

India-Georgia Relations

Overview:

India recognized Georgia's independence on 26th December 1991 and established formal diplomatic relations on 28th September 1992. Presently, there is no Indian Resident Mission in Georgia. Ambassador to Armenia with residence in Yerevan (Armenia) is concurrently accredited to Georgia. The Georgian side had first set up its Honorary Consulate in Delhi in 2005 which was upgraded to a fully fledged Embassy subsequently. The first Resident Ambassador of Georgia to India arrived in New Delhi on 25th February 2010. Mr. Girogi Margvelashvili was sworn-in as the new President of Georgia on 17 November 2013 in Tbilisi.

Historical Background:

There is enough literary and folklore-based evidence to suggest that links between India and Georgia and awareness of India in Georgia have existed from very early times of human civilization. Fables from India's Panchtantra are believed to have influenced the Georgian folk legends. Those links were further strengthened in medieval ages by missionaries, travellers, and traders. Georgians are said to have served at the Mughal Courts and some of them are believed to have risen to the positions of Governors. The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's wife Udaipuri Begum was of Georgian origin. Archeological investigations are at hand in pursuance of the Georgian conviction that the body of their Queen St. Ketevan (who attained martyrdom in 1624 in Shiraz, and has since been elevated to Sainthood) is buried in St. Augustine Tower in Goa (where the Portuguese had managed to transfer her body).

During the Soviet era, Prime Minister Pt. Nehru visited Tbilisi in 1955; Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited Tbilisi (1976). Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Georgia (June 1978) as EAM.

Important visits:

The Georgian Foreign Minister Irakli Menagarishvili and EAM Shri Jaswant Singh met in New Delhi on 11 May 2000. During that visit, a Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations was concluded. This was the only high level political exchange at the bilateral level. Shri Parvez Dewan, Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, visited Tbilisi during 26-28 May 2012 to represent India at Georgia's first 'Day of Diaspora'.

Cooperation at the International Fora:

Georgia supported Indian candidatures at various international fora including International Civil Aviation Organization (ICA), Executive Board in the UNESCO and International Maritime Organization (IMO) in the year 2013. India supported Georgia's candidature in the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) in 2013.

Institutional mechanisms:

Bilateral dialogue between India and Georgia is conducted through the mechanisms of Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) which provide regular consultations at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other agreed levels on international, regional and bilateral issues of mutual interest. The Fourth Session of FOCs was held during 15-16 July 2013 in Tbilisi. JS [ERS] led the Indian delegation. He met the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Agriculture. The consultations were focused on bilateral cooperation in all sectors of mutual interest and regional and international issues. Draft agreements on consular subjects were handed over to the Georgian side for examination. It was agreed that the first Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) will be held in 2014 on mutually convenient dates.

Trade and Economic Relations:

According to Indian statistics, the bilateral trade between the two countries is relatively small and was registered at US \$ 66 million in 2009-10. Balance of trade has always been in favour of India. According to Georgian statistics, in 2012, total exports to India from Georgia stood at USD 14.94 mn and total imports from India to Georgia stood at USD 73.87 mn. Steel, infrastructure, agriculture farming and service sectors are among few sectors of large Indian investment which amounted to US\$ 6.1 mn in 2012. Individual investors from India, mostly from Punjab, about 150 have acquired agricultural land for cultivation in Georgia at an average of 10 hectares per investor. However, only 5-10 have actually started active farming activity. TATA Power will be the new Indian company to enter into Georgia with its investment (approx US\$ 280 mn) jointly with other majors in Europe in a power project worth US\$700 mn. With this, the total Indian investment in Georgia has gone up close to approx. US\$400 mn.

Cultural Relations:

A 15-member ICCR sponsored Bollywood Dance & Music group 'Sugar N' Spice' gave a performance in Tbilisi on 18 September 2013. The event was organized by the Mission, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia. Around 500 people consisting of Georgian Deputy Minister of Culture, dignitaries and senior officials from various Ministries/Departments, Georgian nationals and friends of India, Indian community living in Georgia attended and enjoyed the dance performance by the Bollywood Group.

India's Development/Capacity Building Assistance:

15 ITEC slots have been allotted to Georgia in 2013-14; ICCR Scholarships are given to Georgian nationals to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Indian Universities; and Kendriya Hindi Sansthan scholarships to study Hindi in India.

Indian Community:

The Indian community in Georgia consists of students, businessmen, agricultural farmers and workers. Since 2012, their number has been considerably increasing and at present there are around 2000 Indians living in Georgia. This figure also includes 700 students at the Tbilisi State Medical University and about 200 Indian nationals working for Indian companies which are engaged in the infrastructure sector in Georgia. No incident of ethnic violence against the Indian community has come to Mission's notice. Indian films and food are popular in Georgia; there are four Indian Restaurants in Tbilisi. Interest in learning Hindi is palpable. The India-Georgia Cultural Association 'Bharat' is engaged in promoting Indian culture; it is coordinating Hindi classes in Tbilisi.

January 2014