

## **India-Turkmenistan Relations**

### **General**

Turkmenistan, one of the republics of the former USSR, was proclaimed as an independent State on 27 October 1991. It shares borders with Kazakhstan in the north, Uzbekistan in the north and North-east, Iran in the South and Afghanistan in the Southeast. It has an area of 488,100 square kms and stretches 650 kms from north to south and 1,100 km from east to west. Eighty percent of Turkmenistan's territory is covered by the Karakum Desert. The main river of Turkmenistan is Amu Darya, which enters the country from Afghanistan and flows along the north-eastern borders before it enters Uzbekistan. The Karakum canal carries the waters of Amu Darya across the desert from the East to the West and is the main source of irrigation. For administrative purposes, the country has been divided into five provinces (Welayats) – Ahal, Balkan, Dashoguz, Lebap and Mary – each headed by a Hakim (Governor). Although Turkmen is the Official Language, Russian continues to be widely used by the public. The main religion of the country is Islam (Sunni). Turkmenistan is situated in Central Asia, north of Kopet Dagh mountains between Caspian Sea in the west and Amu Darya in the east, within latitudes of 35° N and 42° N and longitudes of 52° E and 68° E. The country is sparsely inhabited with an estimated population no more than 5.5 million.

### **Topography and Climate**

The climate is continental with high temperatures in summer and freezing cold in winter.

### **Historical background**

The Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic was established on 27 October 1924 as a republic within the erstwhile USSR. On 20 August 1990, the Supreme Soviet Council of Turkmenistan proclaimed the State sovereignty of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic. On 27 October 1991, Turkmenistan was proclaimed as an Independent State in a nation-wide referendum and the name adopted as Turkmenistan.

### **Politics**

Turkmenistan has been politically stable since 1991. As per the constitution, the country is a democratic and secular State. It acquired the status of "Permanent Neutrality" by a UNGA Resolution of 12 December 1995. Turkmenistan has a Presidential form of the Government, where President is both the Head of the State and the Head of the Executive. He is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The executive and administrative authority is exercised by the Cabinet of Ministers headed by the President. Turkmenistan has been a single party system. The ruling Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (TDP) is headed by the President of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov was the President of Turkmenistan from 1991-2006. After his death, Mr. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov was elected as the President for a 5-year term in February 2007. President Berdimuhamedov was re-elected for another 5-year term with a massive mandate of 97.14% in the elections held on 12 Feb 2012.

The Mejlis (Parliament) of Turkmenistan is a representative body exercising legislative powers. Membership of Mejlis was expanded to 125, for which election was held on 14 December 2008. The members of Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (only political party) and few registered NGOs were nominated to contest the election. About 50% of the Members of Parliament are

serving civil servants, teachers and tax officials etc who would continue to work in their respective jobs and attend the parliament only during voting of legislations. The parliament echoes the official line.

### **Economy**

Turkmenistan is endowed with rich reserves of natural gas, crude oil, iodine, potassium and rock salts. **Turkmenistan has the fourth largest natural gas reserves in the world**, including the world's second largest South Yolotan gas field. It also has significant reserves of crude oil. The country's key industries are state-owned.

**Being the richest country in natural gas in Central Asia and located in India's extended neighbourhood, Turkmenistan is important for India's energy security.** Four countries, viz., Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI countries) are working together on a gas pipeline project, which is expected to be operational by early 2017. On 11 December 2010, two basic documents between the four countries were signed in Ashgabat in the presence of Presidents of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan and from India, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Shri Murli Deora. In 2011, Turkmenistan produced about 11 million tons of crude oil and 51 billion cubic meters of gas of which about 30.5 bcm were exported.

In agricultural sector Turkmenistan produces cotton, wheat, rice, limited variety of vegetables and fruits but remains short of needs for its population. Turkmenistan had a bumper wheat crop of 1.3 million tons in 2011. In view of continuous increase in domestic production of dairy products, butter, cheese and expansion of agro-food industry, there has been a remarkable reduction in Turkmenistan's imports of foodstuff. However, the country still depends on import of some food items, viz., rice, sugar, milk and milk products, fruits & vegetables, etc.

Currency of Turkmenistan is Manat, with a exchange rate pegged to US Dollar at the rate of 1 US \$ = 2.84 Manat.

The Turkmen economy is dynamic and grew by 9.9% in the year 2011. The fast pace of growth is expected to be maintained in the years ahead.

Major economic indicators are as follows:

GDP (est. 2011)	:	GDP – \$ 24.1 billion GDP (PPP) - \$ 41.51 billion
GDP growth rate	:	9.9% (est. 2011)
Global Trade in 2011	:	\$ 23.37 billion ; Exports \$14.37 billion, Imports \$ 9 billion. Major exports: Natural Gas (to China, Iran and Russia), Petroleum products(LPG and polypropylene), textiles, cotton fiber, electricity (to Afghanistan and Iran) Major imports: manufactured goods, consumable items Major export destinations – Iran, Russia, China, Turkey Major import sources – Turkey, Russia, China, UAE, Ukraine
Inflation	:	15% (est.2010)
Electricity production	:	15.5 billion kwh (est. 2009)
Oil production	:	216,000 bbl/day (est. 2011)
Natural Gas Production	:	51 billion cubic metres (est. 2011)

## **Bilateral**

The year 2012 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Turkmenistan. TAPI (Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan – India) gas pipeline project has made steady progress since TAPI Summit was held in Ashgabat in December 2010. This project which will elevate bilateral ties to a strategic partnership, is expected to be operational in early 2017.

Relations with India : Close, friendly and historical ties. ‘Turkman Gate’ built in Delhi in 1650s. Prime Minister Nehru visited Ashgabat in June 1955. India and Turkmenistan have implemented w.e.f. 1 April 2011 an Agreement on visa free entry for Diplomatic Passport holders. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the India-Turkmenistan Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Consular and Cultural cooperation was held in Ashgabat in February 2010. The next IGC is expected to be held shortly.

ITEC training in India - 35 ITEC slots are offered in 2012-13  
(296 Turkmen nationals trained in various courses since 1994)

ICCR Scholarships - 13 ICCR scholarships are offered every year.

Students from Turkmenistan  
in India - Approx. 100

Trade with India in 2010-11 - Total trade \$ 42.69 million; Exports from India - \$ 29.51 million and Imports by India - \$ 13.18 million

Imports from India - Electronic and electrical items (LG products made in India),  
Machinery and woven apparel  
and pharmaceuticals, frozen meat and tyres

Exports to India - Raw hides and inorganic chemicals (e.g. Iodine)

**Major visits from India** - PM Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, 19-21 Sept 1995; EAM Shri Jaswant Singh - May 1999; MOS(P&NG) Shri Dinsha Patel 13-15 Feb 2006; MOS(EA) Shri E.Ahamed- 1-4 Oct 2006 & 14 Feb 2007; Minister of Water Resources Shri Saifuddin Soz, 23-25 Dec 2006; Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari, 4-6 April 2008 ; EAM Shri S.M. Krishna 18-19 Sept.2009; MOS (PK) Smt. Preneet Kaur, 8-9 Feb.2010, MOS(P&NG) Shri Jitin Prasada, 19-20 Sept.2010; Minister (P&NG) Shri Murli Deora, 10-12 Dec.2010; MOS (Communications & IT) Shri Sachin Pilot, 16-18 October, 2011; Minister (P&NG) Shri S. Jaipal Reddy, 22-24 May 2012

**Major visits to India** - President Saparmyrat Niyazov, 18-20 April 1992 & 25-26 February 1997; Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Shikhmuradov 02-04 December 1992, Dy. Prime Minister & Foreign Minister 18-20 April 1995, 7-8 April 1997 and April 2000; Dy. Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov, 20-22 January 2008; President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, 24-26 May 2010; Minister Oil & Gas Industry B. Nedirov, 28 April 2011; Deputy Minister of Defence Jepbar Akyyev, 29 May-4 June 2011.

### **Bilateral trade in (in million \$ )**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Indian exports</b>	<b>Indian imports</b>	<b>Total Turnover</b>
2009-10	18.79	9.01	27.8
2010-11	29.51	13.18	42.69

### **Air links with Turkmenistan**

Turkmenistan Airlines operates 8 flights a week to India – 2 flights to New Delhi (Saturday and Sunday) and 6 flights to Amritsar (all days except Friday).

### **Indian community in Turkmenistan**

At present there are about 1,800 Indians nationals in Turkmenistan, comprising of junior engineers/technicians (working in oil and gas industry) and construction workers. Most Indian nationals in Turkmenistan reside at 3 main clusters: approx. 1,200 Indians at Yolotan/Mary area, 550 Indians in Ashgabat and remaining about 50 at Hazar/offshore Caspian Sea region. There is no Indian Association in Turkmenistan. Also, there are no Indian students in this country.

**June 2012**