

India - Armenia Relations

India recognized Armenia on December 26, 1991, and India's Ambassador in Moscow was concurrently accredited to Armenia. The Protocol on establishment of Diplomatic relations between India and Armenia was signed on 31 August 1992 in Moscow. From September 1992, India's Ambassador in Kiev (Ukraine) was given the concurrent charge of Armenia. India opened its Resident Mission in Yerevan at the level of Charge d' Affaires on 01 March 1999; the first Resident Ambassador (Shri Bal Anand) assumed charge in Yerevan in October 1999. Armenia, which had opened its Honorary Consulate in April 1994, established its Embassy in New Delhi in October 1999 at the level of Charge d' Affaires, followed by the arrival of the first Resident Ambassador (Armen Baibourtian) in May 2000.

Historical background:

According to literary evidence, there were Indian settlements in Armenia established by two Indian Princes who along with their families and large retinue had arrived in Armenia as early as 149 BC and were allotted land in Taron region (now in Turkey) by the then rulers of Armenia. Thomas Cana is said to be the first Armenian to have landed on the Malabar Coast in 780 AD. A few Armenian traders had come to Agra during the Mughal Empire. Emperor Akbar, who was believed to have an Armenian wife Mariam Zamani Begum, highly appreciative of the commercial talents and integrity of the Armenians, granted them numerous privileges and considerable religious freedom as also an opportunity to serve in his empire in various capacities. Indian classical singer Gohar Jaan, the first to be recorded on gramophone in 1902 was of Armenian origin. The Armenian language journal "Azdarar" published in Madras (Chennai) in 1794 was the first ever Armenian journal published anywhere in the world. The vestigial Armenian community in India is now mainly settled in Kolkata. The Holy Church of Nazareth, erected in 1707, repaired and embellished in 1734 is the biggest and the oldest Armenian Church in Kolkata.

During the Soviet era, President Dr. S Radhakrishnan (September 1964) and **Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (June 1976)** visited the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Political Exchanges

There have been two Presidential-level visits from Armenia (in 1995 and 2003) and three visits to India at the level of Foreign Minister (2000, 2006, and 2010). The Vice President and Chairman of Rajya Sabha led a Parliamentary delegation to Armenia in October 2005. ***The third and current President has been seeking a visit to India since 2008 but PMO has not yet been able to schedule the visit despite EAM's assurance to their FM in November 2010.*** Invitation to Speaker of Lok Sabha to visit Armenia remains unutilized. The 6th IGC and FOC were held in New Delhi on 25 September 2013. A Goodwill Indian Parliamentary delegation comprising 8 MPs from different political parties, led by Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Parliamentary Affairs & Development of North-Eastern Region, visited Armenia during 29 October – 1 November 2013.

Mr. Hovik Abrahamyan, the then Chairman(Speaker) of the Armenian National Assembly [Parliament] led an 18-member delegation to India (4-8 December 2013) and called on Hon'ble President, met Lok Sabha Speaker, EAM, the then Leader of Opposition Mrs. Sushma Swaraj and other dignitaries.

Institutional Mechanisms

Bilateral dialogue between India and Armenia is conducted through the mechanisms of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) and Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological, Cultural and Educational Cooperation (IGC), and periodic high-level interactions. The 5th IGC and FOCs were held in Yerevan from 31 October-1st November 2011. Next session of India-Armenia IGC will be held on 25 September in Delhi. A few important VIP level visits from Armenia to India are on the bilateral agenda.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

The bilateral trade and economic engagement with Armenia has not been on increase despite the availability of potential to tap. India is the major supplier of frozen bovine meat (it accounts for 90% of India's export i.e. US \$ 91.4 mn). According to the preliminary data available from Statistical Service of Armenia, during Jan- Nov. 2014, the bilateral trade stood at US\$31mn. India's imports from Armenia were at US\$0.2 mn and exports to Armenia stood at US\$30.8 mn again favouring India. Indian exports to Armenia consist of bovine meat, agricultural products, electrical equipment, cut and polished diamonds, optical equipment, plastics, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, garments and other chemical goods and cars, while Armenia's exports include non-ferrous metals and raw-rubber. One Indian Group "Kalpataru Power Transmission Limited," Gandhinagar (Gujarat) won the World Bank financed contract (approx. US\$ 22 million) in Nov. 2012 for designing, supplying and installation of high voltage transmission towers in Armenia. The work is being carried out by the company and the duration of the project is three years.

The "Make in India" Presentation was organized by the Embassy on 6 October 2014 in Yerevan. A video film [provided by the XP Division] with subtitles in Armenian language was screened. A presentation on 100 days of the new Government and its new initiatives to attract foreign investment into the Indian economy was made by Ambassador. The event was attended by the Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Agriculture and other high level dignitaries and businessmen in Armenia.

Mr.Emil Tarasyan, Deputy Minister of Economy [IT] led a 5- Armenian IT companies delegation to New Delhi to participate in the India-Soft 2015 (12 -13 February 2015).

Relief/Project Assistance

India donated USD 2.2 mn in cash and USD 1.1 mn earthquake relief in 1988; gifted 750 MT of wheat and 250 MT of rice following 2000 drought; gifted 300 Indian tractors in 2006 worth US\$ 5 million; set up an IT Centre of Excellence equipped with PARAM super computer in Yerevan worth US \$ 1.67 mn; extended assistance of US\$ 215,000 for the restoration of a dilapidated school building in Lori region; provided computer labs to 72 schools in Tavush region in 2011-12 worth US\$ 0.5 mn.

The Project will benefit over 14,000 students and around 500 teachers in the region. Two MoUs were signed with the Armenian Government in August 2014 to implement “Telemedicine” project in Armenia and “Establishment of Computer Labs” in 50 schools of Vayats Dzor region. C-DAC will implement these two projects. Dr. Mariam Nalbandyan, an Ophthalmologist from Armenia attended one month training at Dr. Shroff’s Charity Hospital, New Delhi under the ‘Aid to Eurasia’ programme.

Cultural Cooperation

The Indian Embassy organized activities including (i) Visit of five Armenian Painters to India (November 2012); Indian film week in Yerevan (January 2013); Painting Exhibition (April 2013); Book release of Indian Epic Ramayana in Armenian language (April 2013); Indian Photos Exhibition (June 2013).

A 15-member ICCCR sponsored cultural troupe ‘Sugar N’ Spice’ visited Armenia for a Bollywood dance performance on 16 September 2013. The first India Tourism Seminar “Incredible India” along with the Regional Office of M/o Tourism[Frankfurt] in Yerevan on 24 September 2014; A two-member Indian classical (mandolin) musicians led by Pandit Sugato Bhadhuri participated in the ‘Silk Road’ international festival on 8 October 2014 in Yerevan; Commemorating the 65th anniversary of Indian Republic Day in Armenia, an All-Armenia Essay and Painting competition among two age groups (12-14 and 15-17 years) was organized in partnership with the Armenian Ministry of Education & Science and the TUMO Centre for Technologies in December 2014. The four first prize winners have visited India (16-24 March 2015) at our M/o Tourism’s sponsorship; Magazine “India – New version, New Vigour” was also released on the occasion; Photo exhibition on Jammu & Kashmir “Paradise on Earth” was held for 10 days starting from 27 January 2014; 14 Armenian artists comprising dancers and singers performed at the annual Surajkund Mela [1-15 Feb] in Haryana. Dr. Sergey Minasyan, Deputy Director of the Caucasians Affairs Institute visited Mumbai (November 2014) to participate in an international seminar on ‘Caucasian Regional Affairs’ hosted by the University of Mumbai. Dr. Alexander Iskandaryan, Director of the Caucasians Affairs Institute visited India [Delhi, Kolkata and Hyderabad] from 8-16 February 2015 under IVP hosted by the ICCR. Three Hindi films and Indo-Armenian Friendship Chess Tournament by Indo-Armenian Friendship NGO supported by the Embassy were organized in March 2015. Vishwa Hindi Diwas was celebrated in the Yerevan State Linguistic University (YSLU) on 16 June 2015. Elocution and recital of poems’ competitions were held and winners were given cash awards. The first International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated in Armenia on 21 June 2015 in which over 300 Armenians from different walks of life participated. The IDY event created awareness about yoga benefits among Armenians.

ITEC

Armenia has been offered 20 ITEC slots in 2014-15 for short and medium term courses which are extremely popular. There is Hindi Language Chair at the Yerevan State Linguistic University (YSLU). Armenians visit India for attending various courses under ICCR, Kendriya Hindi Sansthan (KHS) and ITEC scholarships. There is an overwhelming response from Armenians to join various courses under ITEC programme.

Gifting of Medicine

On 11 September 2013, in a formal ceremony arranged by the Ministry of Health of RA, Ambassador donated 324 boxes of 'Kelfer Capsules' [16200 capsules] to the State owned hospital "Muratsan", run by the Yerevan State Medical University [YSMU]. The medicines (US\$2500) were gifted by CIPLA, one of the leading Indian Pharmaceutical Companies, as a humanitarian assistance for treating 20-25 young children suffering from Thalassaemia in Armenia. The request for donation of this medicine came from the Minister of Health of RA.

A two-member delegation comprising Shri R.S. Sinha, Director in the Ministry of AYUSH of India and Dr. M.M. Padhi, Deputy Director (Technical), Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences visited Armenia to participate in the first ever Scientific Seminar on India Traditional Methods of Medicine from 24-26 November 2014. The delegation called on the Minister of Health of RA. India's eminent Homeopathy doctor Prof. Alok Pareek visited Armenia to participate in the 5th Homeopathy Congress organized by Association of Armenian Homeopathy.

Bilateral Agreements

33 bilateral agreements have been signed with Armenia so far. There are 16 draft agreements in the pipeline. DST, Gol has invited Armenian side to India to discuss cooperation in the fields of Seismology, Astrophysics and disaster management.

Armenia supported India's candidature at the UNESCO, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and UN Board of Auditors, International Telecommunication Union Council.

Indian Community

The Indian community in Armenia consists largely of over 700 students pursuing medical education at Yerevan State Medical University, which currently is the only University permitted by the Ministry of Education of Armenia to teach medicine in English medium.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Yerevan website:

<http://indianembassy.am/>

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