

Embassy of India, Warsaw & Lithuania

India-Lithuania Relations Political relations

India has had close and friendly relations with Lithuania, reinforced by strong cultural connections. India recognized Lithuania (along with the other Baltic States, Latvia and Estonia) on 7th September 1991, after acceptance of their independence by the erstwhile USSR. Diplomatic relations were established with Lithuania on 25th February 1992.

Lithuania opened its Embassy in New Delhi in July 2008, and has Honorary Consuls in Mumbai (*Shri Om Prakash Lohia*), Bengaluru (*Shri Kiron Shah*) and Kolkata (*Shri Arvind Sukhani*). Currently, our Ambassador in Warsaw is concurrently accredited to Lithuania and visits Vilnius frequently. The Honorary Consul of India in Vilnius (*Wing Cdr (Retd) Rajinder Chaudhary*), has been functioning since January 2015. (He earlier also served from 2007 to 2010).

The first political contact between India and independent Lithuania took place in June 1992, when the then Prime Minister of India Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, met Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis, the first President of Lithuania, during the Rio Earth Summit.

Visits from India: MOS for Agriculture, Shri Mohanbhai Kundariya visited Lithuania in October 2015 to unveil a sculptural composition of Mahatma Gandhi and his Lithuanian friend Hermann Kallenbach. MOS for External Affairs, Ms. Preneet Kaur twice visited Vilnius – in March 2011 & again in June 2011 to attend a Ministerial Meeting of the Community of Democracies (CoD). Earlier visits from India include: Shri Salman Khurshid, MOS (External Affairs) in August 1995; Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MOS (External Affairs) in October, 2005 and Shri Anand Sharma, MOS (External Affairs) in March, 2007.

Visits from Lithuania: Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Linas Linkevicius, visited India to attend the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi in November 2013. Mr. Linkevicius met EAM on the sidelines of this event. The two Ministers signed an agreement on the exemption from visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic Passports. Earlier visits from Lithuania to India include: (i) Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius (September 1995), (ii) President Valdas Adamkus's state visit (February 2001), & (iii) Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Vygaudas Ušackas (December 2009).

Parliamentary exchanges: There have been three visits from the Lithuanian Parliament - (i) in 1993, (ii) in January 2003 - the Vice Chairman (Deputy Speaker) of the Seimas (Parliament), Mr. Gintaras Steponavicius, and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament, Mr. Gediminas Kirkilas, attended the Inter-Parliamentary Conference to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Indian Parliament, & (iii) in November 2010, a Lithuanian Parliamentary delegation led by Deputy Speaker, Mr. Algis Kasetas, visited India. The *India Lithuania Forum* was inaugurated in the Lithuanian Parliament in September 2010. This was the result of the initiative taken by the Lithuanian Parliament and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. This forum provides support to various NGOs, individuals and institutions that are interested in India to reinforce India's multi-faceted relationship encompassing culture, education, business and science.

A number of bilateral agreements are operational, including Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation (July 1993), Protocol on Bilateral Consultations between the

two Foreign Offices (August 1995), Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services signed between Government of India and Government of Lithuania (November 1999) Agreement on Air Services (February 2001), Agreement on Cooperation in Spheres of Culture, Science and Education (February 2001), Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation (October 2001), Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA) (March, 2011), Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA) (July 2011), Agreement on the exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic Passports (November 2013) & the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for the years 2016-2018 (March 2011).

Economic Relations

Major Indian exports to Lithuania include vegetable saps and extracts, fish fillets and other fish meat, medicaments, footwear, extracts, essences and concentrates of coffee, tea or mate, ferro-alloys, carpets, rice. Major Lithuanian exports to India include mineral or chemical fertilizers, potassic, dried leguminous vegetables, shelled, wadding of textile materials, nickel waster and scrap, diagnostic or laboratory reagents on backing, machzono-therapy appliances.

Bilateral trade figures for the last few years are given below:

Lithuanian statistics:

(In US\$ million)

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
India's Exports	143.51	38.42	49.72	62.15	58.42
India's Imports	39.55	18.08	13.56	22.60	57.51
Total turnover	183.06	56.50	63.28	84.75	115.93

Source: OSP Lithuania

Indian statistics:

(In US\$ million)

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	% change	2013-14	% change	2014-15	% change	2015-2016*
Exports	66.39	83.30	134.89	147.43	9.30%	104.94	-28.82%	103.23	-1.62%	86.89
Imports	72.69	125.45	203.37	45.91	-77.43%	53.70	16.99%	111.91	108.39%	226.95
Total	139.08	208.75	338.26	193.34	-42.84%	158.64	-17.94%	215.14	35.61%	313.81

Source: DGCI&S, Kolkata/Ministry of Commerce, Gol *estimated

The trade figures are being reconciled in consultation with both the Lithuanian Statistics Office (OSP) and DGCIS, Kolkata.

An important development in the economic field has been the investment of about US\$ 200 million by Indorama, a Lohia Group company, from their Thailand branch, in the Klaipeda Economic Zone in a plant to manufacture plastic resin. This investment has given visibility to India in Lithuania.

Make in India Roadshow in Lithuania: A *Make in India* roadshow, organised by the Embassy of India and Honorary Consul of India in Vilnius, in partnership with Confederation of Industrialists of Lithuania in Vilnius, on April 13, 2015 saw participation by more than 30 business executives from leading Lithuanian companies, covering a wide range of sectors, as well as Investors Forum of Lithuania, Baltic Institute of Corporate Governance, the Lithuanian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association and officials of the local Foreign Office.

World Dairy Summit: India, as the leading producer of dairy products, was represented at the World Dairy Conference (September 2015) in Vilnius by Ms. Rajni Sekhri Sibal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture enriched its proceedings as a keynote speaker.

India-Baltic Chamber of Commerce (IBCC): This Chamber was set up in 2009 and in its first year of establishment itself, the Chamber sent a 22-member strong business delegation to India accompanying the Foreign Minister of Lithuania in December 2009. In October 2015, the Chamber led another business delegation to the 2nd ICEBF in Bangalore.

India-Central Europe Business Forum (ICEBF): A Lithuanian business delegation, led by the India-Baltic Chamber of Commerce participated in the 2nd India-Central Europe Business Forum, organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (FICCI) on 5-6 October, 2015 in Bangalore. The company representatives had detailed business engagements with their Indian counterparts. The meeting focused on economic affairs and also on closer cooperation between the two countries in international bodies.

Cultural Relations:

Indology: Study of Indian languages, mainly Hindi and Sanskrit, has been carried out at the Vilnius University for several decades. A separate centre of Indian studies, under the Department of Oriental Studies, was set up in the Vilnius University in 1996. The Department of Oriental Studies, in collaboration with the Lithuanian Embassy in New Delhi, brought out a Dictionary of common Sanskrit-Lithuanian words, a copy of which was presented PM Modi at the Make in India Week in Mumbai in February 2016. Their Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, had announced a grant of US\$10,000 for promotion of Indian studies at the Centre of Oriental Studies of the Vilnius University in October 2005, and a language laboratory setup with this grant was inaugurated in February 2007. Vilnius University also hosted the 2nd Regional Conference of Central & Eastern Europe on Indian Studies (CEEIS) August 2006 under the auspices of ICCR.

Cultural affinities: Lithuanians have great interest in Indian cultural traditions, including Yoga. An estimated 70% Lithuanians visiting India have spiritual and yogic interests. There is special interest in Ayurveda. The Kaunas Ayurveda Centre arranges lectures on Ayurveda. The ISKCON Movement has a very active temple in Kaunas.

ICCR Chairs: In January 2011, the first ever ICCR Chair (long-term) of Indian Studies in the Baltic States was established based on the MoU signed between ICCR and the Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius). The visiting professor was with the University for two years - till June 2014. ICCR has signed an agreement with the Vilnius University in January 2015 for establishment of an ICCR Chair of Indian studies.

Romuva Community: A team of five scholars from Rajasthan, led by Major Surinder Mathur, visited Lithuania to participate in various events of the Romuva community of Lithuania in May 2015. They participated in a ceremony where Ms Inija Trikiuniene, a representative of the community, was anointed as 'high priestess'. ICCR proposes to organize a conference on India's linkages with Lithuania in the context of the Romuva community with participation of experts from India, Lithuania and other Baltic countries.

Yoga: The maiden International Day of Yoga was celebrated in 18 Lithuanian cities in June 2015. Despite heavy rains that washed out open air celebrations in the morning, hundreds of people came out to celebrate the event, not just in the capital city of Vilnius

but in other cities as well, reaffirming the growing popularity of Indian philosophy and also yoga. At 12:00 hours, all participants in all 18 towns gathered together to stand in the 'Tree asana' pose in order to send a green message. The 2nd IDY week-long event is planned for 17-22 June 2016 in 18 cities across Lithuania, with the support of The Art of Living, Mayram Ashram, Vilnius City Public Health Bureau, Public establishment "Health City" and the Lithuanian Chamber of Healthy Living and Natural Medicine.

Incredible Indian Roadshow: Ministry of Tourism, with support of the Embassy of India, organised a roadshow in Vilnius on July 07, 2015, which was participated by 18 tour and travel operators from India and several local Lithuanian tour operators. . Shri Girish Shankar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, gave a multimedia presentation on tourist-friendly destinations of *Incredible India*. During the roadshows, the local Lithuanian tour operators had an opportunity to interact directly with tour operators from India and share thoughts, best practices, and trends to make future strategies.

Unveiling of Gandhi's sculpture: Minister of State for Agriculture, Shri Mohanbhai Kundariya, visited Lithuania for the unveiling of a sculptural composition of Mahatma Gandhi and his Lithuanian friend, Hermann Kallenbach. The sculpture was jointly unveiled by the PM of Lithuania and Minister of State for Agriculture at Kallenbach's birthplace, Rusne on October 2, 2015.

ITEC: Under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Programme (ITEC), since 1993, over 400 Lithuanian nominees have attended various capacity building courses in diplomacy, English, banking, mass communications, financial management, urban development management, IT, auditing etc. Around 65 seats are offered to Lithuanian each year and most of them are utilized. The Lithuanian leadership at the highest level has expressed appreciation for the ITEC programme.

Scholarships: Since 2008, 11 Lithuanian students have learned Hindi at Kendriya Hindi Sansthan in Agra under the "Propagation of Hindi Abroad" scholarship.

Friendship Societies: Two friendship societies, namely Indian Cultural and Information Centre (ICIC) [established in 2005] and Indian Lithuanian forum (ILF) Vilnius [established in 2010], are currently operational in Lithuania to promote Indian culture through performing arts, cinema, literature and festivals.

Visas: Visa services were outsourced from September 2010. There has been a surge in Lithuanian visa applications. 1625 visas were issued by the Embassy in the calendar year 2015. Lithuania was included in the e-TV scheme of Government of India effective from May 01, 2015. From May to December 2015, 600 Lithuanian nationals visited India on e-TV visa while 750 availed of this facility during January to April 2016. A total of 2225 Lithuanians visited India in 2015 and 1228 during first four months of current year 2016.

Indian Community:

The Indian community comprises around 700 people, including students. Many came to the erstwhile USSR to study and stayed back due to marriage or business. Over the last few years, some Indian IT experts have come to Lithuania to work on IT projects. 15 Indian families work in the Klaipeda plant of the Lohia Group. The Indian yogic and New Age movements also bring their Indian teachers to work in Lithuania from time to time. The latest data shows that the number of Indian students studying full time in

Lithuania has increased from 37 in 2011 to 357 in 2014 and now stand at over 650 in 2016.

For more information and latest updates, please visit:

Website: <http://www.indembwarsaw.in>

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