectivity, including through Chabahar port and Air-Freight Corridor. It was agreed to deepen the New Development Partnership in the areas of high impact projects in this field of infrastructure, human resources development and other capacity building projects in Afghanistan.

H.E. the Chief Executive of Afghanistan, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (CEO) visited India from 28-29 September 2017. He called on Rashtrapatiji, met PM and EAM. An MoU on technical cooperation on police training and development was signed and formally exchanged at the meeting between Chief Executive and Prime Minister. This created an enabling framework for training and capacity building of Afghan National Police personnel in various fields in addition to India's ongoing assistance for the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. Afghanistan was also invited to participate in the International Solar Alliance Summit meeting being held in India in December 2017 and also to the World Food Processing Show being held in November 2017 in India that would enable the Afghan businessmen to engage with the international markets.

The second Strategic Partnership Council meeting was held in New Delhi on September 11, 2017. Foreign Minister H.E Salahuddin Rabbani led the Afghan delegation comprising of senior members of the Afghan Government. Making use of the fresh US\$ 1Billion announced by Prime Minister, India and Afghanistan launched a New Development Partnership. Government of India worked with the Government of Afghanistan to identify priorities and projects where Afghanistan needed the Indian assistance to be directed. India agreed to implement some important new projects such as the Shahtoot Dam and drinking water project for Kabul that would also

facilitate irrigation, water supply for Charikar City, road connectivity to Band-e-Amir in Bamyán Province that would promote tourism, low cost housing for returning Afghan refugees in Nangarhar Province to promote their resettlement, a gypsum board manufacturing plant in Kabul to promote value added local industry and for import substitution, and a polyclinic in Mazar-e-Sharif.

In addition, India also committed to take up 116 High Impact Community Development Projects in 34 provinces of Afghanistan. These important investments will be in the areas of education, health, agriculture, irrigation, drinking water, renewable energy, flood control, micro-hydro power, sports and administrative infrastructure.

India also announced that on-going programmes for education, capacity building, skills and human resource development of Afghanistan, one of the largest such programmes in the world, will continue for a further period of five years from 2017 to 2022.

During the meeting, three major documents were exchanged;

(a) Motor Vehicles Agreement for the Regulation of Passenger, Personal and Cargo Vehicular Traffic;

(b) Memorandum of Understanding between the National Medicine and Healthcare Products Regulatory Authority of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for mutual cooperation in the field of pharmaceutical products regulation;

(c) The Orbit Frequency Coordination Agreement between India and Afghanistan on South Asia Satellite (SAS)

Several other notable visits were that of Afghan Second Vice President Mohammad Danish Sarwar (December 2017), visit of former President Hamid Karzai (December 2017), visit of Foreign Secretary to Kabul (February 27-28, 2018), visit of Deputy NSA, Shri Rajinder Khanna to Kabul (May 29-31, 2018), visit of CEO Abdullah Abdullah to the inaugural cricket test match of Afghanistan with India on (June 14, 2018) and visit of Foreign Secretary to Kabul (September 11, 2018). Secretary (Economic Relations), MEA visited Kabul for the Joint Working Group on Development Cooperation on 08-09 August 2018. Secretary (Commerce) Dr. Anup Wadhavan visited Kabul for the Joint Working Group on Trade, Commerce and Investment on 25-26 October.

## **Commercial Relations**

The bilateral trade at for the year 2017-18 was USD 1.143 billion approx and has immense potential to be expanded further. However, the trade relations will realize its true potential once the Wagah-Attari route is opened for bilateral trade. So far, the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) has been restrictive in this aspect. India is the largest market in the region for Afghan products and the blocking of transit has affected the free movement of commodities. One of the objectives of building Zaranj-Delaram road by India was to boost bilateral economic relations besides offering Afghanistan another outlet to a seaport. The successful operation of the Chabahar port in Iran would capitalize on this road to offer a new transit route of Afghan products to India while opening a new route for India, and the rest of the world, for trade with Central Asia.

The inauguration of the Dedicated Air Cargo Corridor in June 2017 between Kabul-Delhi and Kandahar-Delhi has provided a fresh impetus to bilateral trade. On 27 December, Kabul- Mumbai Air Cargo Corridor was also inaugurated. The Air Corridor has ensured free movement of freight despite the barriers put in place due to the denial of transit by Pakistan. During the Strategic Partnership Council meeting it was decided to further strengthen the corridor and expand it to other cities in India. Over 3000 tonnes of cargo has already been transported in the Air Corridor since its inauguration.

On 28 September 2017, CEO Dr. Abdullah inaugurated the India-Afghanistan Trade and Investment Show. It provided a valuable platform to showcase trade and investment opportunities in Afghanistan. The show generated business worth US\$ 250 million and enhanced the B2B linkages between India and Afghanistan. The show brought forward the immense potential in the bilateral trade and further strengthened the commercial relations between India and Afghanistan.

On 12-15 September 2018, the second annual India-Afghanistan International Trade and Investment Show was held in Mumbai under the aegis of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Government of India. Around 200 Afghan businesses, 1,200 Indian and 100 international firms participated in the event.

The prominent Indian companies doing businesses in Afghanistan are:

- (1) KEC – Electrical Transmission Lines
- (2) Phoenix – Consultancy in Electrical Transmission
- (3) AIPL – Establishment of Hydro Power Project in Hilmand Province
- (4) APTECH – Computer & Management Education

(5) GAMMON INDIA – Power Transmission Line & Power Sub-stations

(6) KPTL – Power Transmission Line

(7) ANAAR GROUP (AIR INDIA GSA)

(8) Spice Jet

### **Afghan Culture Relations**

Afghanistan has been an important trading and craft centre for over 2000 years connecting the civilizations of Persia, Central Asia with India. However, over 3 decades of war have undermined Afghanistan's unique traditions of art and architecture. Today, the biggest challenge for Afghanistan is to rediscover and sustain its ancient art and architectural knowledge. India and Afghanistan share centuries old cultural heritage with deep-rooted linkages in the field of music, arts, architecture, language and cuisine.

In the field of music, in particular, most Afghan musicians were trained in the Patiala Gharana. Today, Indian films, songs and TV serials are popular with the masses, contributing significantly to the popularization of Hindi and familiarization of the populace with Indian socio-cultural value system.

An India-Afghanistan Culture Week was held in New Delhi in November 2017 as a result of collaboration of India-Afghanistan Foundation (IAF) and ICCR.

A cultural troupe from the India visited Kabul in September 2017. Smt. Kumud Diwan and 3 other artists performed at the auditorium of the Radio and Television Afghanistan for the local government officials, diplomatic corps and music lovers. Smt. Diwan and the troupe also performed at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music and took a Masterclass for the young students of the institute.

On December 2018, 'Awayee Band-e-Amir' - a folk musical troupe from Bamiyan Province of Afghanistan visited India for the 5<sup>th</sup> International Folk Music and Dance Festival organised by ICCR at New Delhi. The group also performed at Lucknow, Bhopal and Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi during their 10 day long visit to India.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting of the India Afghanistan Foundation was held on 24 December 2018 at the Delhi Chapter. The Board reviewed the working of the Foundation and looked into new proposals from both the Chapters.

### **Indian Diaspora in Afghanistan**

The Mission maintains a database on Indians staying in Afghanistan, though many Indians don't register with the Mission. Presently, there are estimated to be about 2500 Indians in the country, though only about 850 are registered with the Mission. Most of the Indian Diaspora are engaged as professionals in Banks, IT firms, Construction companies, Hospitals, NGOs, Telecom companies, Security companies, Universities, Govt. of India sponsored projects, Govt. of Afghanistan and UN Missions. The Mission interacts closely with the Indian citizens, helping them to resolve their problems, and routinely invite them to attend National Day Celebrations & Embassy functions.

**Useful Resources**

Mission's website: <http://eoi.gov.in/kabul/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/indianembkabul>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInAfghanistan>

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