

Brief of India-Tajikistan Bilateral Relations

Relations between India and Tajikistan have been traditionally close and cordial. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 28 August 1992, regular high level visits between the two countries have further cemented the bilateral ties. Deep rooted historical and cultural linkages have helped expand and widen the relationship to a new level. Cooperation between the two countries encompasses all aspects of human endeavor with special focus on military and defense ties.

Political Relation

Although India considers that in 2012, India-Tajik bilateral relations were elevated to a 'Strategic Partnership', the Tajik side views it as being "strategic cooperation" and not partnership. During the preparation for the State visit of President Shri Ram Nath Kovind to Tajikistan in 2018, Tajik side proposed that the two countries could negotiate and sign a strategic partnership agreement. (Tajikistan has signed such agreements with other countries such as Russia, China, Uzbekistan and Belarus.)

Politically, numerous high level visits have bolstered the relationship between the two countries. President Shri Ram Nath Kovind paid a State Visit to Tajikistan on 07-09 October 2018. During the visit, President announced a grant of USD 20 million for Tajikistan for projects mutually agreed upon by the two sides. A total of 08 MoUs/agreements were signed in the following areas– (i) Peaceful Use of Space Technology, (ii) Disaster Management, (iii) Renewable Energy, (iv) Youth Affairs, (v) Agricultural Research and Education, (vi) Unani Medicine, (vii) Programme between Foreign Ministries for 2018-21, (viii) Cultural Exchange Programme for 2019-23.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Tajikistan from 12-13 July 2015. During the visit of Prime Minister, the two sides decided to step up cooperation in the spheres of defence, connectivity and in fight against terrorism. They signed 'Programme of Cooperation in Culture and Art' for 2016-18 and India agreed to set up computer labs in 37 schools of Tajikistan, which was completed in August 2016. Prime Minister Modi again met Tajik President H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon on 24 June 2016 on the sidelines of SCO Summit in Tashkent and thereafter on 9 June 2018 on the sidelines of SCO Summit in Qingdao, China. Prime Minister Modi virtually attended the September, 2021 SCO Summit held in Dushanbe.

Tajik President H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon has paid six visits to India in 1995, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012 and 2016. During his last visit to India on 14-18 December 2016, President Rahmon met then President Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari. Three new cooperation agreements/MoUs were signed during the visit. President Rahmon virtually participated in the 1st meeting of the India-Central Asia Summit (ICAS) on January 27, 2022.

Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India visited Tajikistan from 16-17 September, 2021 to attend the 21st Meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of States and joint meeting of the SCO-CSTO Outreach on Afghanistan. He also had a meeting with President Rahmon during the visit. Prime Minister addressed both the meetings virtually. EAM earlier visited Tajikistan from 13-15 July 2021 to take part in Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of SCO member states and SCO-Afghan contact group. As part of the meeting he

made a courtesy call on President Rahmon along with other SCO Foreign Ministers and on the sidelines he met Tajik Foreign Minister. He paid an official visit to Tajikistan from 29 March-01 April 2021 and was received by President Rahmon and Speaker of Lower House of Tajik Parliament. He also met Tajik Foreign Minister and Defense Minister and took part in 9th Ministerial Meeting of 'Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process'. Earlier he visited Tajikistan from 14-15 June 2019 to attend the 5th Summit Meeting of Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. On the sidelines, he had a fruitful meeting with Tajik foreign Minister, Mr. Sirojiddin Muhridin. EAM also met Tajik Foreign Minister on the sidelines of UNGA in New York in September 2019, on 09 Sept 2020 in Moscow and on 29 July 2022 in Tashkent on the sidelines of meeting of Foreign Ministers of SCO countries. EAM also had a telephone conversation with Tajik FM on 5 May 2020 where issue of combatting Coronavirus as well as Regional and bilateral relations were discussed.

Details of other high level bilateral visits undertaken in the past are as follows:-

- (i) Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Muhridin visited India from 18-20 December, 2021 on an official visit and also to participate in the India-Central Asia Dialogue. He also held official levels bilateral talks with EAM, NSA and Speaker of Lok Sabha and had joint call with other Central Asian FMs on PM. One MoU and one Programme of Cooperation were also signed between India and Tajikistan during the visit. Earlier, FM had visited India in May 2015.
- (ii) National Security Adviser to the Prime Minister, Mr. Ajit Doval visited Dushanbe from 26-27 May 2022 to participate in the Fourth National Security Advisers/Secretaries of Security Councils Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan. During the visit, he also had bilateral discussions with his Russian, Iranian and Tajik counterparts. Prior to this, NSA had visited Dushanbe from 15-16 December, 2021 and had meetings with his counterpart the Tajik NSCS chief, Mr. Nasrullo Mahmudzoda as well as President Rahmon. Earlier, he had visited Dushanbe from 22-24 June, 2021 to attend the 16th Meeting of Secretaries of Security Councils of SCO Member States.
- (iii) Tajik NSA Mr. Nasrullo Mahmudzoda visited New Delhi from 09 to 11 November, 2021 to participate in the Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan. Earlier, Tajik NSA Mr. Nasrullo Mahmudzoda visited New Delhi from 06 to 10 February, 2021 for the 2nd India-Tajikistan Security Council Dialogue.
- (iii) Raksha Mantri visited Dushanbe from 27-29 July 2021 to attend the Meeting of Council of Defense Ministers of SCO member states. He met Tajik Minister of Defense on the sidelines.
- (iv) Tajik Defence Minister Col. Gen. Sherali Mirzo visited India in January 2018. Tajik Defence Minister also met Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singhon 03 Sept 2020 on the sidelines of the meeting of Defence Ministers of SCO, CIS and CSTO Countries.
- (vi) Smt Sushma Swaraj, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister led the Indian delegation to 17th SCO Heads of Government meeting in Dushanbe on 11-12 October 2018.
- (vii) Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs visited Tajikistan in May 2018 to attend High Level International Conference on 'Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism'.
- (viii) Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Jal Shakti, Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation visited Tajikistan in June 2022 to attend the conference on 'International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028'. Earlier, Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister had attended the conference held in Dushanbe in June 2018.

- (ix) Supreme Court Justice Ajay Rastogi participated in the XVII Meeting of Supreme Court Chief Justices of SCO Member States held in Dushanbe on 18th August, 2022. He had a bilateral meeting with the Chairman of the Supreme Court of Tajikistan during his visit.
- (x) Tajik Minister of Economic Development and Trade visited India in June 2017.
- (xi) Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister visited Tajikistan for the Council of Heads of Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Dushanbe in September 2014.
- (xii) Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari visited Tajikistan in 2013.
- (xiii) President Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil visited Tajikistan in 2009.
- (xiv) Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee paid a visit to Tajikistan in 2003.

Several other Ministers and senior civil and military officials from both the countries keep visiting each other from time to time including a three member delegation led by Major General Samarzoda Qiyomiddin Sharof, Deputy Commander of the National Guard of the Republic of Tajikistan from 27-30 October 2021. The delegation visited National Security Guard Training Centre, Manesar.

The two countries have five bilateral consultative mechanisms in the form of: -

- (i) Foreign Office Consultations (four rounds held; last in December 2018 in New Delhi).
- (ii) Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism (three rounds held; last in June 2017 in Dushanbe).
- (iii) Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (11th meeting held in Delhi in February 2020).
- (iv) JWG on Defence Cooperation (7th Meeting held on 26-27 July 2018 in Dushanbe).
- (v) JWG on Peaceful Use of Space Technology for Development (Second Meeting was held on 31 Aug 2020 through Direct Video Conferencing.)

The last round of India-Tajikistan Strategic Consultations between the two National Security Councils was held in February 2021 in Delhi and the first India-Tajikistan Consular Consultations were held in Dushanbe in June 2019.

Cooperation in International Forums/initiatives

In general Tajikistan supports India in most elections for UN bodies and other international organisations. Recently, in June 2022, Tajikistan conveyed its decision to support India's candidature for membership in Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2020, Tajikistan extended support for India's candidature for a non-permanent seat in UNSC for the term 2021-22. Tajikistan has publicly supported India's bid for UNSC permanent membership including in the joint statement issued on 8th October 2018 during the state visit of President Shri Ram Nath Kovind. Tajikistan strongly supported SCO Member status for India. India supported Tajikistan's accession to WTO in March 2013. India has consistently supported Tajikistan's proposals at UN on water related issues. India also supported Tajikistan's candidature to ECOSOC.

Development & Aid Partnership

Since Tajikistan's independence in 1991, India has played the role of a development and aid partner for Tajikistan. A brief outline of the same is placed below.

Developmental Project Assistance:

- (i) In 1995, India extended a credit line of USD 5 million to set up a pharmaceutical plant (Ajanta Pharma). The Government of India thereafter converted the principal amount along with the accrued interest of USD 3.37 million into a grant during the visit of Prime Minister Vajpayee in November 2003.
- (ii) With a grant of USD 0.6 million, a Fruit Processing Plant was established in Dushanbe by M/s HMT in January 2005.
- (iii) With a grant of USD 0.6 million, an Information and Technology Centre (Bedil Centre) was commissioned in 2006. The project ran for full hardware cycle of 6 years and trained almost all the first generation IT experts in government sector in Tajikistan.
- (iv) With a grant of about USD 0.75 million, India set up a Modern Engineering Workshop and commissioned it on 02 June 2011. The project is running successfully.
- (v) India 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 was enhanced from 2x3.67 MW to 2x4.75 MW. The rehabilitated Power Station was inaugurated on 28 December 2012 and is running successfully.
- (vi) A project for setting up of computer labs in 37 schools in Tajikistan (announced during Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's visit in July 2015) was completed and delivered in August 2016 at a cost of USD 6,02,701/-.
- (vii) Under the USD 20 million grant announced during the State Visit of President of India to Tajikistan in October 2018, India has commenced the construction of phase-I of a 8-lane highway project from Chortut village to Ayni roundabout in Dushanbe at a cost of approximately USD 17.54 million. More than 88% of the project has been completed.
- (viii) In March 2021 as announced during official visit of EAM, India provided USD 2 million financial assistance to Tajikistan to help conduct SCO Head of State Summit in Dushanbe in Sep 2021.
- (xi) In December 2021, India has signed an MoU with Tajikistan for Indian Grant Assistance for implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects of a capital cost up to US\$ 1.5 million each.

Humanitarian Assistance:

- (i) India delivered USD 5 million worth of food assistance in 2001-02.
- (ii) To overcome a crisis caused by an unprecedented harsh winter in January-February 2008, India gave a grant of USD 2 million (USD 1 million as cash assistance and USD 1 million in kind, such as power cables, generators and pump sets).
- (iii) In June 2009, USD 200,000 cash assistance was given by India to overcome damage caused by floods in April-May 2009.
- (iv) After flashfloods in Kulyab province in May 2010, India provided USD 200,000 humanitarian cash assistance.
- (v) After the outbreak of Polio in southwest Tajikistan, India provided 2 million doses of oral polio vaccine through UNICEF in November 2010.
- (vi) In September 2015, India granted USD 100,000 as humanitarian assistance to Tajikistan for providing relief to the flood and mudslide-affected people of GBAO (Pamir) and Rasht valley.
- (vii) India provided USD 100,000 to Tajikistan in March 2017 as humanitarian assistance for natural disasters.
- (viii) In March 2018, India gifted 10 ambulances to various regions of Tajikistan.
- (ix) Since the outbreak of Covid19 in 2020, India has provided humanitarian medical assistance to Tajikistan. In May 2020, India provided 50,000 HCQ tablets and 100,000

Paracetamol tablets to Tajikistan, and sent another consignment of 4.6 tons of medical supplies. In June 2020, India sent another 800 Kgs of medicines and medical accessories to Tajikistan.

Human Capacity Building

Since establishment of the Indian Embassy in Dushanbe in 1994, Tajikistan has been a beneficiary of Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC). After the State visit of President Shri Ramnath Kovind to Tajikistan in October 2018, the number of ITEC slots for Tajikistan was enhanced from 150 to 200. Every year about 25 Indian Council of Cultural Research (ICCR) scholarships are offered to Tajik citizens. About **1455** ITEC slots and **392** ICCR scholarships have been utilized by Tajik candidates so far. In the financial year 2017-18, Eurasia Division financed 60 additional slots for customised training of Tajik experts in the field of remote sensing. In FY 2019-20, 10 Tajiks joined Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra to study Hindi. In FY 2022-23, 12 Tajiks joined Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra to study Hindi. In 2019, under India-Central Asia Dialogue Process, 08 Tajik diplomats were trained at Foreign Service Institute, Delhi. Both in 2018 and 2019, one Tajik diplomat was trained under Foreign Service Institute’s PCFD program. Since 2002, 48 students have gone to learn Kathak/music/vocal/instrumental music in India.

Connectivity, Trade & Economic Relation

Trade and Economy is the weakest link in India-Tajikistan relationship, which in turn is due to the lack of reliable land connectivity between the two countries. The trade route through Iran and Turkmenistan is impacted from time to time due to US sanctions on Iran, and ups and downs of bilateral relation between Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

In December 2019, direct air connectivity between Delhi and Dushanbe was restored after almost one year when a Tajik private airline, M/S Somon Air started its operations. Since February 2020, Somon Air decided to operate a second weekly flight between Dushanbe and Delhi. These flights were suspended in March, 2020 due to the pandemic and have resumed in May 2022. Occasional chartered flights are also operated by enterprising Indian businessmen.

Indian exports to Tajikistan mainly consist of pharmaceuticals, medical preparations, apparel, clothing and machinery. India is the largest supplier of pharmaceutical products in the Tajik market. However, not all medical products are directly imported from India and some of them arrive via Russia.

Different types of ores, slag and ash, aluminum, organic chemicals, herbal oils, dried fruits and cotton are exported to India by Tajikistan. Bilateral trade figures of the last few years are as follows:

Indian Exports to Tajikistan (source DoC, GOI): million USD

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (Apr to Sept)
35.16	54.27	53.71	22.26	20.44	23.94	22.28	23.50	53.45	35.35	27.23

Indian Import from Tajikistan (source DoC, GOI): million USD

2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23 (Apr to Sept)
12.86	0.86	4.39	9.98	21.82	50.29	4.24	0.29	1.06	10.74	0.40

Tajik Minister of Economic Development and Trade had a video conference with Minister of Commerce and Industry of India Sh. Piyush Goyal in late 2021 where they discussed the Tajik Minister heading a business delegation to India to explore areas of mutual cooperation and benefit.

Private Investments and Projects

Small size of Tajik market (population 9.3 million), draconian, arbitrary and non-transparent tax and other laws and corrupt bureaucracy have impeded interest of Indian business in Tajikistan. Important Indian private investments/projects undertaken in Tajikistan are as follows: -

- (i) A 5-star hotel constructed by M/s CHL Limited, India. The hotel was inaugurated by President Rahmon in September 2014.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) BHEL supplied a 7 MW generator to the Tajik company "Pamir Energy" in 2011 under a commercial contract.
- (iv) Indian Company M/s Kalpataru bagged a contract worth approximately USD 22 million for construction of electric transmission lines under ADB financing and finished the project in early 2017. The company won one more project worth USD 35 million in 2017 under CASA-1000 power transmission project.
- (v) Besides, there are other small private projects/companies/ clinics, which provide healthcare and other services in Tajikistan.

Tajikistan has potential in hydroelectricity generation, power transmission, mining, full chain of cotton processing, tourism, medical tourism to India etc.

Cultural & People-to-People Relation

India and Tajikistan share strong historical, cultural and linguistic ties. There is great liking for Indian culture. Films and TV serials dubbed in Russian and Farsi language are routinely shown on local TV channels.

To further deepen and widen these cultural linkages, Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Dushanbe offers courses in Kathak & Tabla through teachers deployed by ICCR from India. The centre also offers Hindi language classes.

ICCR funded cultural events were held in 2016, 2017 and September, 2021 in Dushanbe and other cities. From Tajikistan a 20-member art and cultural troupe participated in Surajkund International Crafts Mela in 2017, 2018 and 2019. In 2019, under an MEA sponsored program, a Tajik national visited India to witness and participate in the cultural traditions of Kumbh Mela. 6 students were sent for the first time under ICCR Scholarship to

pursue professional courses in Kathak dance, Vocal music and Tabla. Tajik journalists visited India in April 2019 under India Central Asia Dialogue process.

With help of funds provided by Indian Ministry of Culture to friendship societies in Tajikistan, Embassy has opened a few India Study Corners in some prominent Universities/Institutions in Dushanbe, Khorog, Konibodom and Panjikent to cater to the increasing demand for study of Indian languages and yoga in Tajikistan.

A Hindi-Urdu Chair was established in the Tajik State University and since January 2019 a Professor has been deployed by ICCR at the university.

Yoga: Yoga is very popular among local people in Tajikistan. The Indian cultural Center offers regular Yoga classes using local yoga teachers. Every year International Day of Yoga is celebrated not only by the cultural center but by many private individuals/yoga centres across various towns in Tajikistan. In 2020 'My Life My Yoga' video blogging competition saw participation from Tajik yoga enthusiasts across two categories.

Visas: Indian visa regime for Tajikistan is liberal. Visas are issued within one or two days. Vast majority of Tajiks travels on e-visa for tourism or medical treatment. Tajikistan has launched online visa regime including for Indian nationals.

Indian Community in Tajikistan

The total number of NRIs is estimated at about 1500, out of which about 1400 are students pursuing MBBS course at the Avicenna Tajik State Medical University. The contribution of these students to Tajik GDP is approximately USD 9 million per year. The others are members of the Indian Embassy, business community in Tajikistan, mostly in pharmaceutical business. A few Indians are working in international organizations/banks/hotels and restaurants.

Useful Links

- (i) Embassy website: www.eoidushanbe.gov.in
- (ii) Facebook: @IndEmbDushanbe
- (iii) Twitter: @IndEmbDushanbe