

India-Iran Relations

Political Relations:

India-Iran relations span centuries marked by meaningful interactions. The two countries shared a border till 1947 and share several common features in their language, culture and traditions. Both South Asia and the Persian Gulf have strong commercial, energy, cultural and people-to-people links.

Independent India and Iran established diplomatic links on 15 March 1950. In addition to the Embassy in Tehran, India currently has two Consulates in Iran - Bandar Abbas and Zahedan. The Shah visited India in February/March 1956 and Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited Iran in September 1959. Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Iran in April 1974 and Prime Minister Shri Morarji Desai visited in June 1977. The Shah, in turn, visited India in February 1978.

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 introduced a new phase of engagement between India and Iran marked by exchange of high level visits of Indian Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao in September 1993, Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in April 1995 and Indian Vice President Shri K. R. Narayanan in October 1996. The trend was consolidated and enhanced at the turn of the millennium with visits by Prime Minister Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee in 2001 and a return visit by President Mohammad Khatami in 2003, when he was also the Chief Guest at the Republic Day function. The Iranian President Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited India on 29 April 2008.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Iran to attend the 16th Non-aligned Movement (NAM) summit held in Tehran on 28-31 August 2012. Iran assumed the presidency of NAM in 2012. On the sidelines, Hon'ble Prime Minister met Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Both sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and called for further strengthening the centuries old relationship between India and Iran. In May 2012, Iranian Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi visited India, as president's special envoy, to invite Prime Minister for the 16th NAM summit. Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Shri. Salman Khurshid (EAM) visited Tehran for the 17th India-Iran Joint Commission Meeting on 03-05 May 2013. He called on President Dr. Mahmoud Ahmandinejad, Majlis Speaker Dr. Ali Larijani and Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, Senior Advisor to the Supreme Leader on International Affairs. Hon'ble EAM met the new Iranian president Dr. Hassan Rowhani on the sidelines of the Heads of State Summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Bishkek on 13 September 2013.

Hon'ble Vice President of India Shri M. Hamid Ansari graced the Swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected Iranian President Dr. Hassan Rouhani on 04 August 2013. Hon'ble Vice president met Dr. Hassan Rouhani and the two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest in the bilateral, regional and international arena. On the sidelines of the ceremony, Hon'ble Vice President also met Dr. Ali Larijani, Speaker of the Iranian Majlis.

In November 2011 Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha Smt. Meira Kumar paid an official visit to Iran leading a multi-party Parliamentary delegation on the invitation of Majlis Speaker Dr. Ali Larijani. She inaugurated a tableau of Gurudev Rabindranath's poem on Iran in the Majlis museum and a bust of Acharya J. C. Bose at Pardis

Technology Park near Tehran. Apart from Majlis Speaker Dr. Ali Larijani she also called on President Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Dr. Larijani made a return bilateral visit to India on 24-28 February 2013. He called on Hon'ble President, Vice president, Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister in New Delhi. Earlier in December 2012, Senior Advisor to Supreme Leader on International Affairs and Former Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati visited India. He called on the Vice President and Prime Minister.

The two countries have in place several bilateral consultative mechanisms at various levels which meet regularly. Foreign Offices of both countries also hold regular consultations on bilateral and regional issues. Foreign Secretary of India Smt. Nirupama Rao visited Tehran in July 2011 for the 9th round of Foreign Office Consultations at the invitation of her counterpart, Dr. Mohammad Ali Fathollahi, Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia & Oceania Affairs. Besides holding the Foreign Office Consultations, she called on Foreign Minister Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Dr. Saeed Jalili. During the visit, both sides exchanged the Instrument of Ratification for the Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Prisoners signed in July 2010 thereby operationalizing the Agreement. In October 2012 Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia and Oceania Dr. Seyed Abbas Aragchi visited India for the 10th round of FoC. On 25 November 2013, Mr. Ebrahim Rahimpour, Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia and Pacific Affairs visited India for the 11th round of Foreign Office Consultations (FoC). FM Dr. Zarif visited India on 28 February, 2014.

Commercial Relations:

India-Iran enjoys economic and commercial ties covering many sectors. However, the trade relations have traditionally been buoyed by Indian import of Iranian crude oil resulting in overall trade balance in favour of Iran.

The India-Iran bilateral trade during the fiscal 2013-14 was USD 15.26 billion. India imported US\$ 10.33 billion worth of goods mainly crude oil and exported commodities worth US\$ 4.92 billion. India's export to Iran during the period April-September 2014 stood at USD 2.03 billion.

India and Iran hold regular bilateral discussions on economic and trade issues within the framework of India-Iran Joint Commission Meeting (JCM). The 17th India-Iran Joint Commission was held in Tehran on May 4, 2013. The Session was co-chaired by Shri. Salman Khurshid, External Affairs Minister of India and H.E. Dr. Ali Akbar Salehi, Foreign Minister of Islamic Republic of Iran.

On 20-23 April 2013, Shri S.R. Rao, Secretary (Commerce), Department of Commerce, Government of India led a high level delegation to Iran. Apart from his meetings in Tehran, he also met the members of Isfahan Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines.

A delegation led by Mr. Khalil Rahim, CMD, State Trading Corporation visited Tehran from 27-30 April, 2014.

Mr. Abbas Akhoundi, Minister of Roads and Urban Development of Iran visited India on 25 November, 2014 and met Mr. Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Roads and Transport and Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Railways.

Mr. Akbar Torkan, Advisor to Iranian President and Head of the Special Economic Zones visited India for the Vibrant Gujarat Summit from 10-14 January, 2015. He met PM, Commerce Minister and CM of Gujarat. He was accompanied by Mr. Saeednejad, Chairman, Port and Maritime Organization.

India-Iran bilateral trade for the period April-September, 2014 was USD 7.35 billion, an increase of 15% over the bilateral trade over the same period last year.

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) organized India's participation in the 14th Tehran International Industry Exhibition (TIIE) from 6-9 October, 2014. 27 Indian companies participated in the event. ASSOCHAM organized India's participation in the IRANTEX 2014 (Textile and Clothing Exhibition) held in Tehran from 17-20 November, 2014. 97 companies participated in the event. A 20 member business delegation from Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) attended a "Iran-India Trade Conference" organized by the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Commerce, Tehran Province on 8 December, 2014.

India and Iran are engaged in discussions on the Chabahar port and the INSTC.

Cultural Relations:

On 03 May 2013 Shri. Salman Khurshid, Hon'ble External Affairs Minister of India, officially inaugurated the India Cultural Center in Tehran, when he visited Iran for the 17th India-Iran Joint Commission Meeting (JCM).

Shri Satish Mehta, Director General, ICCR visited Tehran on 14 July, 2014 and met Mr. Masoud Soltanifar, Head of the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO). A Memorandum of Understanding for strengthening cultural cooperation between India and Iran was signed between ICCR and ICHHTO. Mr. Mehta also met Mr. Ebrahim Rahimpour, Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran.

A four member Sarangi music group led by Ustad Moinuddin Khan visited Tehran from 25-28 December, 2014.

Indian community:

The Indian community in Iran, which was sizeable earlier, has dwindled and now it is a small one consisting of about 100 families in Tehran and about 20 in Zahedan. There are a number of Indian students in Iran, approximately 800, a large number of whom pursue theological studies in Qom. There is an Indian school run by the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan in Tehran and another in Zahedan.

There are about 8,000 Iranian students studying in India. India provides 67 scholarships every year to Iranian students under ITEC, ICCR, Colombo Plan and IOR-ARC schemes.

India over the years has emerged as one of the favourite tourist destinations for Iranian tourists and every year around 40,000 Iranians visit India for various purposes. In February 2011, India successfully outsourced the tourist visa collection in Tehran to facilitate the visa services for Iranian tourists visiting India.

Regular meetings of the Joint Consular Committee is held to discuss consular and other related issues aimed at facilitating people to people exchanges between the two countries and addressing the concerns of Indians resident in Iran and Iranians resident in India. The latest round of Consular Committee meeting was held in Tehran in May 2014.

Useful Resources

Embassy of India, Tehran website:

www.indianembassy-tehran.ir

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