



Science Diplomacy for Enhancing India and Mongolia Bilateral Relations



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Historic Overview

India and Mongolia have been historically interacting over a period of 2600 years. Following the emergence of Mongolia as a modern nation state in the 20th century, the two countries have continued to build relations based on the shared historical and cultural legacy. The roots of the relations are based on the ancient literature, languages, medicine, folklores, religions, especially Buddhism, social and cultural traditions. Buddhism was the first bridge connecting India and Mongolia in the Hun period of 3rd century. Mongolia was one of the countries which participated in the First Asian Relations Conference, held under Jawaharlal Nehru's initiative in March 1947.

Political Relations

Diplomatic Relations and Bilateral Cooperation Mechanism

Diplomatic relations between India and Mongolia were established on 24 December 1955. India was the first country outside the Socialist bloc to establish diplomatic relations with Mongolia. India supported Mongolia in becoming a member of UN and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) memberships. By now the diplomatic relations between both the countries are more than six decades old. Many dignitaries from India had visited Mongolia over the years.

Most recently in May 2015, Sri Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India visited Mongolia. In fact he was the first Prime Minister from India to visit Mongolia. On that occasion India announced a US\$ 1 billion line of credit (LoC) for enhancing Mongolia's economic capacity and infrastructure and to take forward the current bilateral relationship into one of strategic partnership.

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The visit of Indian Prime Minister resulted in signing of 13 agreements. India and Mongolia have established 'India-Mongolia Joint Committee on Cooperation (IMJCC). IMJCC is chaired by Minister of State (EA) on the Indian side and Minister of Education & Science from Mongolia. In the fifth meeting held in April 2016 a general agreement was signed between the EXIM Bank of India and the Ministry of Finance of Mongolia on utilization of the soft loan announced by PM.

International Cooperation

Mongolia has traditionally been extending support to India in UN and other international for including India's claim for a seat in UN Security Council. Besides these, Mongolia had supported almost all the candidates from India proposed for various UN agencies. Mongolia voted in favour India's proposal to include Yoga in the list of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage. Mongolia had publicly reaffirmed its support for India's membership to the permanent seat of expanded UNSC.

Bilateral Cooperation in Science and Education Sectors

ITEC On the occasion of President Elbegdorj's visit to India, 120 slots per annum were allotted to Mongolia under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC). The number of these slots for civilian training programme increased to 150 per year in 2011-12. It was further increased to 200 from 2015-16 during PM's visit in May 2015. But utilization had not been satisfactory. In 2016-17, out of the 200 ITEC slots allotted to Mongolia, only 100 were utilized, and in defence sector, only seven out of 14 ITEC seats were utilized.

ICCR Scholarships: In 2016-17, Mongolia 40 slots (20 slots each under Aid to Mongolia and General Cultural Scholarship Scheme) were offered and 13 candidates got admitted to different universities in India.

Rajiv Gandhi Polytechnic College for Production and Art (RGPCPA): This was proposed in 1992 as an institution to train in eight

fields. Over the years the facilities have been upgraded at a cost of US \$ 2.84 million.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee Centre for Excellence in ICT: The Atal Bihari Vajpayee Centre of Excellence (ABVCE) in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and five Community Information Centres (CICs) in five provinces (Khovsgol, Bulgan, Kharkhorin, Darkhan-Uul and Sukhbaatar) were established on the basis of agreement signed in 2001. Upgradation as a full-fledged Centre is in progress, with credit of US\$ 20 million.

Solar Energy: In 2006, Central Electronics Ltd set up a solar energy electrification project that was executed by the Central Electronics Ltd, in Dadal Soum, and cost of project is approx. US\$ 100,000. Training of Mongolian experts on solar energy was provided in India.

Conclusion

For Mongolia, India is an important strategic partner under its 'Third Neighbour Policy' so as to maintain geopolitical balance among its neighbouring countries. This should pave way for more collaboration between these two countries. Sectors like education, cyber security, health, tourism, food processing and processing of minerals provide ample scope to collaborate and such collaborations should include private sector also in a significant way. In fact, strengthening collaboration in higher education and capacity building in S&T will be mutually beneficial. The science diplomacy can play a key role in this.

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