

## India-Iran Relations

### **Political**

India-Iran relations span millennia marked by meaningful interactions. The two countries shared a border till 1947 and share several common features in their language, culture and traditions. Both South Asia and the Persian Gulf have strong commercial, energy, cultural and people-to-people links.

Independent India and Iran established diplomatic links on March 15, 1950. In addition to the Embassy in Tehran, India has two Consulates in Iran, one in Bandar Abbas and other in Zahedan. Before the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the Shah of Iran visited India twice (March 1956 and February 1978) and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Iran in 1963. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Prime Minister Morarji Desai visited Iran in April 1974 and June 1977 respectively. After the Iranian Revolution, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Iran in 1993 and President Rafsanjani paid a visit to India in 1995. Indian Vice President Shri K. R. Narayanan visited Iran in October 1996.

The trend was enhanced at the turn of the millennium with the visit of Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Tehran in April 2001 wherein the two countries signed the “**Tehran Declaration**” which set forth the areas of possible cooperation between the two countries. President Mohammad Khatami visited India from January 24-28, 2003 as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade. Both sides signed “**The New Delhi Declaration**” which set forth the vision of strategic partnership between India and Iran. Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Iran to attend the 16<sup>th</sup> Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit held in Tehran from August 28-31, 2012. Prime Minister met Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad. External Affairs Minister Shri Salman Khurshid visited Tehran for the 17<sup>th</sup> India-Iran Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) in May 2013. Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari graced the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Iranian President Dr. Hassan Rouhani in August 2013. Foreign Minister Zarif visited India on February 28, 2014. He called on the Prime Minister and also met Indian Vice President and External Affairs Minister. Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister Abbas Akhoundi visited India on November 26, 2014 and had meetings with Minister for Road Transport, Highways and Shipping Nitin Gadkari and Railways minister Suresh Prabhu. Foreign Minister Zarif visited India again on August 13-14, 2015 and called on Prime Minister Modi and held discussions with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj. Minister for Women and Child Development Smt. Maneka Gandhi visited Iran in January, 2016 as a special guest in the 10<sup>th</sup> International Energy Management Conference. External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj accompanied by Foreign Secretary Dr. S Jaishankar visited Iran from April 16-17, 2016. During the visit External Affairs Minister called on President Rouhani and held delegation level talks with her counterpart Foreign Minister Dr Zarif. Shri M J Akbar,

Minister of State for External Affairs visited Tehran from September 10-12, 2016 as a Special Envoy of the Government. During the visit he met Foreign Minister Dr Zarif and held discussion on issues of mutual interest. Foreign Minister Zarif accompanied by a large business delegation visited India from December 3-4, 2016 for the 6<sup>th</sup> Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Amritsar.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a bilateral visit to Iran from May 22-23, 2016. 12 MoUs/Agreements were signed between India and Iran. A Trilateral agreement on Transit and Transport was signed between India, Iran and Afghanistan in the presence of Prime Minister Modi, President Rouhani and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. Prime Minister Modi also inaugurated the International Conference titled "India-Iran two great civilizations" in Vahdat Hall, Tehran and Prime released a Persian Manuscript "Kalileh Wa Dimneh". Prime Minister Modi met the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and President Rouhani. Joint Statement titled "Civilizational Connect, Contemporary context" was released.

The two countries have in place several Bilateral Consultative Mechanisms at various levels which meet regularly. The 18th India-Iran JCM was held in New Delhi on December 28, 2015. It was co-chaired by External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj and Dr. Ali Tayyebnia, Minister of Economy and Finance of Iran. A MoU on cooperation in trade, finance, energy, infrastructure and cultural issues was signed during the JCM. Foreign Offices of both countries also hold regular consultations on bilateral and regional issues. Dr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary visited Iran on June 13-14, 2015 for Foreign Office Consultations and held discussions with his counterpart Mr. Ebrahim Rahimpour. Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Ebrahim Rahimpour visited India on February 4, 2016. India and Iran hold security consultations at the level of National Security Adviser and its counterpart Secretary of Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), Iran. Shri Ajit Doval, National Security Advisor visited Iran on February 10-11, 2015 and held discussions with his counterpart Admiral Shamkhani. Admiral Shamkhani, Secretary of Supreme National Security Council accompanied by his Deputy Saeed Iravani visited India from August 26-27, 2016. During the visit, Admiral Shamkhani called on Prime Minister Modi and held discussions with his counterpart NSA Ajit Doval

### **Commercial Relations**

India-Iran commercial ties have traditionally been dominated by Indian import of Iranian crude oil. India is the second largest buyer of Iranian crude after China and Iran was the third largest supplier of crude to India (Apr-Sep 2016). The India-Iran bilateral trade during the fiscal year 2015-16 was USD 9.054 billion. India imported USD 6.2 billion worth of goods mainly crude oil and exported commodities worth USD 2.7 billion. Major Indian exports to Iran include rice, tea, iron and steel, organic chemicals, metals, electrical machinery, drugs/pharmaceuticals, etc. Major Indian imports from Iran include petroleum and its products, inorganic/organic chemicals, fertilizers, plastic and articles, edible fruit and nuts, glass and glassware, natural or

cultured pearls, precious or semiprecious stones, etc. Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Dharmendra Pradhan accompanied by representatives of ONGC, IOCL, GAIL and MRPL visited Iran from April 8-10, 2016. He held discussions with his counterpart Oil Minister Zanganeh on Farzad B and other related matters.

During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Tehran in May 2016, the contract on Chabahar was signed which inter-alia commits to Indian investment of \$85 million for equipping the Chabahar port. The Trilateral Transit Agreement (Chabahar Agreement) was signed by the three transport ministers of India, Iran and Afghanistan in the presence of Prime Minister Modi, President Rouhani and President Ashraf Ghani. Subsequently Minister Akhoundi visited India from September 27-30, 2016 and held discussions on Chabahar with his counterpart Minister Nitin Gadkari and Afghan Minister of Transport in New Delhi. It was decided that a Connectivity Event to show-cause the potential of Chabahar would be held in Chabahar in the near future.

The Chambers of Commerce of both countries have regular interactions including visits of commercial delegations. Some of the significant commercial delegations which have visited Iran include the 18-member Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), CEO's delegation of multi-sectoral businesses led by Dr. Naushad Forbes, President of CII from April 24-26, 2016. A 17-member FICCI delegation led by Mr. Yogendra Kumar Modi, former President, FICCI and Executive Chairman, GEECL visited Iran in April, 2016. A 25-member Tea delegation led by Shri Santosh Sarangi, Chairman, Tea Board of India visited Iran from February 14-16, 2016 to discuss matters pertaining to Tea quality/standards. A 3-member delegation from the State Trading Corporation of India Ltd. (STC), visited Iran from May 1-4, 2016 to discuss steel rail contract and other issues. A 32-member delegation of Federation of Indian Exporters Organization (FIEO) visited Iran from May 21-20, 2016 to explore mutual business cooperation in various sectors. A fertilizer delegation comprising of representatives from Rashtriya Chemical Fertilizers (RCF) and Gujarat State Fertilizers Chemicals Ltd (GSFC) visited Iran from November 6-9, 2016. A 4-member delegation comprising of Mr. Arvind Chaudhary, Director (Ports) Ministry of Shipping and Mr. A K Gupta, MD of IPGCL visited Iran from November 5-9, 2016 to continue discussions on the implementation of the contract on Chabahar Port. A team of OVL visited Iran from December 5-6, 2016 to continue discussions on the Farzad B gas field

### **Cultural Relations**

An Indian Cultural Centre is currently functioning within the Embassy premises which was inaugurated by Shri. Salman Khurshid, then EAM during his visit to Iran for the NAM summit in May 3, 2013. Iran has Cultural Centres in Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai. During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to Tehran in May 2016, MoUs on India-Iran Cultural Exchange Programme, ICCR and ICRO, Iran, National Archives

of India and the National Library and Archives Organisation of Iran were signed. It was also agreed for establishing a chair for Hindi language in Tehran University and India-Iran Eminent Persons Group.

Mission undertakes various cultural activities which included the Indian Cultural week held in Tehran from July 27-31, 2015 wherein Deputy Foreign Minister Rahimpour was the chief guest. A Qawwali group from India led by Mr. Majid Hossien performed during the event. The 2nd International Day of Yoga was celebrated at the premises of Kendriya Vidyalaya school premises on June 21, 2016. More than 500 Iranians participated. Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia had a musical concert in Vahdat Hall, Tehran on April 23, 2016. Among the guests included DFM Rahimpour and Deputy Minister for Culture Mohammadzadeh as well as Ambassadors of other countries. VVishwa Hindi Diwas was celebrated by Embassy on January 10, 2016 at Kendriya Vidyalaya school premises. Embassy has been bringing out a bi-monthly magazine named "Ain-e-Hind" (Mirror of India) taking India to the drawing rooms of the general Iranian public. Mission in collaboration with Inteshaaraat-e-Fanni-e-Iran, University of Tehran, Allameh Tabatabaei University and Bukhara Cultural Organization commemorated the 141<sup>st</sup> Birth Anniversary of Sardar Vallabhai Patel on November 6, 2016. The function was attended by senior members of Association of Iranians who studied in India, academicians and scholars from various universities, scholars and students of Kendriya Vidyalaya along with Ambassador and Embassy officials

### **Indian community**

While there was a large Indian community in Iran during the Shah's time, post Revolution this has dwindled and there is now a small Indian community in Iran consisting of 60-70 families in Tehran and some 13-15 families in Zahedan. There are, approximately 1000 Indian nationals undergoing theological studies in Qom and another 300 in Mashhad and Esfahan. There is an Indian school run by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) in Tehran and another Indian school in Zahedan. The KVS Tehran has staff strength of 8 including the Principal and has 208 students. It has classes from LKG to class 12. The Vidyalaya Management Committee Chairman is the Ambassador of India to Iran. The Indian Secondary School in Zahedan is the only existing English medium school in Zahedan which is following NCERT Syllabus. At present out of a total of 26 students, there are only two Indian students while rest are Iranians.

### **Useful Resources**

[www.indianembassy-tehran.ir](http://www.indianembassy-tehran.ir)

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