

India-Georgia Bilateral Relations

Overview

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, India recognized Georgia's independence on 26 December 1991 and established formal diplomatic relations on 28 September 1992. India does not have a Resident Mission in Georgia. The Indian Mission in Armenia with residence in Yerevan is concurrently accredited to Georgia. The Georgian side had first set up its Honorary Consulate in New Delhi in 2005 which was subsequently upgraded to a fully fledged Embassy in 2009.

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, travelers, and traders. The Knight in the 12th century pre-eminent Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli's classic "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" came from India. 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 have established 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). Her relics kept and forgotten in Goa have conclusively been identified. Georgian Embassy has requested to transfer the relics of St. Ketevan to Georgia, either fully or partially. This is under examination in consultation with the Ministry of Culture/Archaeological Survey of India.

During the Soviet era, Prime Minister Nehru visited Tbilisi in 1955 and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited Tbilisi in 1976. Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Georgia in June 1978 as External Affairs Minister.

Important visits

Georgian Foreign Minister Irakli Menagarishvili and External Affairs Minister Shri Jaswant Singh met in New Delhi on 11 May 2000. During the visit, a Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations was concluded. Ms. Tamar Zhvania, Chairperson of the Election Commission of Georgia visited New Delhi on 13 July 2015 and an MoU for cooperation in the field of election management and administration was signed. Georgia's Deputy Economy Minister Ketevan Bochorishvili visited

India to present the 'Film in Georgia' project to leading local directors, producers and film-production companies in April 2016. Zviad Gonadze, Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister visited India from 23-24 December, 2016 and met Shri Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister of Civil Aviation and Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary (West). Giorgi Gakharia, Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (**now Prime Minister of Georgia**) visited India on 10-11 April, 2017 and met Minister of Shipping, MOS(IC) for Tourism, MOS for Commerce and Industry, Railways Minister and Minister of Civil Aviation. An Air Services Agreement between India and Georgia was signed during the visit. Mr. David Jalagania, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia visited India on 13-14 September 2017 for Intergovernmental Commission.

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'. Shri Ajay Bisaria, the then Joint Secretary [Eurasia], Ministry of External Affairs visited Tbilisi in July 2013 for fourth round of Foreign Office Consultations. A five-member delegation from India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) visited Tbilisi (Georgia) to conduct training in Election Commission of Georgia in June 2016. Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary (West) visited Georgia on 24-27 July, 2016 for IGC and FOC. Shri Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Minister of Civil Aviation visited Georgia on 9-11 November, 2016. He met the President, Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development and Foreign Minister.

Central Election Commissioner Dr. Nasim Zaidi visited Batumi in February 2015 to participate in an International Conference of Election Commissioners. A three member delegation from the Election Commission of India led by Shri O.P. Rawat, Election Commissioner, visited Georgia (Kakheti province) from 15-18 February, 2016 to participate in a multilateral event on electoral practices and related aspects. Shri Ashok Lavasa, Election Commissioner visited Georgia on 28 February-1 March, 2018 to attend the 8th Annual Meeting of Election Management Bodies on Technologies and Innovations in Citizens Engagement.

Institutional mechanisms

Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) is co-chaired by Secretary (West) from Indian side and Deputy Foreign Minister from Georgian side. The first and second rounds of FOCs were held in December 2004 in Tbilisi and in March 2010 in New Delhi respectively. The third round of FOCs was held on 15-16 July 2013 in Tbilisi. The Indian side was led by Shri Ajay Bisaria, the then Joint Secretary (Eurasia), Ministry of External Affairs and the Georgian side by Ms. Eka Akobia, Director, Asia, Africa, Australia and Pacific Rim, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The fourth round of the FOC was also held on 26 July 2016 in Tbilisi.

India-Georgia Intergovernmental Commission (IG-IGC) is also co-chaired by Secretary (West) from Indian side and Deputy Foreign Minister (DFM) from Georgian side. The first session of the IG-IGC was held in Delhi on 29 April 2014, co-chaired by Secretary (West), Shri Dinkar Khullar and DFM David Jalagania. The IGC Session was followed by a Business Forum at FICCI at which presentations were made on trade and investment opportunities that exist in each country. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry was signed.

The second IG-IGC and fourth FOC were held in Tbilisi on 15-16 July, 2016. The Indian delegation was led by Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary (West) and the Georgian delegation was led by Mr. David Jalagania, Deputy Foreign Minister. The third IG-IGC was held in New Delhi on 14 September, 2017. The Indian delegation was led by Mrs. Ruchi Ghanashyam, Secretary (West). The Georgian delegation was led by Mr. David Jalagania, Deputy Foreign Minister.

The dates for next round of FOC and IG-IGC are being discussed between the two sides.

A Joint Working Group on trade and economic cooperation has been constituted from both the sides in 2019. This will be steered by Department of Commerce from Indian side and Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development from Georgian side.

Trade and Economic Relations

Bilateral trade was USD 57 million in 2017. Exports from India were USD 48 million and imports USD 9 million. Steel, infrastructure, agriculture farming and service sectors are among sectors of large Indian investment which amounts to over USD 400 million. Individual investors from India have acquired agricultural land for cultivation in Georgia at an average of 10 hectares of landholding. TATA Power has invested USD 166 mn jointly with other major companies in Europe in a hydro power project worth USD 416 mn.

The first ever visit by an Indian pharmaceuticals delegation comprising 24 Indian pharmaceutical companies to Georgia took place in February 2014, under the aegis of Pharmexcil. The delegation had fruitful B2B session and visited various pharmaceutical plants and laboratories in Georgia. Ambassador inaugurated the 'Best of India' Trade Fair which was put up in Tbilisi by ANM Corporation with the assistance of the Indian Mission in July 2015 in Tbilisi. The Mission organized 'India Tourism' Seminar in Tbilisi on 26 September 2014. 40 Indian companies led by Indian Chamber of Commerce participated in Caucasus Build, exhibition of construction, ceramics and building material in Tbilisi from 16-19 May, 2017.

A 12 member business delegation led by CII visited Georgia from 25-26 September, 2017 and attended a business forum organized by the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

A delegation from the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia participated in the Advantage Healthcare Summit organized by Ministry of Commerce, FICCI and Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) from 12-14 October, 2017 in Bangalore.

Dr. Kakha Shengelia, President of Caucasus University attended the international conference on capacity building for localizing Sustainable Development Goals hosted by Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Bhubaneswar, from 16-18 February, 2018.

A joint feasibility study was launched in April 2017 by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of India and Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia to explore possibilities of signing a Free Trade Agreement between India and Georgia. The report of the joint feasibility was accepted and a Protocol was signed on 11 January 2019 in Tbilisi. Now both sides have constituted a Joint Working Group to discuss the Free Trade Agreement between the two sides. The Indian side is co-chaired at Joint Secretary level in Department of Commerce.

Education and Culture

Georgian nationals visit India for various short term courses under ITEC scholarships which are offered to Georgia; ICCR Scholarships are offered to Georgian nationals to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Indian Universities. Kendriya Hindi Sansthan (KHS) offers scholarships to study Hindi in India. An ICCR Chair of Contemporary Indian Studies was established at the Tbilisi State University (TSU) for one year (2011-12).

There are around 1500 Indian students studying MBBS in Georgia.

A 15-member ICCR sponsored Bollywood Group, 'Sugar N' Spice' gave a dance performance in Tbilisi on 18 September 2013, which was organized by the Embassy of India, Yerevan in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia. A 'Gandhi Foundation Georgia' was launched in Tbilisi on 30th June, 2014 at the Institute of Multi Task Diplomacy in Tbilisi with the co-operation of Gandhi Foundation, India. A seminar dedicated to 'non-violence' and 'Jan Satyagraha' was organized by this institute in which representatives of Canadian and Indian Gandhi Foundation gave lectures. The Foundation has also opened its branch in the Batumi city and has been actively involved in organizing various programmes propagating Gandhian philosophy of

'Truth and Non-Violence' in Georgia. A Gandhi Conference on non-violence was organized by the Gandhi Foundation from 25-30 July, 2016 in Tbilisi.

A group of Georgian artists comprising dancers and singers performed at the 'annual Surajkund Mela in February 2015 in Haryana.

The first International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated in Tbilisi on 21 June 2015 in which over 200 people participated. The Georgian side was represented by the Deputy Mayor of Tbilisi. The second and third IDY were celebrated in Tbilisi on 25 June, 2016 and 25 June, 2017. 'Days of Indian Culture' comprising live concert by 'Bharat Folk Dance Academy', screening of three Indian films and exhibition of photos on the State of Jammu & Kashmir' were organized in Tbilisi (20-22 November 2015). Noted Kazakh Bharatnatyam dancer Akmaral Kainazarova gave a performance in Tbilisi on 1 November, 2016. A screening of three Bollywood films was held in Tbilisi from 19-21 January 2017.

39 members of Georgian National Ballet-Sukhishvili group participated in "Synergy-An International Cultural Festival" held in India from 5-20 September 2017.

The group led by Padam Sri Pratibha Prahlad gave a Bharatnatyam dance performance in Tbilisi on 14 October, 2017. Manjari Chaturvedi gave a Sufi Kathak dance performance in Tbilisi on 1 November 2017.

The Mission celebrated Holi in Tbilisi in March 2018 and Vishwa Hindi Divas and International Women's Day in Tbilisi and Batumi in March 2018 respectively.

Considering the scenic locations of Georgia, many Bollywood film producers have shot movies in Georgia.

Consular matters

In view of some instances of deportation of Indian nationals visiting Georgia by Georgian immigration authorities, an Advisory was issued by Ministry of External Affairs on 28 May 2018 (link enclosed [https://www.mea.gov.in/advisories-details.htm?27/Travel+Advisory+for+Indian+Nationals+\(including+students\)+travelling+to+Georgia](https://www.mea.gov.in/advisories-details.htm?27/Travel+Advisory+for+Indian+Nationals+(including+students)+travelling+to+Georgia)).

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Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Yerevan Website: <https://eoiyerevan.gov.in/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/indiainyerevan/>

Embassy of India, Armenia Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/indiainarmenia>