

India-Tajikistan Bilateral Relations

Relations between India and Tajikistan have traditionally been close and cordial. There has been a regular exchange of high level visits. Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Tajikistan in 2003, President Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil in 2009 and Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari in 2013. Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister visited Tajikistan for the Council of Heads of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Dushanbe in September 2014. From Tajik side, President Rahmon has visited India six times in 1995, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012 and 2016. Tajik Foreign Minister visited India in May 2015 and Minister of Economic Development and Trade in June 2017. Several other Ministers and senior officials have been visiting India from time to time.

During the visit of Tajik President to India in September 2012, the two countries elevated their relationship to '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.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Tajikistan in July 2015 during which the two sides decided to step up cooperation in the spheres of defence, connectivity and in fight against terrorism. They signed a Programme of Cooperation in Culture and Art for 2016-18 and decided to set up computer labs in 37 schools of Tajikistan. Apart from this, an Agricultural Workshop was also held. Prime Minister Modi met President Rahmon again on 24 June 2016 on the sidelines of SCO Summit in Tashkent. During his visit to India in December 2016, President Rahmon met President Pranab Mukherjee, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice President Hamid Ansari. President Rahmon and Prime Minister Modi had a substantive meeting during which the entire gamut of bilateral relations was reviewed. Three new cooperation agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit.

The two countries 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 (three rounds held; last in June 2017 in Dushanbe), (c) Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (9th meeting held in New Delhi in June 2017) and (d) JWG on Defence Cooperation (6th Meeting held on 29 August 2017 in New Delhi).

Project Assistance: In 1995 India extended a credit line of USD 5 million to set up a pharmaceutical plant. The 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. India also undertook rehabilitation and

modernization of a 1936 vintage Varzob-1 Hydro Power Station through Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) and National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC). After renovation the installed capacity has enhanced 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.

Private Investments and Projects: Tajikistan has good potential in hydroelectricity generation, power transport, full chain of cotton processing, tourism etc. Indian private investments in Tajikistan include a 5-star hotel constructed by M/s CHL Limited, India. The hotel was inaugurated by President Rahmon in September 2014. An Indian company KEC/RPG completed the construction of 116 km. long power transmission line from Sangtuda-1 Hydropower plant to 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. USD 22 million for construction of electric transmission lines under Asian Development Bank financing. The project was completed in early 2017. The company won one more project worth USD 35 million in 2017 under CASA-1000 power transmission project. There are other small private projects/companies which provide healthcare and other services in Tajikistan.

Bilateral Trade: The usual route for transportation of goods from India is by sea to Bandar Abbas and from there via Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan by land. This is a time consuming route and costs are high. Besides, there are difficulties at border crossings. India mainly exports pharmaceuticals, meat and meat products, apparel and clothing accessories and iron and steel. Different types of Ores, slag and ash, aluminum, organic chemicals, herbal oils, dried fruits and cotton are exported to India from Tajikistan. The bilateral trade figures during the last seven years are given below.

Exports to Tajikistan:				Value in US \$ Million		
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
18.31	21.28	35.16	54.27	53.71	22.26	20.51

Imports from Tajikistan:				Value in US \$ Million		
2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
23.02	8.86	12.86	0.86	4.39	9.98	21.82

(Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry, India)

Air links with Tajikistan: Tajik Air restarted its weekly direct flight to Delhi in May 2013 and it has been continuously operating since then. In November 2016 second weekly flight was also started but it could not continue due to lack of passengers. Medical tourism is on the rise.

Humanitarian Assistance: India delivered major food assistance in 2001-02. 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 in May 2010, India provided US \$ 200,000 humanitarian cash assistance. After the outbreak of Polio in southwest Tajikistan, India provided 2mn doses of oral polio vaccine through UNICEF in November 2010. In September 2015, India granted US\$ 100,000 as humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for providing relief to the flood and mudslide-affected people of GBAO (Pamir) and Rasht valley. India provided USD 100,000 to Tajikistan in March 2017 as humanitarian assistance for natural disasters.

Scholarships: Tajikistan is one of the largest beneficiaries of the ITEC and ICCR scholarship programmes outside SAARC (150 ITEC slots and 25 ICCR scholarships are allotted annually to Tajikistan). Over 1300 ITEC slots and 360 ICCR scholarships have been utilized by Tajik candidates so far. For the financial year 2017-18, Government of India has provided 60 additional slots for customised training of Tajik experts in the field of remote sensing.

Cultural and Sports Exchange: There is deep-rooted liking in Tajikistan 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 ICC. ICCR funded cultural events “Namaste Tajikistan” took place in April 2016.

Visas: Indian visa regime for Tajikistan is highly liberal. Visas are issued within one or two days. However, Indian nationals sometimes face some problems in extending their Tajik visas. Tajikistan has recently launched online visa regime (45 days) including for Indian nationals.

International Forums: In general Tajikistan supports India in most elections in UN bodies and other international organisations. Tajikistan has publicly supported India's bid for UNSC permanent membership. Tajikistan supported SCO Member status for India. India supported Tajikistan's accession to WTO in March 2013 and on 03 August 2012 a Protocol to this effect was signed in Dushanbe. India has consistently supported Tajikistan's proposals at UN on water related issues. India supported Tajikistan's candidature to ECOSOC.

Indian Community in Tajikistan: The total number of NRIs is estimated at about 900, out of which 700 are students pursuing MBBS course at the Dushanbe Medical College. The members of the Indian business community in Tajikistan are mostly in pharmaceutical business. A few Indians are working in international organizations/banks/hotel and restaurants.

Useful Resources: i) Embassy website: Indianembassytj.com
ii) Facebook: [IndiainTajikistan](https://www.facebook.com/EOIDUSHANBE/)
<https://www.facebook.com/EOIDUSHANBE/>

iii) Twitter: @indiaintaj

iv) Embassy news magazine

'Oina-e-Hind'

<http://indianembassytj.com/index.php?itfpage=contents&itemid=ainahind>

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