

## India-Serbia Relations

### Political Relations

India's relations with Serbia have traditionally been close and friendly since the days of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Marshall Tito were co-founders of the Non-Aligned Movement. Following the dissolution of the SFRY in the early 1990's and the emergence of the Republic of Serbia, those early bonds of friendship and cooperation still provide the foundation for the relations between the two countries. Bilateral relations today are warm and friendly, marked by mutual understanding and support on issues of core interest. Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Preneet Kaur visited Belgrade in September 2011 to attend the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first NAM Summit.

Several agreements (as detailed below) have been signed between the two countries, providing a ready framework to give momentum to bilateral relations. Institutional mechanisms such as Foreign Office Consultations and Joint Economic Committee facilitate regular exchange of views and identifying ways to further enhance cooperation.

### Bilateral Agreements signed between India and Serbia

1. **Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Culture, Education & Sports** signed on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2002 (being renewed).
2. **Air Services Agreement** between India and Serbia and Montenegro was signed on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2003 in Belgrade.
3. **Agreement on Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments:** signed between India and Serbia and Montenegro on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2003.
4. **Agreement on Scientific and Technical Cooperation** was signed on 28 October, 2004 in Belgrade with Minister of State for Science and Technology, Shri Kapil Sibal signing on behalf of GOI and SCG Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic for the Council of Ministers of Serbia & Montenegro.
5. **An MOU in the field of tourism** was signed on 2 November 2004 in Belgrade.
6. **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement** was signed on 8 February, 2006 in New Delhi during the visit of Dr. Predrag Ivanovic, SCG Minister for International Economic Relations.
7. **Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement** was signed on 7 February, 2006 in New Delhi during the visit of Dr. Predrag Ivanovic and delegation to India.
8. **The Agreement on Visa Exemption** for holders of Diplomatic and official passports was signed on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The agreement became operational w.e.f. 17.7.09.
9. **An MOU for Cooperation between the Foreign Service Institute and the Diplomatic Academy** was signed on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007 during the visit of MOS(AS).
10. **Agreement in the field of Agriculture & Allied Sectors** was signed on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009.

## **Bilateral Visits**

### **Incoming Visits**

**Oct 2004:** Minister of State for Science and Technology Shri Kapil Sibal

**Nov 2004:** Minister of State for Tourism Smt. Renuka Chowdhury

**July 2005:** Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Rao Inderjit Singh

**Sept 2007:** Minister of State for Ext Affairs Shri Anand Sharma

**Mar 2009:** Agriculture Secretary Shri Nanda Kumar

**Sept 2011:** Minister of State for Ext Affairs Smt. Preneet Kaur

### **Outgoing Visits**

**June 2004:** Assistant Minister of Tourism, Ivana Pejovic

**June 2004:** Assistant Minister of International Economic Relations of SCG, Jasmina Hadziabdic

**Jan-Feb 2005:** Minister of Economy and Privatization of SCG Predrag Bubalo

**Feb 2005:** Lieutenant General Ivan Djokic, Assistant Defence Minister (Material Resources) of Serbia and SCG

**Feb 2006:** Minister for International Economic Relations of SCG Dr. Predrag Ivanovic

**Aug 2007:** State Secretary Ministry of Economy and Regional Development of Serbia Ms. Yasna Matic and Goran Jesic, Mayor of the municipality of Indjija

**Dec 2007:** State Secretary in the Ministry of Health Dr. Nevena Karanovic and State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture Dr. Milan Petrovic

**Feb 2008:** Minister of Science Dr. Ana Pešikan

**Apr 2008:** State Secretary Ministry of Economy and Regional development Ms Yasna Matic

**Sept 2008:** Foreign Minister of Serbia Vuk Jeremic

**May-June 2010:** Formerly State Secretary in the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development Ms. Yasna Matic

## **Cooperation in Multilateral Affairs**

The unanimous UNGA resolution admitting the FRY into the UN on November 1, 2000 was co-sponsored by 70 member-countries including India. India and Serbia have since developed a good track record of cooperation in multilateral fora in terms of mutual support and reciprocal arrangements for elections in multilateral bodies. Serbia supported India's candidature for non-permanent seat in the Security Council in 2011-12. We have extended support to Serbia on the Kosovo issue whenever the matter came up at the United Nations.

## **ITEC Cooperation**

The number of ITEC scholars from Serbia going to India to attend various courses have increased substantially in the last two years and our slots have been increased from 25 to 35 this year.

## Commercial Relations

The Balkan wars of 1990s and the break-up of the SFRY resulted in the disruption of the trade and economic cooperation which amounted to nearly US\$ 500 million in the late 1980s. Following the democratic changes in Serbia in 2000 and the introduction of economic reforms from 2002 onward, bilateral trade between the two countries started growing again, amounting to stood at US\$ 158.43 million in 2012. In the period from January to May 2013, bilateral trade reached US\$ 82.5 million, of which US\$ 77.8 million were exports from India and US\$ 4.6 were imports into India. The main items of India's exports to Serbia are soybean oilcake/coffee/sesame seeds and food products, pharmaceuticals & chemical products, textile yarn, garments & footwear, products of iron & steel and industrial machinery. Serbia's exports to India consist of cigarettes/ tobacco, organic chemicals, industrial machinery, footwear & apparel, metal waste and scrap.

### Bilateral Trade (in US\$ Million)

US\$ million	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	up to May 2013
India's exports	113.99	109.02	113.36	152.55	153.56	77.83
India's imports	16.20	05.01	09.66	08.39	4.87	4.62
<b>Total trade</b>	<b>130.20</b>	<b>114.03</b>	<b>123.02</b>	<b>160.94</b>	<b>158.43</b>	<b>82.45</b>

### Indian Investments

- A major investment by an Indian real estate company, Embassy Group, is in the pipeline. Embassy Group from Bangalore specializing in developing IT Parks signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development and Mayor of Indjija in Serbia in September 2007 for building an IT Park. With 250,000 square meters of business space, the Park will involve a total investment of about US\$600 million over a period of five years. In the first phase, the Embassy Group agreed to invest US\$60 million.
- Another Indian company M/s. Usha Industries signed a contract in November 2005 with a Serbian state-owned company-JPPEU for lifting Boron ore for export to India. The company has already invested over 2 million Euros in installing machinery specific to Serbian boron ore.
- The world's best-selling brand of aluminium composite panels Alubond U.S.A, owned by the Indian businessman Nawab Shaji Ul Mulk (Mulk Holdings) opened a new production & commercial facility in Serbia in Nov 2012 with an investment of USD 20 million.
- Indian companies such as M/s Amalgamations Limited, Mahindra & Mahindra, Ranbaxy, Arvind Mills, Himalaya Herbals, Pancea Biotech, Sonalika have appointed local representatives in Serbia.

## Cultural Relations

Cultural troupes sponsored by the ICCR have been visiting Serbia regularly, the last being that of a seven-member Kathak group led by Ms. Sharmistha Mukherjee in September 2012. The group gave three full-house performances in the cities of Belgrade, Novi Sad and Kragujevac. Serbian President Tomislav Nikolic accompanied by his wife graced the performance in his hometown Kragujevac.

In the last few years, the Mission organized several cultural events such as:

- a) As part of 'India Fortnight' in Belgrade in May-June 2007 which included a series of events like a talk on Rabindranath Tagore; Photographic Exhibition 'My India' opened as part of the Museum Night under the banner 'Spirit of India' and included classical music and folk dance performances by local artists; talk on 'Stress Free Living' by Shri Prasana Prabhu of Art of Living Foundation, Bangalore
- b) A festival of Indian films was held in two cities of Serbia - Belgrade and Novi Sad in April 2008
- c) Photo Exhibition 'Mahatma-Apostle of Peace' at Gallery of City Library, Kragujevac and a collection of photographs 'Incredible India' in April 2008
- d) A cultural troupe from India led by Dr. Deepti Omcherry Bhalla visited Serbia in April 2008 to give performances of Indian Classical Dance, Mohiniattam
- e) A dance troupe from India from the Shivam Nritya Cultural Academy participated in the Int'l Folk Festival in Belgrade in July 2008
- f) An exhibition of paintings on Indian culture titled 'Unforgettable India' by Ms. Scarlett Baptista, a PIO was held at the Art Gallery of Belgrade Library in April 2009
- g) An ICCR-sponsored ten-member Odissi dance troupe led by Mrs. Ranjana Gauhar visited Serbia in September 2010 and gave performances in different cities
- h) Well-known Indian writer Amitav Ghosh visited Belgrade in Oct-Nov 2010 at the invitation of Laguna Publishers and the Belgrade Book Fair and launched the Serbian version of his book The Sea of Poppies
- i) Indian contemporary dancer and choreographer Astad Deboo visited Belgrade and gave a performance in June 2011 at BITEF Theatre
- j) Days of Indian Culture and Philosophy was held in Zrenjanin in November 2011
- k) An ICCR-sponsored exhibition "Kalpana- Masterpieces of Figurative Indian Contemporary Paintings" was held in the different cities of Serbia from April to July 2012
- l) Another ICCR-sponsored 7-member Kathak dance group led by Ms. Sharmistha Mukherjee visited Serbia in Sept 2012 and gave performances in 3 cities
- m) Two ICCR-sponsored photographic exhibitions titled "Archiva" and "Sacred India" by Amit Pasricha were displayed in the city of Leskovac in June 2013.
- n) A photographic exhibition titled "India- Faces in Rural Places" by an Indian national Darryl Baptista was held in Belgrade in July 2013.

## **Indian Community**

There is practically no Indian community in Serbia. There are approximately 10 Indian nationals and a few PIOs who came to erstwhile Yugoslavia 30-40 years ago as students and settled down after getting married to locals. Some of them have acquired Serbian nationality while others have retained their Indian citizenship. They are scattered all over the country but majority are in and around Belgrade. They are mostly engaged in small trading, travel industry or pursuing artistic goals and most of them still maintain their bonds with India.

\*\*\*\*\*

**July 2013**