

India-Serbia Bilateral Relations

Political Relations

India and Serbia (Successor State of former Yugoslavia) have traditionally enjoyed deep friendship as co-founders of the Non-Aligned Movement. Despite the breakup of former Yugoslavia, the tradition of mutual support on issues of core interest continues. There are no outstanding or unresolved bilateral issues. India does not recognize Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Kosovo and is of the view that the Kosovo issue should be resolved peacefully through dialogue between the concerned parties. In line with its policy, India has, on Serbia's request, consistently opposed Kosovo's membership of various international bodies including those of technical and scientific nature. Serbia supports India in multilateral fora including India's membership of NSG, permanent and non-permanent membership of UNSC and Indian candidatures to various international organizations. Serbian leadership has expressed solidarity with India in the fight against terrorism. In a unilateral gesture Serbia has abolished visas for Indian Nationals w.e.f. 2nd September 2017.

2. The then PM now President Aleksandar Vucic visited India from 9-12 January, 2017 to attend the Vibrant Gujarat Summit (VGS) and held delegation level talks with PM Modi. This was the first visit at this level from Belgrade in 30 years and provided the desired impetus for a multi-sectoral partnership. Mr. Vucic invited PM Modi to visit Serbia. Both sides reiterated support for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty and expressed solidarity in the fight against terrorism. Among other things, both sides agreed on the need to promote economic cooperation, especially in food production, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, defence industry, health, tourism and IT. Addressing the businesses in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, Mr. Vucic invited Indian investors and promised to provide the best possible business conditions for Indian companies in Serbia.

3. Prior to this, MOS (PMO) Dr. Jitendra Singh visited Serbia from 12-16 October, 2016 and met PM Aleksandar Vucic, Speaker Maja Gojkovic, First DPM & FM Ivica Dacic, DPM and Minister of Trade, Tourism & Telecommunications, Rasim Ljajic and Minister of Agriculture & Environmental Protection Branislav Nedimovic. MOU on Cooperation in the field of IT & Electronics was signed.

4. Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic and Speaker, National Assembly, Ms Maja Gojkovic, have standing invitations to visit India. Invitation to FM Dacic was reiterated by MOS Shri MJ Akbar during meeting on the sidelines of the Bled Strategic Forum in Slovenia on 5th September 2017.

5. Mr. Branislav Nedimovic, Serbian Minister for Agriculture, Forestry & Water Management led a delegation of 11 agro processing companies to World Food India 2017 held in New Delhi from 3-5 November 2017. Minister Nedimovic held bilateral meetings with Shri Radha Mohan Singh, Minister of Agriculture and Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Minister of Food Processing Industries; and agreed on harmonization of veterinary certificates and early conclusion of Phytosanitary agreement to promote trade in tropical fruits from India and frozen fruits and meat products from Serbia. Minister met Mahindra Group, CG Food India and visited TAFE Tractors in Madurai. CG Food India organized an Investors Forum to raise awareness of investing in Serbia due to Serbia's FTAs with EU, Russia, Turkey, USA, etc.

6. Serbia has unconditionally supported India's international role and votes in favour of India's candidatures at the UN and other fora. A list of candidatures supported by Serbia since 2014 is given below:

- Position in the UN Board of Auditors (2014-20)
- Election to the Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural heritage (2014-2018)
- Election to the Human Rights Council (2015-17)
- Election to the Council of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2015-18)
- Director (Capacity Building) at WCO (2015 - the Indian candidate did not win)
- Re-election to the Council of International Maritime Organization (IMO), Cat B (2015)

- Election to the International Law Commission for the term 2017-2021
- Re-election to United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (UN-JIU) for the term 2018-2022
- Re-election to the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)
- Re-election to the Postal Union Council (POC) of the Universal Postal Union (UPU)
- Election to the (Int'l Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) for the term 2017-2026
- Re-election to the Council of the IMO for 2018-19
- Re-election of Justice Bhandari to the International Court of Justice 2018-2027
- Re-election to the Executive Board of UNESCO for 2017-21
- Non-Permanent Membership of UNSC (2021-22)

7. India@70: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, First Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic and Foreign Secretary Nemanja Stevanovic gave special messages on the occasion of India@70. Two iconic structures in Belgrade, 'Ada Bridge' and 'Palace of Albania' were lit in Indian flag colours to mark India@70. A cultural concert (Bharatnatyam) was organized in Belgrade for India@70.

8. Conferences: (i) Ms. Irini Reljin, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Trade, Tourism & Telecommunication and Mr. Vladimir Radunovic from Diplo Foundation participated in GCCS-2017, New Delhi.

(ii) Ms Natasa Milanovic, Director, Biosil d.o.o participated in the 8th Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES 2017) at Hyderabad from 28-30 November 2017.

(iii) Mr. Jovan Ratkovic, International Secretary, Social Democratic Party and Dr. Marko Savkovic, Programme Director, Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence attended 'Raisina Dialogue' at New Delhi from 16-18 January, 2017.

9. Agreements: Existing agreements include Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection Agreement (BIPPA), Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC), Trade Agreement (MFN), Tourism Cooperation Agreement and Air Services Agreement. MOUs on Agriculture, S&T, IT & Electronics are under implementation. All working group meetings have been held including Agriculture Joint Commission (Nov 2016), Joint Economic Committee (2017), Joint Committee on S&T (2016 & 2017) and JWG on IT & Electronics (Oct 2017). MOU on Archival Cooperation was signed in October 2017. MOU on Cooperation in Culture, Arts, Youth Affairs & Sports and Mass Media is ready for signatures. MOU on Phytosanitary Cooperation is under negotiation.

10. ITEC: Over 140 Serbian ITEC-trainees have undergone training in India including in IT, telecommunications, WTO, English language, SMEs, management, finance, textiles, rural development, environment, yoga, etc. Serbia has been allocated 25 slots for 2017-18.

11. Visas: Serbia unilaterally abolished visas for 30 days' stay in a year for Indian nationals holding ordinary passports w.e.f. 2nd September 2017. Approximately 6000 Indians visited Serbia in 2017. Serbian nationals are increasingly using e-visa facility; approx. 2000 Serbians visited India for business and tourism during 2017.

Economic & Commercial Relations

12. Bilateral trade at US\$ 157.1 m during Jan-Oct 2017 registered an increase of 32.2% as compared to Jan-Oct 2016 with Indian exports worth US\$ 149.2 m and imports US\$ 7.9 m. Indian investments in Serbia are as follows:

- Bangalore's Embassy Group has invested Euro 15 m (USD 20 m) in an IT Park in Indjija, near Belgrade. Additional investment of USD 25 m is planned to make film studios.
- TAFE, Mahindra and Sonalika export/have assembly line of tractors.
- CG Group India has invested USD 9 m in a noodle factory in Ruma.
- Two UAE-based Indian companies have invested in Serbia, namely, Excel Industries (USD 1.1 m), Mulk Holdings (USD 20 m).
- Indian pharma companies, namely, Himalaya Herbals, Panacea Biotec, HiMedia Laboratories, etc have local representatives.

13. Industry level MOUs have been signed for joint defence production through TOT under Make in India. Reliance Defence Ammunition entered into a 10-year strategic partnership worth Euro 2.8 b with Serbia's state-owned Yugoimport SDPR for ammunition manufacturing in India.
14. Serbian IT company Schneider Electric DMS NS is working on the Naya Raipur and three other projects under GOI Smart Cities venture.
15. More than 200 business visas were issued in 2017 to Serbian companies to provide business solutions to India companies.
16. 3rd session of the India-Serbia Joint Economic Committee was held through video conferencing on 10th March 2017 where both sides expressed readiness to find ways and means for further development of bilateral economic cooperation.
17. The 1st Meeting of India-Serbia Joint Commission on Agriculture was held in November 2016 where India expressed interest in import of pulses, soyabean, oil seeds. Serbia emphasized on export of fresh, frozen & processed fruits and vegetables to India and import of agriculture machinery such as trucks, tractors, combine harvester. India reiterated interest in exporting tropical fruits, mango, pine apple, banana, papaya etc. India is invited to be a Partner Country in the International Agricultural Fair, Novi Sad. Experts on both sides are negotiating an agreement on phytosanitary cooperation to promote trade in crops, oil seeds, soyabean, berries, tropical fruits etc.
18. The 2nd Session of India-Serbia Joint Committee on Science & Technology was held in Belgrade in October 2017. A new Programme of Cooperation (POC) was signed with increased fields of cooperation. It was agreed to hold two workshops – in the scientific domains of (a) biotechnology & human health and (b) ICT in India and Serbia, respectively. Both sides agreed to announce joint calls in the second half of 2018 after the workshops in accordance with priority fields as incorporated in the POC i.e. (i) New materials and Nanotechnology, (ii) Energy and Energy efficiency, (iii) Information and Communication Technologies, (iv) Human health, (v) Biotechnology including food technology and food security.
19. Meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) under the bilateral MOU on IT & Electronics was held in October 2017 through video conferencing where both sides exchanged cooperation agendas in the field of e-Governance, Cloud Computing, IoT, Big Data, Start-up ecosystem etc.
20. Trade Fairs: Indian tractor companies TAFE, Mahindra, Sonalika and Jain Irrigation regularly participate in the annual Agricultural Fair in Novi Sad (May). Indian tour operators Uni Crystal and Truly India Tours participated in the annual Tourism Fair. Morbi Ceramics Association (MCA) participated in the South East European Belgrade Building Expo (SEEBBE) (2017). HBL Power Systems Limited participated in the International Armament & Military Equipment Fair "Partner 2017". Kotak Mahindra Bank participated in 'Roadmapping The Digital (r)Evolution' Conference xCEED 2017.
21. Serbian companies participated in Indian trade fairs such as AeroIndia, Defexpo, India Engineering Sourcing Show (IESS), Homexpo India, India International Handwoven Fair (IIHF), International Pharma Expo (IPHEX), Global Exhibition on Tourism (GET) India, Global Exhibition on Services (GES), Indian Fashion Jewellery & Accessories Show (IFJAS), INDIASOFT, NASSCOM India Leadership Forum 2016, Indian Carpet Expo 2016, India Shoe & Accessories Forum (ISAF 2016), Vibrant Ceramics Expo & Summit 2016, India International Leather Fair 2017, Indian International Handwoven Fair 2017, IHGF 2016 & 2017, ISAF 2016 & 2017, IIGF 2017 and Textile India 2017 (Jun - Jul 2017). Dr.Vladimir Miklic, Serbian Seed Expert, attended Global Rajasthan Agritech Meet (GRAM 2016) as an Expert Speaker.
22. Tourism: Eight prominent Serbian tour operators undertook a familiarization visit to India (Sept 2017) and held a workshop with 25 top Indian tour operators and government officials.

Likewise five Indian tour operators, three travel journalists and two film producers visited Serbia in October 2017 on familiarization trip to promote Serbia in India. Shri Sudhir Horo, Consultant with Government of Jharkhand, visited Serbia in October 2017.

23. Power & coal delegation from West Bengal comprising Mr. S.Kishore, Principal Secretary, Power Department, Government of West Bengal and Mr. Santanu Basu, CMD, WBPDC visited Serbia in May 2017 regarding possible collaboration in Coal Mining Technology and Clean Coal Technology.

24. During the Berne Union Annual General Meeting held in Belgrade in October 2017, a MOU was agreed between ECGC Ltd, a Government of India Enterprise and AOFI, Serbian Export Credit and Insurance Agency with the aim of developing cooperation between the Indian and Serbian Export Credit Agencies to increase the bilateral trade of goods and services.

25. Ms Dragana Dermanovic, CEO of Bee Premium Group (BPG) and Co-founder of the startup BeeShaper, was chosen as “Woman of the Decade in Social Media and Leadership” by Women Economic Forum in New Delhi in May 2017.

Cultural Relations

26. Serbia co-sponsored India's Resolutions at UN for declaring October 2 as International Day of Non-Violence and June 21 as International Day of Yoga. Serbia is a culturally vibrant country with high respect for Indian culture and heritage. The recent initiatives include: (i) Course on cultural history of India in University of Belgrade; (ii) ICCR Hindi Chair at University of Novi Sad; (iii) Permanent exhibition of Chandigarh's Rock Garden at the Museum of Naive and Marginal Arts; (iv) AYUSH Information Cell (approved). Ambedkar Jayanti and Sardar Patel Jayanti, etc. are commemorated through local universities, schools, organizations and media.

27. Serbian National shooting team achieved 4th rank with 2 Gold, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze medal at the ISSF World Cup Final 2017 at New Delhi in October 2017. Indian all Woman boxing team lifted the best team trophy at 7th Nations Cup International Women's Boxing Tournament in Sombor, Serbia with 8 Gold medals in January 2018. Serbian sports teams and coaches regularly visit India.

28. In recent years, Embassy's initiatives in public diplomacy have included participation in:

- (i) International Agricultural Fair, Novi Sad (2013-17)
- (ii) Belgrade International Book Fair (2013-2017)
- (iii) Belgrade International Tourism Fair (2014-2017)
- (iv) Ethnic Food & Drink Fair (2015 & 2016)
- (v) Belgrade Fashion Week (Manish Arora 2014; Kamran Patel 2017)
- (vi) Belgrade Design Week (Satya Sheel 2014)
- (vii) Auteur Film Festival ('Court'-2015) & 'The Fourth Direction' - 2016)

29. Indian cultural groups continue to be popular in Serbia and recent performances include:

- Kathak Dance Group led by Ms. Rujuta Soman Amogh (2014)
- Rajasthani Puppet Group led by Mr Vinod Bhatt (2014)
- Fusion Band 'East India Company' led by Mr Angaraag Mahanta-Papon(2014)
- Rudra Veena group led by Dr Jayanta Kumar Das (2015)
- Katkatha' Puppet Group (2015)
- “Laya, Taal, Samvaad” percussion group led by Pandit Sadanand Naimpalli (2015)
- Bharatnatyam group led by Ms Jyotsana Jagannathan (2015)
- Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt at Guitar Art Festival 2016 (Mar 2016)
- Stree Shakti' percussion band led by Ms Anuradha Pal (Mar 2016)
- Dance Workshop by Manasi in 23rd Int'l Children's Theatre Festival (Sept 2016)
- India @ 70 concert “Kadamb Kathak” of Kumudini Lakhia (Sept 2016)
- Folklore ensemble of Punjab Cultural Promotion Council at 5th FIDAF(2017)

- Kryative Theatre led by Laxmi Chandrashekhar in the 44th INFANT, Novi Sad and Belef Festival, Belgrade (2017)
- Independence Day Concert Bharatnatyam by Geeta Chandran (2017)
- Indian Film Festival at Cultural Hall "Studentski Grad" Belgrade (2017)
- Indian film festival at Cultural Center of Kikinda, Vojvodina (2017)
- Indian film festival at Cultural Center of Mladenovac (2017)
- Indian film at Film Street Belgrade (2017)
- Indian film festival organized at the Cultural Center of Zrenjanin (2017)

30. Recent exhibitions include:

- ICCR's curated Saree Exhibition and Fashion Show at Ethnographic Museum, Belgrade (2014)
- ICCR exhibition "Temple, Forts and Palaces- 2000 Years of Indian Architecture" by Dr Saryu Doshi at National Bank of Serbia, Belgrade (2015)
- 'Digital Prints of Artworks by Rabindranath Tagore' at National Library of Serbia in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Zrenjanin (2015)
- Exhibition on INDIASERBIA Photography Contest 2014 showcasing 25 prize winning entries each from India and Serbia at Museum of Applied Arts (2015)
- 2nd IDY Exhibition of Yoga 'asanas' at Novi Sad University (2016)
- Permanent exhibition of Nek Chand's Rock Garden at Jagodina Museum (2016)
- Photo Exhibition on 3rd IDY at Kalemegdan, Belgrade (2017)
- Serbian Ethnographic Exhibition at National Museum, New Delhi.
- Exhibition of Nek Chand's Rock Garden, Kalemegdan, Belgrade (2017)
- Photo Exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi at Cultural Center, Vrsac (Nov 2017)

31. Indian books have been gifted to National Library; National Assembly; Belgrade City Library; Universities of Belgrade; University of Novi Sad; University of Nis; Belgrade 8th Gymnasium School; Milutin Bojic Library; Kreativno Pero School; Zrenjanin Cultural Centre; Dositej Obradovic School, Pozarevac, Cultural Centre Vrsac; etc.

32. Yoga, Ayurveda and Homeopathy are recognized in Serbian law. Recent initiatives are:

- Workshop "Traditional Medicine – Goals & Challenges" in the Serbian Ministry of Health (2015)
- Training of three Serbian medical doctors in Yoga, Ayurveda & Homeopathy (2015-16)
- International Ayurveda Symposium in Belgrade (2016)
- IDY (2015, 2016 & 2017)
- Photo Exhibition on 3rd IDY at Kalemegdan (2017)
- Free consultations on Ayurveda at the International Tourism Fair of Belgrade (2016/2017)
- 'Padma Shri' to Mr Predrag K Nikic, President, Yoga Federation of Serbia (2016)
- Commissioning of special video "Yoga from the rooftops of Serbia" (2015)
- Yoga in Prison project – Rehabilitation of Women in Female Prison in Pozarevac, Serbia
- Establishment of an AYUSH Information Cell (2018/2019).

33. India receives positive coverage in Serbian print media. Special supplements are published in prominent local dailies and business magazines on 15th August, 26th January and IDY. The national broadcaster Radio & Television of Serbia (RTS) regularly telecasts Indian documentaries. Indian film shootings have commenced in Serbia. First India-Serbia joint production 'Dev Bhoomi' by renowned Serbian Director Goran Paskaljevic was shot in Uttaranchal with Indian starcast.

Indian Community

34. There are only a handful of NRIs/ PIOs in Serbia. There is no Indian community association.

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