

India-Lithuania Relations

Political Relations

India and Lithuania enjoy cordial and friendly relations. Lithuanians believe that there is a close similarity between Lithuanian and Sanskrit, Lithuanian being the Indo-European language grammatically closest to Sanskrit.

The first direct knowledge about India reached Lithuania through Lithuanian Christian missionaries who started serving in India since the 16th century. Since the early 19th century, many Lithuanian intellectuals were interested in India due to the affinity between Sanskrit and Lithuanian languages. One of the prominent Lithuanian philosophers and ideologists of the national movement, Vydunas (real name Vilhelmas Storost, 1868-1953; he is also known as the Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo of Lithuania) was extremely interested in Indian philosophy and he even created his own philosophical system closely based on the Vedanta. He argued that before the introduction of Christianity, Lithuanian spiritual culture had a lot of similarities with Hinduism, including the concept of Trinity.

Diplomatic relations were established with Lithuania on 25 February 1992. The Ambassador of India in Warsaw is concurrently accredited to Lithuania. Lithuania opened its Embassy in New Delhi on 01 July 2008.

High Level Visits from India to Lithuania include Minister of State for External Affairs Salman Khurshid (August 1995), Minister of State for External Affairs Rao Inderjit Singh (October 2005) and Minister of State for External Affairs Anand Sharma (March 2007). Minister of State for External Affairs Smt Preneet Kaur visited Vilnius in March 2011 for a bilateral visit and in June 2011 to attend Community of Democracies Ministerial meeting.

High Level Visits from Lithuania to India include a Lithuanian Parliamentary Delegation for the Inter-Parliamentary Conference (April 1993), Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius (September 1995), President Valdas Adamkus (February 2001), Vice Chairman (Deputy Speaker) of the Seimas (Parliament) Gintaras Steponavicius for the Inter-Parliamentary Conference to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Indian Parliament (January 2003) and Lithuanian Foreign Minister Vygaudas Usackas (December 2009). A 3-member Lithuanian parliamentary delegation led by the Deputy Speaker visited India in November 2010 as guests of our Public Diplomacy Division.

Following agreements have been signed between India and Lithuania:

- Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation signed in July 1993
- Protocol on Bilateral Consultations between the two Foreign Offices in August 1995
- Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services signed on 19 November 1995
- Agreement on Air Services in February 2001
- Agreement on Cooperation in Spheres of Culture, Science and Education in February 2001
- Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation in February 2001.
- Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement in March 2011
- Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement in July 2011.

Commercial Relations

According to Lithuanian statistics, bilateral trade was USD 117.9 million during 2009 and USD 184 mn in 2010. In 2011, bilateral trade reached USD 203 mn. In the first quarter of 2013, bilateral trade reached Euro 23 mn. An Indian Baltic Chamber of Commerce (IBCC) was formed in Vilnius in 2009 while an India-Lithuania Forum was inaugurated in September 2010.

Major items of import from India include pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, textiles and consumer goods. Major items of export to India include machinery and mechanical appliances, high tech optical instruments, base metals and articles of base metal, chemicals, sulphur, lime and cement.

Cultural Relations

Study of Indian languages (mainly Hindi and Sanskrit) has been carried out at the Vilnius University for several decades as part of the Philology Department. A separate centre of Indian studies, under the Department of Oriental Studies, was set up in the Vilnius University in 1996.

An MoU was signed by ICCR with Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius) in January 2011 to establish with effect from 01 Sep 2011 the first ever Chair of Indian Studies in the Baltic States. Private Indian Universities have cooperation MoUs with their Lithuanian counterparts.

There is great interest in Lithuania in Indian culture (dance, music, Yoga and Ayurvedic system of medicine). There are Ayurveda centres in Vilnius and Kaunas, while Sai Baba has over 200 devotees in Lithuania. The ISKON Movement is very popular. A number of ICCR sponsored troupes have performed in Lithuania.

Under the hugely popular Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme since 1993, a large number of Lithuanian nominees have attended

courses in banking, mass communications, ICT, English, financial management, urban development management, human resource development, foreign trade, auditing etc.

Under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, since 1993, over 238 Lithuanian nominees have attended various courses in diplomacy, English, banking, mass communications, financial management, urban development management, IT, auditing, etc. 65 Lithuanian nominees attended courses in 2012-13. The Lithuanian leadership at the highest level has expressed appreciation for the ITEC programme.

Indian Community

The Indian community is around 300, including students. Over the last few years, some Indian IT experts have been coming to Lithuania to work on IT projects for varying periods. Several Indians work in the Klaipeda-based USD 200 million PET plant of the OP Lohia Group.

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