

## **India-Belarus Bilateral Relations**

India's relations with Belarus have been traditionally warm and cordial. India was one of the first countries to recognize Belarus as independent country in 1991. Formal diplomatic relations were established and the Indian diplomatic mission was opened in Minsk in 1992-with the first Resident Ambassador joining in January 1993-followed by the opening of Belarusian Embassy in New Delhi in 1998. Belarus opened its Honorary Consulate in Kolkata in December 2002 and in Mumbai in September 2018. In August 2022, the new Belarusian Consulate General in Mumbai was inaugurated.

Bilateral relations between India and Belarus are marked by broad understanding on issues of mutual interest. The two countries enjoy a comprehensive partnership and have established mechanisms for exchanging views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues through Foreign Office Consultations, Intergovernmental Commission (IGC), and Joint Commission on Military Technical Cooperation.

The 7<sup>th</sup> round of FOCs was held in August 2022 in New Delhi. The 11<sup>th</sup> IGC meeting was held in New Delhi in November 2022. The two countries have signed a number of Agreements/MoUs on various subjects, including trade and economic cooperation, culture, education, media and sports, tourism, science & technology, agriculture, textiles, Avoidance of Double Taxation, Promotion and Protection of Investments, and defence and technical cooperation.

Both countries have exchanged high level visits at regular intervals. Hon'ble Rashtrapatiiji's State Visit in June 2015 to Minsk, the first Presidential visit from India to Belarus, provided further impetus to the existing bilateral relations. During the visit, six MoUs for cooperation in areas such as broadcasting, standardization, textiles, and financial securities were signed and a Roadmap for future cooperation was exchanged. Government of India also announced a line of credit (LoC) of US\$100 million to Belarus. President of Belarus visited India in 1997, 2007 and 2017.

The two countries cooperate and coordinate their efforts in the international, multilateral and regional matters with a commonality of views on several international and regional issues. Belarus has been supportive of India's candidature for a permanent seat at the UNSC. Belarus had supported India's candidature for the non-permanent seat of UNSC for the years 2021-22. Belarus also supported India at Nuclear Suppliers Group meetings. Similarly, India has supported Belarus for its membership in the NAM and also other international and multilateral

fora like IPU. India's supportive stand on various Resolutions in Geneva and New York (especially during India's non-permanent membership of UNSC in 2021-22) targeting Belarus for violation of human rights and restrictions on freedom of expression have also been appreciated by Belarus. Belarus recognizes India as an emerging global power and seeks to develop a "strategic relationship" with India.

Bilateral trade between the two countries remains below its true potential. Bilateral trade in 2022 amounted to US\$ 223.77 million. The trade balance remains in favour of Belarus primarily on account of imports of Potash. Belarus played an important role in the setting up of the Advance Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials in Hyderabad in 1991. Indian PSU, BHEL, was awarded a contract worth US\$ 55.5 million under GoI's credit line for the Grodno Power Project-II. The project was commissioned in June 2013 and is running well. A Digital Learning Centre in ICT at High Technology Park in Minsk set up with India's Rs. 50 million credit line began operating in February 2011 and was formally inaugurated in January 2012.

BelAZ signed an MoU with an Indian company Enrika for establishing a joint venture for servicing the Belarusian dumper trucks in India. BelAZ signed another contract with Coal India Ltd. for supply of 77 mining dump trucks in October 2019. With its completion, a subsequent contract for 96 dumptrucks is under implementation now. Belarus participated in the India International Trade Fair in November 2012 as 'Partner Country' and again in 2016 as focus country. Belarusian Trade Minister visited Mumbai in February 2016 to participate in the 'Make in India' conference. The 10th Session of India-Belarus Joint Business Council was held in New Delhi in Nov 2016. Cooperation in science & technology and defence is an important aspect of India-Belarus bilateral relations.

During 9-10 November 2022, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus H.E. Mr. Vladimir Makei visited India to co-Chair the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the Indian-Belarusian Inter-governmental Commission on Trade, Economy, Industry, Science, Technology and Culture (IGC-TEC).

On 9 November 2022, FM Makei met External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar and both sides reaffirmed the friendly and constructive nature of bilateral cooperation. FM Makei also held discussions with Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, India's Minister of Chemicals and

Fertilizers wherein the two sides discussed issues related to supply of Potash from Belarus to India.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the IGC-TEC was held on 10 November 2022 and was co-Chaired by FM Makei and Shri Som Prakash, Minister of State for Commerce & Industry from the Indian side.

During the visit, FM Makei also held a meeting with Shri Piyush Goyal, India's Minister of Commerce & Industry. The two sides confirmed their firm focus on creating favorable conditions for increasing mutual trade and implementing joint projects in such areas as engineering, pharmaceuticals, and infrastructure development.

FM Makei also addressed the Belarusian-Indian Business & Investment Forum, organized under the auspices of the National Center for Marketing and Price Study of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), which was attended by more than 60 Indian companies.

Pharmaceuticals is an important area of cooperation, and forms a major component of India's exports to Belarus. The first meeting of the Joint Working Group for cooperation in the pharmaceuticals was held in New Delhi in February 2017. The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the JWG on Pharma was held on 4 August 2023 in virtual format. The meeting was chaired by Economic Adviser of the Department of Pharmaceuticals from the Indian side and the Deputy Minister for Health from the Belarus side. A delegation of 19 pharma companies, led by Pharmexcil visited Belarus and participated in the international exhibition Healthcare of the Republic of Belarus in May 2023.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Joint Working Group on Textiles was held on 18 September 2023. It was chaired by Trade Adviser from the Ministry of Textiles on the Indian side and the heads of Bellegprom and Belneftekhim on the Belarus side.

Science and Technology is an important component of bilateral relations as both countries have a strong scientific and technological establishment. The 9th meeting of the India-Belarus Joint Science & Technology Committee was held virtually on 5 Aug 2020. The two sides agreed to launch a Joint Research call for proposals. Under this joint call (launched in July 2022), out of the common proposals received, several projects in areas such as ICT, new materials, Biotech and medicine have been jointly selected for funding during 2023-24. A CSIR delegation, led by Secretary, DSIR visited Minsk in May 2023 and held meetings with their counterparts from National Academy of Sciences and State Committee of Science and Technology of Belarus.

Belarus is a partner in the ITEC Program of the Ministry of External Affairs since 1993. Over 350 Belarusian professionals have benefited under the Program through various professional courses in designated institutions in India.

The Indian Community in Belarus consists of around 171 Indian nationals and 809 Indian students pursuing studies in medicine in State medical universities in Belarus. Indian art and culture, dance, yoga, ayurveda, films, etc. remain popular among Belarusian nationals. Many young Belarusians also take keen interest in learning Hindi and classical dance forms of India. Hindi classes had been started at Belarusian State University (BSU), Minsk in September 2017, the first batch of 15 students completed their 2-year course in July 2020. A Centre of Indian Culture at BSU, Minsk was inaugurated in July 2020.

**Ambassador of India in Belarus: Shri Alok Ranjan Jha**

**Ambassador of Belarus in India: H.E. Mr. Andrei I. Rzhheussky**

**Website - <https://www.eoiminsk.gov.in/>**

**Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInBelarus>**

**X - <https://twitter.com/IndiainBelarus>**

**Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/indianembassyminsk/?hl=en>**

**October 2023**