

**Embassy of India
Yerevan**

Brief on India-Armenia Relations

Overview

India and Armenia share friendly relations rooted in historical ties between the people of the two countries. India recognized Armenia on 26 December 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. India opened its Resident Mission in Yerevan at the level of Chargé d'Affaires on 01 March 1999. The first Resident Ambassador assumed charge in Yerevan in October 1999. In 2022, the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Armenia was celebrated.

Historical Background

2. Historians have suggested that when Assyrian warrior queen Semiramis invaded India in 2000 BC, some Armenians accompanied her as they probably did Alexander the Great in 326 BC. According to literary evidence, there were Indian settlements in Armenia established by two Indian Princes (Krishna and Ganesh escaping from Kannauj) who along with their families and large retinue had arrived in Armenia as early as 149 BC and were allotted land in the Taron region (now in Turkey) by the then rulers of Armenia. An Armenian merchant-cum-diplomat named Thomas Cana is said to be the first Armenian to have reached the Malabar Coast in 780 AD using the overland route. The first guidebook to Indian cities in Armenian was written in the 12th century. By the middle ages, Armenian towns of Artashat, Metsbin and Dvin had become important centres for barter with India which exported precious stones, herbs and stones to Armenia and imported hides and dyes. 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, was 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. In the 16th century, Armenian communities emerged in Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Agra, where the first Armenian Church was constructed in 1562. Indian classical singer, Gohar Jaan, the first to be recorded on gramophone in 1902, was of Armenian origin. The first-ever Armenian constitution (*Vorogayt Parats*) was written in Madras (Chennai) in 1773 by Shahamir Shahamirian (a wealthy Armenian merchant, writer and philosopher who founded the first Armenian printing press in Madras). The Armenian language journal "Azdarar" published in Madras 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.

Political Exchanges

3. During Soviet era, President Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (September 1964) and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (June 1976) visited Armenia. After the independence of Armenia, political exchanges have been regular – three Presidential-level visits from Armenia in 1995, 2003 and 2017, the last visit was by President Serzh Sargsyan from 2-4 November 2017. He met President, Prime Minister and Vice President. From India, the highest-ever visit was that of Vice President B. S. Shekhawat in October 2005 and Vice President Hamid Ansari in April 2017. The Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has extended an invitation to our Prime Minister to visit Armenia. This invitation was reiterated during the meeting of the two PMs in September 2019 on the sidelines of the 74th UNGA. President ICCR visited Armenia from 14-17 August 2021.

4. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar met Mr. Ararat Mirzoyan, the Armenian Foreign Minister on 16 September 2021 in Dushanbe, on the sidelines of SCO Summit. **Shortly, thereafter, EAM visited Armenia from 12-13 October 2021. This was the first-ever visit of EAM to independent Armenia.** During the visit, he held meetings with FM Ararat Mirzoyan, PM Nikol Pashinyan and Speaker Alen Simonyan. Both Foreign Ministers also paid a floral tribute at the Mahatma Gandhi statue in Yerevan. EAM also laid wreath at the Tsitsernakaberd Memorial (Genocide Memorial) and planted a tree there.

5. **FM Ararat Mirzoyan visited India from 24-27 April 2022 to participate in the Raisina Dialogue.** He met EAM and along with other FMs, made a joint call on Hon'ble Prime Minister. The Armenian FM was accompanied by a big business delegation and had detailed meetings with the representatives of CII in Delhi and in Mumbai.

6. EAM and Armenian FM met in September 2022 and December 2022 at New York during EAM's visits to New York for participating in UNGA and to preside over sessions on counter-terrorism and reformed multilateralism held under India's Presidency of the UN Security Council respectively.

7. In March 2023, FM Ararat Mirzoyan attended the Raisina Dialogue and held a bilateral meeting with EAM. The Vice President of the National Assembly of Armenia and Head of Armenia-India Friendship Group, Mr. Hakob Arshakyan, also attended the Rasina Dialogue and called on Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Shri Om Birla.

8. The Armenian Deputy Minister of Environment, Mr. Aram Meymaryan participated in the launch of the International Big Cat Alliance in Mysuru from 09-10 April 2023. The Armenian Minister of Health, Ms. Anahit Avanesyan, participated in the Advantage Healthcare Summit in Delhi from 26-27 April 2023. The Deputy Minister for Hi-Tech, Mr, Gevorg Mantashyan, took part in the, "Global Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Summit" which took place on the sidelines of the G20 Digital Economy Working Group meeting from 12-14 June 2023 in Pune. During the Summit, India and Armenia signed the MoU between MeitY and the Ministry of High-Tech Industry of Armenia on Cooperation in the Field of Sharing Successful Digital Solutions Implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation (INDIA STACK).

9. India-Armenia-Iran trilateral consultations were held in Yerevan in April 2023. Indian delegation was led by JS (PAI) Shri. J.P. Singh. The First India-Armenia Policy Planning Dialogue was conducted in Yerevan in July 2023. The Indian delegation was led by JS (PP&R), Dr. Sumit Seth.

10. A 17-member National Defence College delegation led by the Commandant, Lt. Gen. Sukriti Singh Dahiya, visited Armenia from 28-30 August 2023. The visit was part of their Strategic Neighbourhood Study Tour 2023.

11. The Armenian Secretary of Security Council, Mr. Armen Grigoryan, met our NSA on 29 August 2023 in Delhi. EAM met Armenian FM on the sidelines of UNGA in September 2023. Armenian Minister of Territorial Administration, Mr. Gnel Sanosyan and DFM, Mr. Mnatsakan Safaryan, participated in the Global India Maritime Summit from 17-19 October 2023. Armenian Deputy FM Paruyr Hovhannisyan participated in the Foreign Ministers' Session of the 2nd Voice Of Global South Summit held virtually on 17 November 2023.

12. The Minister of Economy of Armenia, Mr. Vahan Kerobyan participated in the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit- 2024 from 10-12 January 2024. EAM met Armenian FM on 18 February 2024 on the sidelines of Munich Security Conference.

Parliamentary cooperation

13. Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Vice-President of India visited Armenia in October 2005 and an MoU was signed between the two Parliaments which included intensification and promoting bilateral cooperation through exchange of visits and information, formation of parliamentary friendship group. The first visit to Armenia by the Parliamentarians of India was in October 2013 when Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs led the Indian Parliamentarian delegation which included 8 MPs. President, ICCR and Member of Rajya Sabha, Shri Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, visited Armenia from 14-17 August 2021.

Institutional mechanisms

Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) & Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological, Cultural and Educational Cooperation (IGC)

14. Bilateral dialogue between India and Armenia is conducted through the mechanism of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) and Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological, Cultural and Educational Cooperation (IGC). The 7th IGC and 8th FOC were held in Yerevan on 01 April 2016. The 9th round of FOC was held in a virtual format on 18 February 2022. The 8th session of the India-Armenia IGC was held in Yerevan on 04 July 2022. FM Mirzoyan led the Armenian delegation while the Indian delegation was led by Secretary (West), Shri Sanjay Verma.

15. The 10th round of India-Armenia Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) was held in New Delhi on 18 November 2023. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Sanjay Verma, Secretary

(West). Deputy Foreign Minister of Armenia, Mr. Mnatsakan Safaryan led the Armenian delegation.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

16. The trade figures for the last few years are as follows:

(in USD million)

Year	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
India's Exports	25.9	40.49	69.8	27.4	61.3
India's Imports	0.91	1.56	96.46	134.8	72.8
Total	26.81	42.05	166.26	162.2	134.1

Source: DGCIS, DGFT

As may be seen from the table, there has been increase of trade between the two sides since 2020-21 onwards. India's major export items (in terms of value) are: (i) diamonds or semi-precious stones (ii) electrical apparatus for line telephony (iii) bovine meat (iv) tobacco and manufactured tobacco substitutes (v) pharmaceutical products. India's major import items (in terms of value) are: (i) Gold (ii) unwrought lead (iii) medical, surgical & dental instruments (iv) precious and semi-precious stones and (v) optical fibre cables.

17. There is no significant Indian investments in Armenia currently. Pharmexcil brought an 18-member delegation to Armenia in November 2019 to explore the pharma market. A business delegation led by Indian Economic Trade Organization (IETO) also visited November 2019 and signed 4 agreements with their counterparts in diverse fields. Lack of direct air connectivity and Armenia being a landlocked country has kept our trade figures low.

18. With an aim to strengthen business relations and develop reciprocal cooperation, Investment Support Centre of the Republic of Armenia and Invest India signed an MoU on 28 June 2021. The objective of this MoU is to provide business solutions for stakeholders of both sides to promote the investment climate in Armenia and India and establish a practical framework for the development of stronger business relations between the two sides.

19. FIEO (Federation of Indian Exporters Organization) organized the India Pavilion at the 20th Edition of Armenia Expo held from 16-18 September 2021 with around 23 Indian companies representing multiple sectors like ceramics, food & beverages, handlooms & handicrafts, textile & apparels and industrial equipment etc. The Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and the Indian Economic Trade Organization (IETO) led business delegations to Armenia in April and May 2023 respectively. Indian companies had fruitful engagement with their Armenian counterparts during these forums.

20. During the 9th edition of India International Science Festival (IISF-2023) from 17-20 January 2024, an MoU between National Innovation Foundation (NIF), India & National Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship of Armenia (NCIE) was signed.

Developmental / Humanitarian Assistance

21. India-Armenia Centre of Excellence in ICT with PARAM super computer was set up in Yerevan in March 2015. This Centre has trained one third of total IT workforce of Armenia. Telemedicine network was created in Armenia in March 2015. Computerization of 50 schools in Vayots Dzor region was carried out in April 2017. Computer labs were established in 72 schools in Tavush region of Armenia in November 2013. Apart from this, India has provided humanitarian assistance, especially medicines, on several occasions including during the Covid pandemic.

22. An MoU on High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) in Armenia with financial and technical assistance from India was signed on 04 July 2022.

23. 15 Armenian diplomats attended the 1st Special Course for Armenian diplomats at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) from 18-27 October 2023.

Cultural Cooperation

24. A Folk Group, 'Kayt' and three artisans participated in Surajkund International Crafts Mela in 2019. While, "Nubar"- Armenian Folk Ensemble participated in 2023 and a 3 member group of artisans participated in 2024. Armenian troupes are almost a regular participant in the Crafts Mela.

25. The Indian Embassy, in cooperation of Government of Armenia, celebrated the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in 2019. Haypost (Department of Posts of Armenia) issued a stamp on Mahatma Gandhi on 23 May 2019. An Indian Cultural Centre, run by a local NGO, India-Armenia Friendship Society, was carrying out various activities to promote Indian culture in Armenia. The Centre however, had to close down in 2022 due to huge increase in real estate prices and rentals.

26. A statue of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled in Yerevan in April 2021 and was subsequently formally inaugurated by President ICCR, Dr. Vinay Sahashrabuddhe, on 16 August 2021. He also inaugurated the Veda Centre for Indology at the Russian-Armenian University. There is a Mahatma Gandhi Centre at the Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) since 2021.

27. As a part of the events dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia and Institute of Oriental Studies of Armenia organized a conference titled 'Armenia-India: New Incentives for Millennial relations' from 27-29 November 2022. Opening addresses were delivered virtually from Delhi by Joint Secretary (Eurasia), Shri Charanjeet Singh and in Yerevan, by Deputy FM Mr. Mnatsakan Safaryan. Former Ambassador, H.E. Mrs. Reena Pandey, also delivered her remarks in one of the sessions. Mr. Sunjoy Joshi from Observer Research Foundation (ORF) was also one of the participants. At the end of the conference, an MoU was signed between the Institute of Oriental Studies of the National

Academy of Sciences of Armenia and the Indian Think-Tank, Vivekananda International Foundation.

28. As a part of “Mission LiFE” (Lifestyle for Environment) initiative, the Mission in collaboration with the Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets organized a photo exhibition by renowned conservationist, Shri Vivek Menon, in Yerevan on 16 October 2023.

29. The Mission celebrated the Ayurveda Day on the theme “Ayurveda for One Health” on 10 November 2023. The Mission also organized a “Satyajit Ray Film Festival” from 24-25 November 2023 in Yerevan at the Moscow Cinema Hall.

ITEC & Hindi language

30. 40 ITEC slots have been allocated to Armenia. So far, 359 Armenians have availed of ITEC courses.

31. Ministry of External Affairs sponsors Hindi teaching at 3 Institutes / Organizations in Armenia, namely, Galik College in Ijevan (150 Km from Yerevan), India-Armenia Friendship NGO and Russian-Armenian University. Armenians avail 2 annual ICCR scholarships to pursue various courses in India and 1-2 scholarships at the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan (KHS).

Cooperation at International Organizations

32. Armenia has been steadfast in its support to India’s candidatures in various international bodies.

33. Armenia became the 117th signatory of the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement on 16 November 2023.

India Community

35. There is a moderate Indian student community in Armenia – approx. 3000. Students are mainly from the medical field who are studying in one Government University (Yerevan State Medical University) and 4-5 private Universities. There has been a significant increase in the number of Indian workers in Armenia since last year. Tourist inflow from India has increased in the past few years. The figures are as follows:

No. of Indian Tourists visited Armenia	2020	2021	2022	2023
	2920	17980	18194	34687

February 2024