

India - Macedonia Relations

Bilateral Political Relations

India was one of the 40 co-sponsors of the Resolution in the UNGA for the admission of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [FYROM]. India established Diplomatic and Consular relations with FYROM on February 9, 1995. India now refers to the country as the Republic of Macedonia in bilateral communications.

The Indian Embassy in Bulgaria is concurrently accredited to Macedonia. In 2006, the Government of Macedonia appointed an Indian businessman in New Delhi as its Honorary Consul before proceeding to open a full-fledged Embassy in New Delhi on October 7, 2008.

The Government of India appointed an Honorary Consul to Macedonia in 2008. Currently, the post of Honorary Consul to Macedonia is lying vacant. The Macedonian government appointed an Honorary Consul in Kolkata in 2009 as a follow-up of the Macedonian FM's visit. Macedonia has subsequently appointed Honorary Consuls in Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore.

Macedonian PM Gruevski accompanied by the Dy. PM and Finance Minister and the Minister of Foreign Investments visited India during 11-17 January 2015 for the Vibrant Gujarat and CII-Partnership Summits. Earlier, the same delegation visited India from March 5-8, 2012 to showcase the investment and business opportunities in Macedonia to Indian investors.

In continuation of the Macedonian PM's 2012 visit, Dy. PM and Finance Minister Zoran Stavreski, accompanied by the Ministers of Information Society & Administration and Foreign Investments and Director of Technological Industrial Development Zones, visited India in October 2012 on a visit and gave a presentation on benefits Macedonia offered to investors in six Indian cities.

President of the Macedonian National Assembly Trajko Veljanoski led a Parliamentary delegation on an official visit to India from 5-8 March 2013. Macedonian Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki visited New Delhi and Agra on 16 & 17 December 2013 and met the External Affairs Minister. The two Ministers agreed that the bilateral political relations set solid foundation for strengthening the economic cooperation. A Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and an MoU on Cooperation between the Diplomatic Academy of the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Service Institute of Ministry of External Affairs were signed.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Smt. Preneet Kaur, accompanied by a business delegation of the CII, visited Macedonia on 10-11 July 2012 and met FM Nikola Poposki, Dy. PM and Finance Minister Zoran Stavrevski and Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Policy and former FM, Antonio Milososki. The talks focussed on

potential for improving the bilateral cooperation between the two countries including economy, culture and education & science.

Mr. Damjan Manchevski, Minister of Information, Society and Administration of Macedonia attended the International IT Forum, “IT HUB CONNECT”, organized by the Embassy of India Sofia on 26-27 March 2018 in partnership with the Indian-Bulgarian Business Chamber (IBBC) and the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria (AmCham Bulgaria), under the auspices of the Bulgarian EU Presidency.

Honourable Minister of State for Textiles Shri Ajay Tamta visited Macedonia on 6-8 May 2018. During the visit, he held discussions with Macedonian Minister of Economy Mr. Kreshnik Bekteshi besides meeting members of Balkan India Business Association (BIBA), the Textiles cluster in Macedonia and members of the Indian community. A visit to the Textiles facility (Okite-Tex Macedonia) and food processing facility (Bonum Macedonia) was also arranged. During the meetings, both sides agreed on the enormous potential to expand Macedonia-India economic relations. In the Textiles sector, setting up cultivation and fiber and fabric production facilities in Macedonia by Indian companies and cooperation in skill development and waste disposal were identified as areas with special potential. Apart from Textiles, Information Technology, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, tourism, film making and creative industries were identified as possible sectors for cooperation where Indian and Macedonian companies find exciting opportunities to invest and partner in each other’s countries.

Important Bilateral Treaties and Agreements

- (a) Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement was signed on 17 March 2008.
- (b) Agreement on the Mutual exemption of visa requirements for holders of Diplomatic passports was signed during the visit of Macedonian FM to India in January, 2009. The Agreement came into force on 15 May, 2010.
- (c) Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation was signed on 17.12.2013.
- (d) MoU on Cooperation between the Diplomatic Academy of the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Service Institute of Ministry of External Affairs was signed on 17 December 2013.

Commercial and Economic Relations

The bilateral trade turnover between the two countries was US\$ 39.02 million in 2016 (Indian exports-US\$ 14.88 million and Indian imports – US\$ 24.13 million). The Trade volume has been fluctuating. The following table shows the bilateral trade during the last 5 years:

(in US\$ Millions)			
Year	India’s Exports to Macedonia	India’s Imports from Macedonia	Total Bilateral Trade

2013-14	10.79	19.92	30.70
2014-15	14.51	9.05	23.56
2015-16	12.87	7.08	19.95
2016-17	14.88	24.13	39.02
2017-18	17.38	46.61	63.99

(Source: Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GOI)

Main items of Indian exports to Macedonia are: gas oils of petroleum or bituminous minerals; agricultural & forestry tractors; partly or wholly stemmed pre-stripped flue-cured tobacco, coffee; sesamum seeds; single cotton yarn of combed fibres; medicaments; plates, sheets, film, foil & strip of non-cellular polymers of propylene; pneumatic elevators & conveyors etc.

Main items of Macedonian exports to India are: ferro-alloys, marble and travertine, electrical machinery & equipment and plastics.

Indian investments in Macedonia are limited but show an upward trend. In 2004, Arcelor Mittal took over Balkan Steel and later also bought the state-owned shares, amounting to 90% of the ownership. A subsidiary of Bang Overseas Ltd., Mumbai, (Bang & Scott DOO, Macedonia) was incorporated in September 2011. The company is into trading of fabrics and garments manufacturing. In 2013, Sahara Group announced its intention to build the 'Saharayan Makeeduniya' Complex at the Ohrid Lake shore and an integrated dairy, animal husbandry and allied agriculture farm. However, Sahara's projects do not seem to have progressed as envisaged due to various factors.

On 12 January 2016, an agreement between Macedonia's Government and Indian metal products manufacturer BRG Group on the latter's investment of EUR 31 million in restarting of former 'Porcelanka' factory was signed. The project with a potential for creating 1,000 jobs would manufacture steel kitchenware for export. Some other investments proposals are under discussion.

An India – Macedonia business event was organized by the Embassy at the Macedonian Chamber of Commerce on 24 November 2017. A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between Balkan-India Business Association and the Macedonian Chambers of Commerce to further enhance trade and commerce between the two countries.

Macedonia got EU candidate status in December 2005 and is entitled to duty-free exports to EU member-countries. This has enhanced its attractiveness as a potential launching pad for the EU market. It has low profit tax, low income tax and zero tax on reinvested profit. Macedonia's geographic location, fiscal and business sector reforms offer opportunities for Indian companies to invest and sell in Macedonia. A rapidly

growing Indian economy also offers Macedonian companies substantive opportunities for trade and investment in India.

Cooperation under ITEC and PCFD Programmes

Government of India offers scholarships under ITEC programme to Macedonia. Macedonian diplomats participate in the Professional Course for foreign diplomats organized by the Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi from time to time.

Cultural Relations and people to people contacts

Macedonians evince keen interest in Indian culture. Shankar's International Painting Competition is very famous in Macedonia and Macedonian children participate regularly in this competition. Four Indian films, namely, *Dharavi*, *Stree*, *Naseem*, and *Doghi* were shown in a film festival *Cine Days* in Macedonia in November 2015. India was featured as a focus country in the festival. Tourism is an area which holds prospects for both the countries. Macedonia, with its beautiful landscapes may become an attractive destination for Indian film Industry. Some Indian films were shot at different locations in Macedonia in the past. The biggest blockbuster Tamil movie 'Mersal' was shot in Macedonia.

The first International Yoga Day was celebrated on 21 June 2015 in Gradski Park, Skopje with the help of Art of Living, Macedonia. The event was attended by more than 100 persons and was well received by the local populace. Local media also covered the event. The second International Day of Yoga was celebrated in Skopje at the City Hall on 19 June, 2016, in cooperation with Art of Living and other important Yoga centres. The third International Day of Yoga was celebrated on a large scale in Skopje on 24 June 2017 in cooperation with ISKON, Art of Living and various important Yoga centres in Macedonia, hosting lectures on Ayurveda, Bhagavad Gita, Indian cuisine and organising performances of classical Indian dances. The 4th International Yoga Day (IYD) was celebrated on 21 June 2018 at the Memorial House of Mother Teresa, Skopje, in partnership with Art of Living, Macedonia Chapter. In addition a day-long event was also held at the Art of Living Hall in central Skopje on 23 June 2018 to celebrate IYD. Around 1000 persons including 8 yoga schools across Macedonia participated in both the events.

Indian Community

The Indian community in Macedonia is very small. There are about 10 Indian nationals - some are engaged in the IT sector and a few are working as executives in multinational companies.

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