

India-Norway Relations

Beginning with the first official contact on 21.2.1947 through a telegraphed message from Foreign Minister Halvard Lange to India's Special Envoy V.K. Krishna Menon in Stockholm confirming the Norwegian government's in principle agreement to establish bilateral relations, India and Norway have had cordial and friendly relations. The two countries respect each other for commonly shared values such as democracy, human rights and rule of law. In recent years, both countries have been increasingly tapping bilateral economic and technical complementarities.

There have been regular exchanges of high level visits between the two countries. Visits from the Norwegian side during the last three years have included those of Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg in early February 2010 for the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS); Minister of Agriculture and Food Lars Peder Brekk in February, 2010; Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre in early March 2010 to co-chair the India-Norway Joint Commission Session; Minister of Environment and International Development Erik Solheim in March, 2010, November 2010, and February 2012; Trade and Investment Minister Trond Giske in October 2010, and May 2012; Minister of Higher Education and Research Ms. Tora Aasland in early February, 2011; Minister of Local Government and Regional Development , Ms. Liv Signe Navarsete, from 10th to 13th January 2012; Minister of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs to India, Ms. Rigmor Aasrud, from February 6-8, 2012; and, Minister of Agriculture Mr. Trygve S. Vedum, from 15-18 August 2012; Deputy Minister for International Development, Mr Arvinn Gadgil attended the DSDS in January-February 2013. There have also been several Ministerial level visits from India to Norway, including those of Shri Chidambaram, the then Finance Minister in October 2007; Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister of HRD in July 2008; MOS for S & T and Earth Sciences Shri Prithviraj Chavan in June 2010; Dr. C.P. Joshi, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in September, 2010; Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal, Minister of Earth Sciences, Science and Technology & Parliamentary Affairs, in May 2011; Minister for Shipping Shri G.K. Vasan in May 2011; Shri Pallam Raju, MOS for Defence, in September 2011; and, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Minister for New & Renewable Energy in October 2011. Shri Kishore Chandra Deo, Minister of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, visited Norway from 10-14 September 2012 as a follow-up on the MoU signed between the two countries on local governance; Shrimati Jayanthi Natarajan, Minister of State(Independent Charge), for Environment and Forests visited Norway from May 27-30, 2013 to attend the Seventh Trondheim Conference on Biodiversity and COP Bureau meeting; Shri Salman Khurshid, Minister of External Affairs, visited Tromso, Svalbard ,Oslo from June 11-13, 2013.

India-Norway Joint Commission sessions are held on a regular basis under the chairmanship of the respective Foreign Ministers, the last session having been held in New Delhi on March 2, 2010. The next session of the Joint Commission is likely to be held in Delhi during the proposed visit of Norwegian Foreign Minister to India, tentatively planned for in early 2014. Foreign Office Consultations between the two Foreign Ministries are held on an annual basis, alternately in New Delhi and Oslo, at the level of Secretaries. Norway has extended its support to India's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. It had also supported India's candidacy for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the period 2011-2012.

Joint Working Groups

The following Joint Working Groups (JWGs) have been set up under the auspices of the India-Norway Joint Commission:- (i) JWG on Environment; (ii) JWG on Science and Technology; (iii) JWG on Higher Education; (iv) JWG on Hydrocarbons; (v) JWG on Culture vi) JWG on Mutual Cooperation on Local Governance and (vii) JWG on Maritime Matters.

Agreements and MOUs: The following Agreements and MoUs have been signed between the countries:-

| Agreements | MOUs |
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| Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) (1986; Revised DTAA signed in ear February 2011) | MoU between Foreign Service Institutes of the two countries(2005) |
| Air Services Agreement (2008) | MoU on Science & Technology (2006) |
| Cultural Agreement (1961) | MoU on Norway – India Partnership Initiative (NIPI) (2006) |
| Agreement on Social Security (2010) | MoU on Polar Research (2008) |
| | MoU on Education and Research (2008) |
| | MoU on Cooperation on the area of Climate Change and CDM (2009) |
| | MoU on Cooperation in the field of fisheries (2010) |
| | MoU for Mutual Cooperation on Local Governance (2010) |

Cultural Exchange Programme between India and Norway for the years 2010-15 was signed in Oslo on 12 May 2010

Agreements / MoUs under negotiations

i) Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters (ii) Trade and Investment Agreement between India and EFTA (Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Switzerland); (iii) Agreement on Exemption of Visas for holders of diplomatic and official passports; and, (iv) Maritime Cooperation Agreement.

Trade

Exports from Norway to India include electronic goods, general industrial machinery, scientific control equipment, artificial resins, plastic materials, non-ferrous metals, while the main items of export from India to Norway include transport equipment, apparels, cotton yarn and fabrics, miscellaneous manufactured articles, metals, non-metal mineral items, paper products, cashew, furniture, travel goods, leather items, coffee, tea, spices and footwear. There has been a substantial growth in economic and commercial relations between India and Norway in recent years especially in areas such as oil and gas, shipping and maritime industries, renewable energy, offshore projects and service sectors. This has given a major fillip to bilateral trade with the total trade between India and Norway as per Norwegian figures reaching USD 932 million in 2012 as compared with USD 791.9 million in 2010.

Investments

Around 70 Norwegian companies are engaged in India either through joint ventures with Indian partners or through wholly owned subsidiaries. Over 100 Norwegian companies have shown interest in possible business prospects in areas such as ship building, petroleum related services, marine/subsea drilling equipment, hydropower, clean energy, and IT services. ONGC and Reliance Industries have tie ups with Norwegian companies in the petroleum and energy sector. There has also been a trend of Norwegian IT companies to either offshore their business to India or acquire shares in Indian companies. Indian IT majors like Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, ITC Infotech, Larsen & Toubro Infotech and Wipro have increased their presence in Norway over the last few years due to the existing potential of IT outsourcing contracts in the country.

Norwegian expertise in maritime operations, have been in demand in India and the Norwegian shipping industry has likewise discovered the potential and economic viability of building vessels in Indian ship yards. More than 30 ships are in the pipeline, being built or delivered from Indian shipyards on orders from Norwegian ship owners. Telenor, Norway's largest telecom company, is the majority share holder in the Indian mobile operator, UNINOR. After severing its ties with Unitech Wireless, Telenor has set up a separate company, Telewings Communications, in joint venture with M/s Lakshdeep Investments. Telenor has announced that it is committed to invest upto Rs. 15,500 crore in India. Another major Norwegian investment in India has been by their largest paint manufacturer, Jotun. Indian companies have also invested in Norway over the last few years. One of the largest investments was by Chennai-based Aban Offshore which took over Norwegian drilling company Sinvest in early 2007, in a deal worth around \$1.3 billion. Another Chennai-based company, Siva Ventures acquired the Norwegian shipping company, J.B. Uglund Shipping AS for US \$ 300 million in 2008; it also acquired a Norwegian bottled-water company, Isklar AS, in 2010. Tata Motors have bought a 50.3% stake in Norwegian company Miljo Grenland/Innovasjon, which specialises in developing hi-tech batteries for electric vehicles.

Norwegian investments in India are estimated at US \$ 5.611 billion as of June 2012, including equity and fixed income investments of US \$ 4.2 billion across 266 Indian stocks made by Norges Bank (Norwegian Central Bank) as part of Norway's Pension Fund Global. Indian investments in Norway are estimated at US \$ 1.838 billion. The overall bilateral economic engagement is estimated at over US\$ 15 billion.

Punjab National Bank inaugurated its Representative office in Oslo in January 2009, while DNBNor, the largest Norwegian Bank opened its Representative Office in Mumbai in February 2009. With the signing of an MoU between RBI and the Financial Services Authority of Norway for enhancing bilateral cooperation on banking supervision in July 2012, the process is underway to upgrade PNB's representative office in Oslo to that of a Branch.

Science & Technology

During the second meeting of the Joint Working Group on Science & Technology held in Oslo in May, 2009, a Programme of Cooperation was signed by the two sides. Three Arctic Missions from India have so far visited Norway, in 2007, 2008 and 2009. India's Polar Research Station "Himadri" was inaugurated by S&T Minister Shri Kapil Sibal at Ny Alesund in Svalbard on July 01, 2008. The Research Station was also visited by S&T and

Earth Sciences Minister Shri Prithviraj Chavan in June 2010 and his successor in the said Ministry Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal in May 2011. External Affairs Minister Shri Salman Khurshid, visited the “Himadri” research station in June 2013. Teams of our research scientists are regularly visiting the station for conducting research between April and October of each year. The third meeting of the Indo-Norwegian JWG on S&T met in October 2012 at Bergen, Norway. A programme of cooperation for the period 2013-15 was concluded during the JWG.

Health

In pursuance of its commitment to achieving Millennium Development Goals 4 & 5 to bring down infant mortality and improve maternal health, Norwegian Government is supporting programmes in five Indian states (UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, MP and Orissa) to the tune of US\$ 80 million over the 2006-2011 period, as part of the Norway India Partnership Initiative. Separately, under bilateral Bio-Technology co-operation, Norway is providing NOK 50 million for human vaccines research and NOK 15 million for animal and fish vaccines research.

Indian Community

The size of the Indian community in Norway as on January 2013 was 9747 of whom 5882 held PIO cards and 3865 are NRIs. Most of the Indians living in Norway are professionals and highly successful in their respective fields. According to Norwegian Immigration Department figures, India has become the leading source of foreign skilled professionals working in Norway. The number of skilled professionals from India has gone up from just 100 in 2005 to around 2000 in 2012.

Visas

More and more Norwegians are travelling to India for tourism and business purposes. The number of visas issued by the Embassy nearly doubled up from around 9000 in 2005 to well over 16000 in 2012.

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