

India - Turkmenistan Relations

Political Relations:

Turkmenistan, one of the Republics of the former USSR, was proclaimed as an independent State on 27 October 1991. It shares borders with Kazakhstan in the north, Uzbekistan in the north and North-east, Iran in the South and Afghanistan in the Southeast.

India enjoys close, friendly and historical ties with Turkmenistan. 'Turkmen Gate' built in Delhi in 1650's bears testimony to this friendship. India-Turkmenistan political relations have been warm and cordial. Hon'ble President of Turkmenistan Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov visited India in May, 2010. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi visited Turkmenistan on 10-11 July, 2015 during which several significant MoUs and agreements were signed. There have been several other visits at Ministerial level including the then EAM's visit in April 2015 for Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) Meeting and the visit of her counterpart Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in 2017 and again in January 2018. Late Smt. Sushma Swaraj, the then EAM made transit visits to Ashgabat on 2 August, 2018 and 13 September 2018 during her visit to Moscow. Late Smt. Sushma Swaraj also had a separate meeting with Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on the sidelines of First India-Central Asia Dialogue held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on 13 January 2019. Mr. Allanur Altyyev, Deputy Minister of Agriculture & Environment Protection of Turkmenistan led the Turkmen delegation to attend the 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held in New Delhi on 2-13 September 2019. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan Mr. Rashid Meredov made a transit visit to New Delhi on 2 February 2020 where he was received by EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar. Both Ministers held a brief meeting during which issues of bilateral interest were discussed.

Trade & Commercial Relations:

Total trade for the year 2019-20 (upto December 2019) stood at US\$29.97 million of which exports from India stood at US\$26.40 million

and Imports by India at US\$3.57 million registering a surplus of US\$22.83 million in India's favour. Major items of import from India include electronic and electrical items, machinery and woven apparel and pharmaceuticals, frozen meat and tyres. Exports to India comprises of fertilizers, cotton, raw hides and inorganic chemicals (e.g. Sulphur, Iodine). Turkmenistan produces cotton, wheat, rice, and variety of vegetables and fruits.

Bilateral trade (in million US \$)

Year	Indian exports	Indian imports	Turnover
2014-15	91.98	13.05	105.03
2015-16	68.53	46.97	115.50
2016-17	57.60	21.32	78.92
2017-18	54.31	26.15	80.46
2018-19	45.64	20.63	66.27

TAPI- Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI countries) signed two basic documents on 11 December 2010, marking the beginning of TAPI project. The TAPI Gas Sales & Purchase Agreement (GSPA) was signed in May 2012. At the 22nd Steering Committee Meeting of TAPI held in Ashgabat on 06 August, 2015, Turkmenistan offered to lead the Consortium. During this meeting Shareholders Agreement was initialed among the parties. Former Vice President, Shri Hamid Ansari attended the TAPI ground-breaking ceremony in Mary city of Turkmenistan on 13 December, 2015. Shri M.J. Akbar, the then Minister of State for External Affairs visited Turkmenistan on 21-23 February, 2018 for inauguration of the 2nd phase of the TAPI gas pipeline at Islim Cheshme (Serhetabat) on Turkmen-Afghan border.

Education and Cultural Relations:

India provides training for Turkmen nationals under ITEC programme. In the year 2019-20, 20 ITEC slots were offered to Turkmenistan. In all, since the inception of the programme for Turkmenistan in 1994, over 421 Turkmen nationals have been trained in various courses. In addition, India provides ICCR Scholarships to students from

Turkmenistan to pursue graduation, post-graduation and Ph. D. 20 ICCR scholarships are offered every year. There are over 300 Students from Turkmenistan pursuing their higher education in India in various reputed universities.

Hindi Chair: In 2015, Hindi Chair was established in Azadi Institute of World languages, Ashgabat where Hindi is being taught to university students. 'Vishwa Hindi Diwas' is celebrated in Turkmenistan every year.

Indian Cinema and TV serials are popular with Turkmen people. Similarly, Indian music also holds a special place in the hearts of Turkmen people. Indian film festivals are held on regular basis in different cities in Turkmenistan. Indian Film Show was held in Ashgabat on 20-21 June 2019. A 15-member cultural troupe from Turkmenistan visited Surajkund to participate in the International Crafts Mela from 1-15 February 2016. A Turkmen Cultural delegation visited India in November, 2016 for performance in Delhi and Chennai on the occasion of 25th Anniversary of Turkmenistan's Independence. A cultural troupe 'Silicon' sponsored by ICCR performed at a Friendship concert at Berkerar Mall in Ashgabat on 26th January 2017 as part of Republic Day celebration. A Jugalbandi (duet) was played among Indian and Turkmen musicians. 'India Cultural Week' was celebrated in Ashgabat from 16-23 May 2017 to mark 25th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between India and Turkmenistan. The week long celebrations included 'Vastram' Exhibition, Bollywood Performance, Film Festival & first ever Food Festival. A 14-member group "Bollywood Rockers" sponsored by ICCR visited Turkmenistan on the occasion of Independence Day of India from 30-31 August, 2019. An 11-member Turkmen Cultural Folk Group "Galkynysh" visited India to participate in the International Folk Dance and Music Festival-2018 from 05-12 December, 2018. A number of events were organized by Embassy of India in Turkmenistan to commemorate 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi- Bicycle Rally (3 June 2019), School outreach (31 May 2019), Tree Plantation (2 October 2019), Gandhi Jayanti celebrations (2 October 2019) and Vegetarian Food Festival (4-5 October 2019).

Yoga and Traditional Medicine Centre: The Yoga and Traditional Medicine Centre at Bagtyarlyk Sports Complex, Ashgabat was inaugurated by Hon'ble PM during his visit to Ashgabat on 11 July 2015. There are over 3000 registered Yoga Practitioners in the Centre. A

Teacher of Indian Culture and Ayurveda Expert have been deputed to the centre by ICCR and offer classes to interested people. The Ayurveda Expert also teaches in the State Medical University thereby promoting Indian traditional medicine systems in Turkmenistan. International Day of Yoga and Ayurveda Day are celebrated with great enthusiasm every year in Turkmenistan (5th International Day of Yoga on 15 June 2019 and Ayurveda Day on 25 October 2019)

Indian community in Turkmenistan:

There are presently 240 Indian nationals in Turkmenistan. Majority of them are semi-skilled workers construction sector. There are also a few engineers, professionals and technicians working in oil and gas sector. There are no Indian Associations or Indian students in Turkmenistan.

Air links with Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan Airlines operates 4 direct flights a week to India (New Delhi - Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday & Sunday).

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Ashgabat website: <http://www.eoi.gov.in/ashgabat>

(As on February 2020)