

3 CHAPTER

India and Kyrgyz Republic Relations

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Basic background
- Origin of Indo–Kyrgyz relations
- Commercial diplomacy
- Defence cooperation
- Analysis of PM’s visit in 2015
- Future areas of cooperation
- Case studies
- Medical education and assistance
- Tulip revolution
- Soft diplomacy

BASIC BACKGROUND

Kyrgyzstan is a small yet very progressive republic. Since 2010, it has stabilised as a nation after some initial differences and problems due to the Tulip Revolution from 2004 to 2010. In the years following the end of the Cold War, Kyrgyz has opened up its economy for foreign investment, yet remaining a predominantly agrarian economy. It has a huge gold mine in Kumtor from where gold is exported and is also the third largest producer of mercury in the world after Singapore and China. Kyrgyz is a country that is also very rich in hydroelectricity power potential (HEP).

India and Kyrgyzstan opened up diplomatic relations in 1992. The two nations not only celebrated 20 years of diplomatic relations in 2012 but the first India–Central Asia Track–II diplomatic dialogue also happened to take place in Bishek, where India announced its Connect CA policy for a renewed engagement with the region.

COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY

Kyrgyz Republic has a skilled workforce but needs foreign investment in agriculture, transport and HEP. The leadership in Kyrgyz is progressive and pro-industry and the Kyrgyz currency is also convertible. In 2009, India and Kyrgyzstan concluded an MoU on agriculture and India subsequently assisted Kyrgyzstan in the setting up of a potato procurement plant in Talas. This plant undertakes chips production and gives locals employment. In 2014, the Indian government also gifted a computerised tomography machine to the National Centre for Cardiology and Internal Medicine in Kyrgyzstan.

India has been extending lines of credit for industrial unit establishment and modernisation. Under the Indian credit facility, an oil and diesel filling station was established in Osh. India exports pharma products, tea, and machinery while importing non-ferrous metals, raw hides, and leather. Tourism has been one of the important aspects of our growing relations. India is providing training to Kyrgyz nationals in the hospitality and tourism sector. Kyrgyzstan has regularly participated in the Surajkund fair in Delhi.



Medical Tourism, Education and Assistance

A lot of Indian students in recent years have begun to go to Kyrgyzstan for MBBS education. Moreover, there is a need for recognition of degrees of the two countries bilaterally. Indian students prefer Kyrgyzstan because of lesser costs involved in medical education. India also assisted Kyrgyz with the Mountain Biomedical Research Centre, which had been established with assistance of DRDO. The centre aims to study multiple possible acclimation methods. India has also been providing assistance to establish a super speciality hospital and diagnostic centre in Kyrgyzstan.

DEFENCE DIPLOMACY

There is a JSC Dastan in Bishek and it is the only functional defence production unit of Kyrgyzstan. Dastan was established by the Russians and is producer of naval weapons, rocket systems and torpedoes. Since the 1990s, the Indian navy and DRDO have established relations with Dastan. India also maintains relations with Joint Stock Company ULAN–Torpedo Range (UTR). The Russians had built UTR in 1943 for the production of naval armaments and submarine parts. India has been associated with UTR since 1997 and Indian Navy has both been procuring torpedoes from Dastan and undertaking tests at UTR. The erstwhile Indian Defence Minister, A K Antony, had visited UTR in 2011. The DRDO is presently providing assistance for the redevelopment of the facility.



Tulip Revolution

During the Cold War, Kyrgyzstan was under Russian control. It is a clan-based society where the Soviets had managed to effectively control all clans in a unified set up. Since the end of the Cold War, Kyrgyz has been moving towards a democracy and till date has witnessed two uprisings. Since the end of Cold War, Kyrgyz had been ruled by Askar Akayev. He showed authoritarian tendencies and was overthrown in 2004 by the Tulip Revolution. Akayev was replaced by Kurmanbek Bakiyev. In 2010, Bakiyev was ousted for same reasons as his predecessor and finally since 2011, Almazbek Sharshenovich Atambayev has been in power.

ANALYSIS OF INDIAN PRIME MINISTER VISIT—2015

The Indian PM in 2015 visited Kyrgyz and met Almazbek Atambayev. The PM visited the victory movement in Bishek and paid homage to Kyrgyz martyrs. He also gifted the Kyrgyz President a fine silk hand-knotted carpet. The PM also visited the Mountain Biochemical Research Centre and initiated the next phase of Indo–Kyrgyz cooperation. He

also launched the telemedicine link to connect hospitals in Kyrgyz with Apollo and AIIMS in India.

Soft Diplomacy

Khwaja Syed Mohammad Qutubuddin Bhaktiyar Kaki was born in the city of Osh in Kyrgyz. He popularised the Chishti order and ideology of Moinuddin Chishti in Delhi. He was a very popular Sufi who conveyed a message of universal brotherhood and peace and charity during the rule of Aibak and Iltutmish in India. Continuing this legacy of peace and brotherhood, India played a fine card of soft diplomacy in 2015, and when the Indian PM visited Kyrgyz, he unveiled a statue of Mahatma Gandhi.

FUTURE AREA OF COOPERATION

The first area of potential cooperation is tourism. Kyrgyz is rightly called the Switzerland of the East. India is already providing hospitality training to the Kyrgyz youth. This area can be strengthened in future. India can invest FDI in the hospitality sector of Kyrgyz. Another important area is agriculture. Kyrgyz has a complete ban on the use of fertilizers. They only resort to organic farming. India can share best practices in this regard for the mutual development of both.

