

India - Italy Relations

1. India and Italy are ancient civilizations but young states (Italy having been reunified only in 1861). The classical languages, Sanskrit and Latin both belong to the Indo-European language family. Peoples of these two ancient civilizations have known, interacted and traded with each other for over 2000 years. Italian port cities were important trading posts on the spice route. The Venetian merchant Marco Polo, during his travels to the east, also traveled to India in the 13th century and wrote about his experiences.

2. Indian troops, serving with the British Indian Army, were active in Italy during the World War II. These included the Rajputana Rifles and Gurkha Rifles. The 10th Indian Division took part in the East African Allied campaign against the Italians in Somaliland and Abyssinia.

High Level Engagements

3. Political relations between India and Italy were established in 1947. The two countries enjoy cordial relationship. There has been a regular exchange of visits at political and official levels between both countries. From the Indian side, at the level of Head of State/Government, the visit (s) date back to 1953 & 1955 when Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru visited Italy, Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi in November 1981; President Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma in October 1996; Prime Minister Shri H.D. Deve Gowda in November 1996; Prime Minister Shri I.K. Gujral in September 1997; Prime Minister Shri A.B. Vajpayee in June 2000; and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in July 2009. From the Italian side, the first visit at the level of Head of State/Government took place in 1988 when Prime Minister Mr. Giovanni Gorla visited India. This was followed by President Dr. Oscar Luigi Scalfaro in Feb 1995; Prime Minister Prof. Romano Prodi in Jan 1998; President Mr. Carlo Azeglio Ciampi in Feb 2005; and Prime Minister Mr. Romano Prodi in Feb 2007. Both countries regularly hold an institutionalized Senior Officials Dialogue (Foreign Office Consultations).

4. An Italy-India Parliamentary Friendship Association was established in the IPU Italy Chapter in 2004. Year 2011 was marked by visit of then EAM Shri SM Krishna to Italy to participate in the 150th anniversary celebrations of Italy's unification. The same year MOS (External Affairs) also visited Italy to meet Indian Business community and had Bilateral Talks with Italian counterpart. In 2012, Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi visited India and held bilateral discussions with EAM and CIM. Union Home Minister,

Shri Sushil kumar Shinde visited Rome from 4-5 November 2012 to participate in the triennial Interpol Ministerial Meeting. Over the past few years there have been several visits at the Prime Ministerial level, EAM level, Commerce Minister, Agriculture Minister, health and so on, with several MoUs being signed during these visits. The then EAM, Smt. Sushma Swaraj led an official delegation for the Canonization ceremony of Mother Teresa at the Vatican from 2-5 Sept 2016. During her visit, she met then Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni. In 2018, both countries celebrated the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic relations through a series of cultural events.

5. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Rome on 06-08 December 2019 to attend MED Conference and met Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte on the margins of the Conference. EAM also attended the MED 2020 on 04 Dec 2020 in virtual format.

6. PM Modi and PM Conte co-chaired a Virtual Summit between India and Italy on 06 November 2020. The two Prime Ministers held extensive talks on bilateral, regional and global issues. A total of 15 MoUs covering areas like energy, media, finance, ship building were signed coinciding with the Summit. The second India-Italy Parliamentary Interaction was held on March 22, 2021, which was the first ever virtual interaction for Indian Parliamentarians. EAM also met Italian FM in Italy on the side lines of G20 Foreign Ministers conference on 28 June 2021.

Parliamentary Interactions

7. Speaker of Lok Sabha Smt. Meira Kumar attended the G8/G5 Speakers Meeting in Rome (12-14 Sept 2009). An Italy-India Parliamentary Friendship Association under the IPU Italy Chapter was established in 2004 with Senator Maria Claudia Lannucci as President. The reconstituted Italy-India Parliamentary Friendship Association, under Mr. Sandro Gozi MP, visited India in December 2011.

8. A Goodwill Delegation of Indian Parliamentarians led by MOS for Parliamentary Affairs, Arjun Ram Meghwal, and comprising 9 MPs from different parties, visited Italy from 15-17 October 2018.

9. The Italian Parliament in 2019, has constituted an Italy-India Parliamentary Friendship Group. The Group is presided by former Defence Minister Senator Roberta Pinotti and is a cross-party grouping of 17 Senators and Deputies.

10. The 2nd India-Italy Parliamentary meeting was held on 22 March 2021 on virtual platform. This was the 1st virtual interaction of Indian Parliamentarians.

Trade and Investment

11. Italy is among India's top 5 trading partners in the EU. The balance of trade has been in India's favour since the early eighties. The bilateral trade witnessed a strong growth till 2007, before the world-wide recession of 2008 led to a marked slowdown in Italian economy, which had an adverse impact on the bilateral trade. In 2011-12, the bilateral trade stood at € 8.52 billion registering an increase of 18% *vis-à-vis* 2010-11 and owing primarily to the global economic recovery. However, in 2012-13 the total bilateral trade has decreased to € 7.09 billion due to the onset of a severe economic recession in Italy coupled with the economic austerity and reform programme initiated by the Italian government in 2012.

12. In 2014-15, the total trade was of US\$9 billion with a negative growth of 1.12%. Due to Covid pandemic the trade declined last year. India ranks 19th as country of origin of Italian imports, accounting for 1.2% of Italian imports. Main items of Indian exports to Italy are ready-made garments, leather, iron ore, motor vehicles, textiles, chemicals, gems & jewellery. Main items of import from Italy are general and special purpose machinery, machine tools, metallurgical products, and engineering items. Around 140 large Italian companies are active in India. Some of the major Italian companies that have invested in India are FIAT Auto, Heinz Italia, FIOIA, Italcementi, Necchi Compressori, Perfetti, Lavazza, Fata Hunter Engineering, ENI, SAI India, Isagro (Asia) Agrochemicals, Piaggio, and Impreglio, SEA Deutzfahr Group, Finmeccanica SpA, Ferrero, Salini etc. Indian companies present in Italy are in sectors such as IT, electronics, pharmaceuticals, automobile, textile and engineering.

13. The prominent Indian companies operating in Italy include Tata, TCS, Wipro, Engineers India Limited, L&T, Mahindra & Mahindra, Ranbaxy, Raymonds etc. SBI has a representative office in Milan. Six Italian banks have representation in India. Top sectors attracting FDI inflows from Italy are Automobile Industry/Transportation, Food Processing, Metallurgical Industry, Textiles, Electrical Equipment and Others.

14. The Joint Economic Commission is an institutional mechanism chaired by the respective Commerce Ministers of both countries. Under the JEC, there are Joint Working Groups in the following areas: Infrastructure, Tourism, Railways, Food Processing, Renewable Energy, Information Technology and Agriculture. The 21st Session of the India-Italy Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation was held through the virtual mode on 9 July, 2021. The two sides discussed various issues such as Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises, Infrastructure with focus on High Speed Railways, Review on Cooperation under the India-Italy Fast Track Mechanism,

Cooperation in promotion of start-up industries, and so on. The two sides decided to hold JCEC on annual basis instead of current biennial basis. New institutional mechanisms like the fast track mechanism and the permanent digital forum for economic cooperation to facilitate market access and investment have been very useful.

15. Following the India-Italy JCEC G2G Meeting, a G2B Meeting focusing on Energy partnership was held virtually. In June, 2014, Air India, National Carrier of India started connecting Rome and Milan of Italy with New Delhi giving opportunity to both tourists and business people from India and Italy to visit each other country for both tourism and business purposes.

16. On October 28, 2020 the first 'Indo-Italian High-Level Dialogue on Economical relations' an initiative promoted by AIICP (India-Italy Association for Cooperation and Partnership), in collaboration with Confindustria and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and with the support of the Embassy of Italy in India and the Embassy of India in Italy, was held. It witnessed the participation of 60 CEOs from India and Italy who represented different sectors. Italy ranks 18th in FDI inflows in India during April 2000 to December 2020 with FDI inflow of US \$ 3.02 billion during this period.

Cultural Exchange:

17 The agreement for cultural cooperation was signed in 1976. It was replaced by a new Agreement in July 2004. An Executive Programme for Cultural Cooperation/Cultural Exchange Programme (EPCC/CEP) is signed periodically, under the bilateral cultural agreement. During the visit of the Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni to India on 30-31 October 2017, the CEP between the two countries was renewed for the years 2017-2020. the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between Italy and India entails exchange of students in language programmes as well as other academic courses.

18. There are around 10 Universities/higher education institutions in Italy with highly qualified faculties which conduct courses in Indian art, history and languages. Many of these institutions teach Hindi and Sanskrit to Italian students. An ICCR Chair on Modern Indian History was also established in September 2011 in 'La Sapienza' University in Rome.

19. An 'Indological Conference' was organized by the Mission in collaboration with the academic institutions in the prestigious Museum of Oriental Art (MNAO) in March 2014. On 18th December 2020, Ambassador held DVC with distinguished Indology,

Hindi, and Sanskrit Professors from Sapienza University in Rome. The First International Day of Yoga on June 21st 2015 was celebrated enthusiastically in Italy. Various events were organized in 2018 to celebrate 70 Years of India-Italy relations. ICCR-sponsored kathak dance performance VIVARTA by Kadamb dance group on 5th June in Rome and 7th June at the Royal Palace in Caserta were highlights of the celebrations.

20. In 2020, in accordance with concerns regarding COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing etiquette, almost all the activities of the 6th International Day of Yoga were held online or by gathering of small groups in open air. Mission also celebrated the IDY 2021 in physical mode in various Italian cities and in collaboration with the local city administrations, i.e. Rome, Florence, Naples and in the Republic of San Marino. Common Yoga Practice held in Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome at the presence of over 200 yoga enthusiasts.

21. The Embassy of India launched year-long Festival of India in Italy 'Srijan' on 18 Jan 2021. The festival aims to connect with Italians and present to them an opportunity to experience richness of India's architecture, history, literature and languages. . Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), New Delhi and the University of Naples L'Orientale was signed on April 22, 2021.

Scientific Co-operation

22. An Agreement on S&T Co-operation exists since 1978. The Agreement envisages three yearly action plans under which a maximum of thirty joint research projects can be undertaken. This agreement was replaced by one signed in Nov 2003. Some of the prime areas of joint research are Electronics, Biotechnology, Design Engineering Automotive Technologies, Energy, etc. An Agreement for Audio-visual cooperation was signed between the two countries in 2005.

23. An Executive Programme of Cooperation (EPOC) for three years from 2017-2019 was signed in New Delhi on 18 April 2017. 13 projects for exchange of researchers and 10 significant joint research projects were selected from the priority areas of ICT, renewable energy and health. . The last S&T Committee was held in New Delhi on 29 October 2018. The Jt. Committee agreed to launch the next phase of the S&T Cooperation Programme on applied science, aimed at developing technologies and processes for industrial application.

24. A significant bilateral initiative under the S&T Cooperation Agreement is the India-Trento Programme for Advanced Research (ITPAR). The 4th Phase of the India – Trento Programme for Advanced Research (ITPAR) was launched on 19 June 2018. ITPAR Joint Scientific Committee which met on 18 & 19 June 2018 recommended joint activities in the areas of (i) Microsystems (ii) Telecommunication (iii) Cognitive Neurosciences (iv) Renewable Energy and (iv) Quantum Physics for the next three years. The India-Italy Innovation Day was held virtually on 14th July 2021. On March 17, 2021 Italy joined the India led International Solar Alliance.

Defence

25. Defence cooperation has traditionally been an important pillar of India-Italy relations. An MOU on Defence Cooperation was signed in November 1994.

26. Indian Army has a historical connect with Italy. The 4th, 8th and 10th Indian Divisions, with more than 50,000 troops, played a significant role in one of the bitterest advances of the allied forces for the liberation of Italy in the Second World War. The Indian contingent was the third largest after the American and English contingents. Out of the twenty Victoria Crosses awarded in the Italian Campaign, six were awarded to Indians.

27. *General MM Naravane, Chief of Army Staff visited Italy from 07-08 July 2021.* He inaugurated an Indian Army memorial in the famous town of Cassino. The memorial has been built to pay homage to Indian soldiers who lost their lives during World War II.

Indian Community

28. The Indian community in Italy (estimated at 2.4 lakhs and 25000 PIOs) is the third largest community of Indians in Europe after UK and the Netherlands. According to official Italian data, there are 1.65 lakhs legal Indian migrants year 2020 (As per official data with the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy: Year 2020) accounting 4.4% of the non-EU citizens and 5th largest foreign community in Italy. As first generation migrants, majority of them are engaged in economic sectors such as agriculture, dairy farming, leather industry, construction works and in service industry. A significant proportion of the Indian diaspora is concentrated in the northern Italy regions like Lombardia, Piemonte, Veneto and Emilia Romagna regions, Central Italy like Florence, Rome and Southern Italy like Campania, Puglia and Calabria. . In order to reach out to the Indian community members, Embassy is hosting monthly webinars. This has emerged as an effective way of reaching out to the Indian community and is highly appreciated by them.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Rome website:

<http://www.indianembassyrome.in/>

August 2021