

India-Tajikistan Bilateral Relations

Relations between India and Tajikistan have traditionally been close and cordial. Exchange of high level visits has served to cement bilateral ties. Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Tajikistan in 2003. President Pratibha Devisingh Patil paid a State visit to Tajikistan in September 2009 and Vice President of India Shri Hamid Ansari in April 2013. Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister visited Tajikistan for the Council of Heads of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in September 2014. President President Rahmon has visited India in 1995, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012 and 2016. During his visit in September 2012 the two countries elevated their relations to the level of "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. Tajik Foreign Minister Mr. Sirodjiddin Aslov and First Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Nizomoddin Zohidi visited India in May 2015 and December 2016 respectively.

2. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tajikistan on 12-13 July, 2015. During the visit, the two sides decided to step up cooperation in the spheres of defence, connectivity and fight against terrorism. They also signed a Programme of Cooperation in the field of Culture and Art for the period 2016-18 and exchanged a Note Verbale for setting up of computer labs in 37 schools in Tajikistan. Apart from this, an Agricultural Workshop was also held with participation of experts from both sides. Prime Minister again met President Rahmon on 24 June 2016 on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Tashkent.

3. During his last visit to India in December 2016 President Rahmon met President Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Vice-President Shri Hamid Ansari. The two sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and exchanged views on all issues of mutual interest. Four agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit.

4. India and Tajikistan have four bilateral consultative mechanisms: (a) Foreign Office Consultations (three rounds held; last in November 2016 in Dushanbe), (b) Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism (two rounds held; last in 2006), (c) Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (8th meeting held in Dushanbe in January 2016) and JWG on Defence Cooperation (last meeting held on 1-4 November 2016 in Dushanbe).

5. **Humanitarian Assistance:** In 1999 India provided relief material worth Rs. 50 lakhs to overcome damage caused by unexpected torrential rains in Tajikistan. In 2001-02 India supplied humanitarian assistance worth USD 5 million to Tajikistan for mitigating the effects of various natural disasters. To overcome a crisis caused by an unprecedented harsh winter in January-February 2008, India gave a grant of US \$ 2 million (US \$ 1 million as cash assistance and US\$ 1 million in kind, like power cables, generators and pump sets). In June 2009, US \$ 200,000 cash assistance was given

by India to overcome damage caused by floods in April-May 2009. After flashfloods in Kulyab province on 7 May 2010, India provided US \$ 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. On 1 September 2015 India granted US\$ 100,000 as humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for providing relief to flood and mudslide-affected people of GBAO (Pamir) and Rasht valley in response to Tajikistan's appeal for international humanitarian aid. India has decided to provide USD 100,000 as humanitarian assistance for overcoming the damage caused by avalanches in Tajikistan in January/February 2017.

6. **Project Assistance:** In 1995 India extended a credit line of USD 5 million to set up a pharmaceutical plant. However, the Tajik side could not provide the working capital and the project could not take off. Government of India thereafter converted the principal amount along with the accrued interest of US \$ 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 in 2005. With a grant of USD 0.6 million an Information and Technology Centre (Bedil Centre) was commissioned in 2006. Similarly with about roughly USD half a million, India set up a Modern Engineering Workshop and commissioned it in June 2011. We also undertook rehabilitation and modernization of a 1936 vintage Varzob-1 Hydro Power Station through Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited and National Hydroelectric Power Corporation. After renovation the installed capacity was enhanced from 2x3.67 MW to 2x4.75 MW. The rehabilitated Power Station was inaugurated on 28 December 2012. 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.

7. **Private Investments and Projects:** Indian private investments in Tajikistan include a 5-star hotel constructed by M/s CHL Limited, India. The hotel was inaugurated by President Rahmon on 6 September 2014. An Indian company KEC/RPG completed the construction of 116 km. long power transmission line from Sangtuda-1 Hydropower plant to the 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. In 2014, an Indian Company M/s Kalpataru bagged a contract worth approx. \$22 million for construction of electric transmission lines under Asian Development Bank financing. The project is in final stage of implementation.

8. **Bilateral Trade:** Trade is low due to transportation difficulties to this land-locked country. The usual route for transportation of goods from India is by sea to Bandar Abbas and from Bandar Abbas via Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan by land. This is not only time consuming but costs are also prohibitive. India mainly exports pharmaceuticals, meat and meat products, apparel and clothing accessories and iron and steel. Ores, slag and ash, Organic chemicals, herbal oils, dried fruits, cotton and aluminum are exported to India from Tajikistan. Bilateral trade figures for the last five years are tabulated below:-

Total Trade					Value in US \$ Million	
2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
32.56	41.33	30.14	48.02	55.13	58.09	32.24

Exports from India to Tajikistan:					Value in US \$ Million	
2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
15.71	18.31	21.28	35.16	54.27	53.71	22.26

Imports to India from Tajikistan:					Value in US \$ Million	
2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
16.85	23.02	8.86	12.86	0.86	4.39	9.98

(Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry, India)

9. **Air links with Tajikistan:** Tajik Air restarted its weekly direct flight to Delhi on 31 May 2013 and it has been continuously operating since then.

10. **Scholarships:** Tajikistan is one of the largest beneficiaries of ITEC and ICCR scholarship programmes [ITEC training slots were increased to 150 from 100 during President Rahmon's visit in September 2012 (in FY 2016-17 the number of ITEC slots is 190); 25 ICCR scholarships are allotted to Tajikistan annually]. Over 1220 ITEC slots and 361 ICCR scholarships have been utilized by Tajik candidates till date.

11. **Cultural Exchanges:** There is deep-rooted liking for Indian culture and films. Indian films are routinely shown on local TV channels. Embassy has a Cultural Centre, where a Tabla Teacher and a Kathak Dance Teacher have been deputed by the ICCR. Hindi and yoga classes are held regularly at the Centre. A new Programme of Cooperation in the field of Culture and Art for the period 2016-18 was signed during the visit of Prime Minister to Tajikistan in July 2015. In 2016 ICCR sponsored cultural troupes visited Tajikistan for celebration of Days of Indian Culture in Tajikistan. From Tajikistan a 20-member art and cultural troupe visited India for participation in Surajkund Mela in February 2017.

12. **Visas:** Visas are issued on the same day by us. However, Indian nationals sometimes face problems due to procedural delays, difficulties in online visa system etc.

13. **International Fora:** In general, Tajikistan supports India in most elections in UN bodies and other international organisations. Tajikistan has supported India's bid for UNSC permanent membership. Tajikistan has also supported SCO Member status for India. India supported Tajikistan's accession to WTO and on 03 August 2012 a Protocol to this effect was signed in Dushanbe. Tajikistan became a WTO member in March 2013. India has been supporting Tajikistan's leadership on water related issues at the UN.

14. **Indian Community in Tajikistan:** The total number of NRIs is estimated at about 800, out of which more than 500 are students pursuing MBBS course at the

Dushanbe Medical College. The members of the Indian business community in Tajikistan are mostly in pharmaceutical sector. A few Indians are also working in international organizations/banks.

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Embassy of India website: indianembassytj.com