

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. Belarus supported India's candidature for the post of a judge of ICJ for term 2018-2026 at elections held during 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly in New York in 2017. Belarus supported India's candidature to the Council of the International Maritime Organisation during the 30th Session of the Assembly of the IMO held in London in November 2017. Belarus has also extended its support for India's candidature to the council of International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for the term 2019-2022 held in Dubai in November 2018. 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, 2007 and 2017. The Vice President of India visited Minsk in 2005 apart from other ministerial level visits and parliamentary exchanges. EAM visited Minsk in Sept 2009. 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 October 2010. MoS (Communications & IT) came to Belarus in Jan 2012 to inaugurate the Digital Learning Centre in Minsk. Indian Parliamentary delegation led by Smt. Meera Kumar, the then Lok Sabha Speaker, visited Belarus from May 20-22, 2013 and a parliamentary delegation led by Smt. Sumitra Mahajan, the current Lok Sabha Speaker, visited Belarus recently, from June 10-13, 2018. 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. MoS (Commerce & Industry), GoI visited Belarus in 2006, 2012, 2015 and 2018. Industry Minister of the Republic 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 and again in July 2017. The recent ministerial visit from India

was that of MoS for Commerce and Industry in September 2018 to co-Chair the 9th Session of IGC in Minsk. Indian PM and Belarusian President met for the first time in Tashkent in June 2016 on the sidelines of 15th Summit of SCO Heads of State and again exchanged greetings during the SCO Summits in Astana in May 2017, and in Qingdao in June 2018.

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 to be utilized on mutually identified projects in Belarus. However, the LoC then announced still remains unutilized.

A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled on the campus of the Belarus State University in Minsk by Rashtrapatiji during his State Visit to Belarus in June 2015.

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. The 6th meeting of India-Belarus FOC was recently held in New Delhi in October 2018. Secretary (West), MEA Ms. Ruchi Ghanashyam led the Indian delegation and the Belarusian side was headed by H. E. Mr. Andrei Depkiunas, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Belarus.

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 (FOCs), India-Belarus Inter-governmental Commission (IGC) on Cooperation in Science & Technology and Commission on Military Technical 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. Vitaly Vovk visited India to participate in the 8th India-Belarus IGC Session held in New Delhi from July 3-4, 2017. Shri C. R. Choudhary, MoS for Commerce & Industry, GoI, visited Minsk to co-Chair the 9th Session of India-Belarus IGC held in Minsk in September 2018.

The two countries have signed a number of Agreements/MoUs on various subjects, namely, trade and economic cooperation, agriculture, 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 and rose only a little to **US\$455 million in 2017**. 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. During the 9th Session of IGC held in Minsk in September 2018, both the sides signed Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT).

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. Recently, an ASSOCHAM delegation visited Minsk in June 2018 for participation in BELAGRO, an exhibition on Agro and Food products, Food Processing, Packaging and Handling Machinery, Equipment and Technology. 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 delegation from CIPLA, one of the leading pharmaceutical companies of India, headed by Dr. Yusuf K. Hamied, Chairman visited Minsk from August 05-08, 2018 for the foundation stone laying the ceremony for the commencement of construction of "Yusuf Hamied Pharma R&D Center" at the premises of Academfarm of the National Academy of Science (NAS) of the Republic of Belarus. This is a unique joint venture for the cutive Eurasian region.

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 9th 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).

A 12-member CII delegation visited Minsk in June 2018 and again an 8-member CII delegation visited Minsk as a part of IGC meeting held on 25th September, 2018 in Minsk. During their visits, CII delegation(s) also participated in Business Forum(s) organized by Belarusian Chamber of Commerce (BCCI) in Minsk.

A 4-member delegation led by Shri Pankaj Kumar Mishra, Director, FIU-IND, Ministry of Finance visited Minsk to take part in the 29th EAG Plenary in November 2018.

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 30th and 31 August 2016 respectively.

India has been assisting Belarus in its human resource development under GoI'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 62nd 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 3rd International Day of Yoga (IDY) 2017 was celebrated in Gorki Park in Minsk on 17 June 2017 with over 300 participants and 4th IDY was celebrated in June 2018. Belarusian government extended full support in the conduct of the International Days of Yoga in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

A tremendously successful 'Day of India' was celebrated in Minsk on September 23, 2018, for the second year running. The response of the Belarusian spectators was extremely positive. An ICCR sponsored Kalarippayattu troupe participated in the festival and mesmerized the large crowd at the venue.

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

To commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, 150 tree(s) and flowering bushes were planted in Loshitsky Park, Minsk on November 14, 2018. The ceremony was attended by H. E. Mr. Mikhail Myasnikov, Chairman of the Council of the Republic of Belarus; H. E. Mr. Andrei Dapkiunas, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs; H. E. Mr. Andrei I. Rzheussky, Ambassador of Belarus to India; Mr. Peter Parkhomchik, General Director of OJSC “Belaz”; Mr. Vladimir Ulakhovich Chairman BelTPP; Mr. Vladimir Prokoptsov, Director of National Art Museum; Mr. Dmitry Klevzhits, Head of the Belarusian-Indian pharmaceutical company “Glorinkor”; Mr. Anatoly Sikorsky, Rector of the Belarus Medical University; several Belarusian nationals; Indian nationals in Belarus and Indian students in Belarus.

The Indian community in Belarus is minuscule with around 85 Indian nationals and 476 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/>