

India-Russia Relations

Bilateral ties with Russia are a key pillar of India's foreign policy. India sees Russia as a longstanding and time-tested friend that has played a significant role in its economic development and security. Since the signing of the "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" in October 2000 (during the visit of President Vladimir Putin to India) India-Russia ties have acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation taking place in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship including political, security, trade and economy, defense, energy, science and technology and culture. Under the Declaration of Strategic Partnership, several institutionalized dialogue mechanisms have been put in place that operate at the political and official levels, and ensure regular interaction and follow up on cooperation activities. In the last couple of years, the two countries have decided to further elevate the strategic partnership to the level of a "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership". The 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Russia was celebrated on 13 April 2012.

Political relations

Annual Summit meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation is the highest institutionalized dialogue mechanism. Since the Declaration of Strategic Partnership, thirteen Summit meetings have taken place alternatively in India and Russia. The 13th Summit meeting between Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Vladimir Putin was held on December 24, 2012 in New Delhi. The two governments have also established two Inter-Governmental Commissions - one on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC), co-chaired by the External Affairs Minister and the Russian Deputy Prime Minister and another on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC- MTC) co-chaired by the two Defense Ministers, both of which meet annually. IRIGC-MTC and IRIGC-MTC meetings were respectively held in New Delhi on 10 October and 15 October 2012. The two countries also hold periodic parliamentary exchanges.

India- Russia cooperation in the military technical sphere has evolved from a simple buyer-seller framework to one involving joint research & development, joint production and marketing of advanced defence technologies and systems such as on the BrahMos missile system. Joint development of the Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft and the Multi-role Transport Aircraft, as well as the licensed production in India of SU-30 aircraft and T-90 tanks, are other examples of flagship cooperation programs presently underway in this area.

Russia has been a partner of India in nuclear energy and recognizes India as a country with advanced nuclear technology and an impeccable non-proliferation record. The construction of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) exemplifies ongoing cooperation in this area. Units 1&2 of the KKNPP (VVER 1000 MW units) are being built with Russian collaboration. Unit 1 is due to be commissioned soon, while Unit 2 is at an advanced stage of construction.

Negotiations for the construction of two additional Units 3&4 at Kudankulam are at an advanced stage.

India and Russia have also been collaborating in several high-technology projects. Under the 2004 Inter-Governmental Agreement on “Cooperation in the area of exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes”, Russia and India are cooperating on projects such as the Moon Mission ‘Chandrayan 2’, the planned Human Space Flight Project and GLONASS navigation. On 20 April 2011, the jointly developed Indian-Russian Student Satellite “Youthsat” was successfully launched by India on a PSLV rocket.

Commercial relations

Bilateral trade has been growing steadily. Trade in 2011 stood at US \$ 8.9 billion from a figure of US \$ 7.5 billion in 2009. In 2011, Russian exports to India amounted to US \$ 6.1 billion and imports from India to Russia amounted to US \$ 2.8 billion. During January- October 2012, the bilateral trade amounted to US \$ 8.72 bn. The two-way cumulative investment between India and Russia stands at approximately US \$ 7.8 billion.

Both India and Russia acknowledge that given the respective sizes of their economies and the untapped economic complementarities, vast potential exists for an increase in bilateral trade volumes and investment. In 2009, both sides set the target of achieving US \$ 20 billion in bilateral trade by 2015. Special attention is being paid to energy, pharmaceuticals, IT, steel, hydrocarbons, aerospace, and diamonds and food products for this purpose.

The India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC), co-chaired by the Indian External Affairs Minister and the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, is the main institutional mechanism supervising economic cooperation. It integrates six working groups on economic and trade cooperation, modernization and industrial cooperation, energy, tourism and culture, science and technology, and IT. The 18th IRIGC-TEC meeting took place in New Delhi on 15 October 2012.

The India-Russia Forum on Trade and Investment (established in 2007 and co-chaired by the Commerce and Industry Minister of India and the Russian Minister for Economic Development) and the India-Russia CEO’s Council (established in February 2008 and co-chaired by Mr. A. M. Naik, Chairman L & T Ltd., and Mr. Vladimir Yevtushenkov, CEO of SISTEMA) are the two primary mechanisms to promote direct business-to-business contacts. The last meeting of the India–Russia Forum on Trade & Investment was held on 15 October 2012 in New Delhi. Mechanisms such as the India-Russia Business Council (in partnership with FICCI of India and CCI of Russia) established in 2007; the India-Russia Trade, Investment and Technology Promotion Council (in partnership with CII of India and RUIE of Russia) established in 2007; and the India-Russia Chamber of Commerce (focusing on SMEs), supplement the efforts to build direct business-to-business ties. In June 2012, the 3rd India-Russia Business Dialogue was also held within the framework of the annual St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF).

Science & Technology Cooperation

The Working Group on Science and Technology functioning under the IRIGC-TEC, the Integrated Long Term Programme (ILTP) and the Basic Science Cooperation Programme are the three main institutional mechanisms for bilateral S&T cooperation, while the Science Academies of the two countries promote inter-academy exchanges. The ILTP supports collaborative research in basic and applied sciences. It has resulted in establishment of 9 thematic centers in India and Russia and implementation of 500 projects. In 2010 the program was extended for 10 years with a renewed mandate - Innovation Led Technology Programme. An India-Russia Science & Technology Centre was set up in 2011-12 with a branch each in Delhi-NCR and Moscow, to promote transfer and commercialization of technologies developed jointly / independently by scientists of the two countries.

Cultural Cooperation

There are strong traditions of cultural and academic exchanges between the two countries. Jawaharlal Nehru Cultural Center (JNCC) of the Embassy of India, Moscow maintains close links with Russian institutions such as the Institute of Philosophy, Moscow, that has a Mahatma Gandhi Chair on Indian Philosophy; Institute of Oriental Studies, Moscow; Institute of Asian and African Studies of the Moscow State University; School of International Relations, St. Petersburg University; Kazan State University; and Far Eastern National University, Vladivostok. About 20 Russian Institutions, including leading universities and schools, teach Hindi to over 1500 Russian students. Besides in Hindi, there are also Russian experts in Indian languages such as Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Pali, Sanskrit, Tamil, and Urdu. Interest in Indian dance and music is widespread and yoga is very popular in Russia. The JNCC conducts classes in yoga, dance, music and Hindi, for approximately 800 students every month.

There are several other cultural initiatives aimed at promoting people-to-people contacts between the two countries and the travel of Russian tourists to India has been rising in recent years. In 2009, the Year of India was held in Russia. In September 2011, a mini Festival of Indian Culture was organized in Russia, while several cultural events and academic conferences were held as part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. During 2012, the Embassy of India, Moscow organized a number of academic, cultural and other events to mark the 65th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Russia. A Festival of Russian Culture was organized in India in 2012. "Days of Moscow in New Delhi" were also held from 26-29 October 2012.

Indian Community

The Indian Community in the Russian Federation is estimated at about 15,000. In addition, there are about 1,500 Afghan nationals of Indian origin in Russia. There are about 500 Indian businessmen residing in Russia including about 200 who work in Moscow. It is estimated that there are around 300 registered Indian companies in Russia majority of them involved in trading. Tea, coffee, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, rice, spices, leather footwear, granite, I.T. and garments are amongst the products being imported by these companies from India.

There are approximately 4,500 Indian students enrolled in medical and technical institutions in the Russian Federation. About 90% of these students pursue medical studies in about 20 universities/institutions spread across the country.

The Hindustani Samaj is the oldest Indian organization in Russia. Set up in 1957, it works in close co-operation with the Embassy of India, Moscow. Other Indian organizations in Moscow include AMMA, DISHA, Indian Business Alliance, Overseas Bihar Association, Textile Business Alliance, Bhartiya Sanskritik Samaj, Brahma Kumaris, ISKCON, Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee, and Ramakrishna Society Vedanta Centre.

There is an Embassy of India School in Moscow, affiliated to Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan in New Delhi with teachers deputed from India. The School has classes from I to XII and has about 360 students.

January 2013