

India-Serbia Relations

Political Relations

India-Serbia relations are warm and friendly drawing their strength from the shared values of Non-Alignment as the pillar of the Foreign Policy and the personal friendship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Marshall Tito the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement. The relations deepened over the years with regular high level visits till the end of 1980s. Once a vibrant relationship, the ties became muted after the collapse of former Yugoslavia, the imposition of UN Sanctions and NATO bombing. The Visits resumed last decade, but the frequency was markedly reduced with no exchange of HOG/HOS level visit for more than 25 years. Serbia, however, remains a pro-India country.

The bilateral relationship was energized with the visit of Smt. Preneet Kaur, Minister of State for External Affairs in November 2013 when the Serbian establishment signalled its intention to reconnect with its traditional ally. MOS(PK) was received by the entire Serbian Establishment and held meetings with the President, Speaker of National Assembly, Prime Minister, First Dy. Prime Minister(PM-designate), Minister of Economy and the Foreign Minister. Both sides reiterated support to each other on core issues of Kosovo and expansion of the UN Security Council. The Serbian side thanked India for its consistent support to Serbia by not recognizing the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Kosovo and conveyed its support for India's efforts for UN Reforms, including expansion in the permanent and non-permanent category of UNSC, and India's candidature for permanent category. Two Agreements: India-Serbia Agreement on Serbia's Accession to WTO and the 99 year lease of Embassy Residence were signed during the visit. Accompanied by the Foreign Minister of Serbia, MOS(PK) attended the soft launch of the second phase of IT Park at Indijia being developed by Bangalore based Embassy Group.

In recent years, the regional situation in the Balkans has stabilised and Serbia has achieved internal political stability. Politically, with the landslide victory achieved by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) led by Mr. Aleksandar Vucic, the current first Dy. Prime Minister & PM-designate, the country can expect faster reforms and accelerated development. The current Government has made FDI inflow number one priority and offers an attractive FDI package. To be able to benefit the eventual accession to EU by 2020, the country will require major structural reforms in industry, agriculture, education, energy, land use and in general business environment. Balanced growth, relying much more on exports, integration with Europe and emerging markets will be its growth path.

Existing Agreements/MOUs provide the necessary framework to give momentum to bilateral relations and identify areas for further enhancement of cooperation. These include BIPA, DTAC, Air Services Agreement, Trade Agreement, Agreement on Cooperation in S&T, Agreement on Cooperation in Agriculture & Allied Sectors, Tourism, Visa Exemption, Foreign Service Training, Institutional mechanisms such as Foreign Office Consultations and Joint Economic Committee etc.

Additionally, Agreements on Cooperation in the fields of Culture, Arts, Sports, Youth and Mass Media and MOU on Cooperation in Traditional Medicines have been finalized. Bilateral MOU on cooperation in ICT is under discussion.

Bilateral Visits (2008-2013)

Incoming Visits

- March 2009 - Shri Nanda Kumar, Agriculture Secretary.
- Sept 2011 - Smt. Preneet Kaur, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs for 50th anniversary commemoration of NAM.
- July 2012 - Smt. B.B Harrison, Additional Secretary (CE), MEA.
- Nov. 2013 - Smt. Preneet Kaur, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs.

Outgoing Visits

- Feb 2008 - Dr. Ana Pesikan, Minister of Science
- Apr 2008 - Ms. Jasna Matic, State Secretary, Ministry of Economy and Regional Development
- Sept 2008 - Mr. Vuk Jeremic, Foreign Minister of Serbia
- May-June 2010: - Ms. Jasna Matic, Minister of Telecommunications and Information Society [to attend Fifth World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-10) held in Hyderabad].

Cooperation in Multilateral Affairs

Serbia and India have 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 and India has extended support to Serbia on the Kosovo issue whenever the matter came up at the United Nations. India supported candidature of Mr. Vuk Jeremic, former Serbian Foreign Minister, as President of UNGA in 2012-13 and Serbia's candidature for ECOSOC for the term 2014-16. Serbia supported the candidature of Mr. Narinder Singh for re-election to the International Law Commission (2012-16) and also voted for India at the elections in ICAO and for the position in the UN Board of Auditors. During the visit of MOS (PK) in Nov. 2013, both India and Serbia reiterated mutual support on core issues- Kosovo for them and expansion of UNSC in our case.

ITEC Cooperation

Over the past few years, ITEC Programme has emerged as an important pillar of bilateral relations. The number of ITEC scholars from Serbia has increased substantially in the last two years and the number of slots has increased from 25 to 35 per year. More than 90 Serbian ITEC-trainees have or are undergoing training in India in various sectors like IT, communications, English language, SMEs, management, finance, textiles, rural development, environment etc. ITEC Day 2014 was well attended by ITEC Alumni, senior

Ministers & officials of the Serbian Government and members of the media. A publication ITEC-Serbian experience was brought out to mark the occasion.
Defence

The Serbian Defence industry led by state run company YugolImport SDPR and Sloboda arms factory participated in Defexpo from 6-9 February 2014 in New Delhi to be followed by the visit of an integrated defence team for talks on technology transfer and joint production. Earlier, a two member team from Ministry of Defence visited Serbia from 14th to 21st April 2013 in connection with Pre-dispatch inspection of the bulk lot of NGB Propellants.

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 was nearly US\$ 500 million in the late 1980s. Bilateral Trade has been picking up slowly over last couple of years and by end of 2013 stood at US\$ 182.62 million. Main items of exports from India are pharmaceuticals & chemical products, soybean oilcake/coffee/sesame seeds and food products, products of iron & steel, textile yarn, garments & footwear, plastics in primary forms and products). Main items of export from Serbia were cigarettes/ tobacco, organic chemicals, industrial machinery, footwear & apparel, metal waste & scrap.

Through a judicious mix of trade policy, high level visits, public diplomacy and development partnership, a special effort is being made to revive Indian presence in Serbia- the epicentre of the Balkans – a country which has positioned itself as the gateway for Indian to 800 million consumers of Europe and CIS.

Mission also actively encourages Indian companies to trade with and invest in Serbia. Mission also actively participates in the commercial/business events in Serbia to bring awareness in Serbian Market of India's economic progress and showcase its advances in the fields of ICT, Agriculture etc.

Recent developments

Mission organized the visit of a high level delegation from Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) to participate in the CII Partnership Summit 2014, in Bangalore, India from 27-29 January. In addition, business road-shows were organized in 4 cities, including New Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bangalore and Mumbai where meetings were also held with Government functionaries including Ministers. An MOU was signed between CII and SCCI and a round table was organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in New Delhi. The delegation also discussed with Indian businessmen about the possibility of investing in over 100 Serbian projects, worth around Euro 7 billion in total.

A business delegation from India is expected to participate in the 81st International Agriculture Fair in Novi Sad from 20-26 May 2014. The event provides an excellent platform to showcase India's capabilities in Agri-processing & Agri-food, Chemical,

Pharmaceutical, Automotive, IT, Textiles & Leather Industry and Agricultural Machinery, Engineering goods & Electrical Industry etc. and promote a strong 'Brand India' image in the region. The event will also be used to project India's Culture, Tourism, Bollywood and Cuisine etc.

A team of eminent Indian scientists have been invited to visit Serbia in May 2014 to scope out areas of cooperation and set up joint Centres of Excellence and create joint ventures for industrial application of research. The team will include scientists in the sectors of Bio-medicine (including Pharmacy and Biotechnology), New Materials and Nanotechnology, Ecology, Energy and Energy Efficiency, Agriculture and Food and ICT.

As per the provisions of India-Serbia Agreement on cooperation in the field of Agriculture & Allied Sectors, a Joint Commission on Agriculture has been set up to implement the provisions of the agreement. India's Ministry of Agriculture has invited its Serbian counterpart for the first meeting of the Joint Commission on Agriculture in New Delhi in coming weeks to cooperate in the areas of scientific and technical information, implementation of joint research programmes in the field of agriculture and food industry, organisation of training programmes, seminars and visits of experts & consultants, exchange of good quality hybrids of fields crops and vegetables/fruits, R&D, agro processing, veterinary, joint ventures and B2B cooperation in agriculture and food industry.

Serbia used to be a major center of film production in Yugoslav days; the competences are still there but the facilities are idle. Serbia Film Commission is leading a delegation to India in April 2014 to meet with their film and TV counterparts seeking bilateral cooperation in film production and distribution.

Bilateral Trade (in US\$ Million)

US\$ million	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
India's exports	109.02	113.36	152.55	153.56	173.88
India's imports	05.01	09.66	08.39	4.87	08.74
Total trade	114.03	123.02	160.94	158.43	182.62

Indian Investments

- An Indian real estate company, Embassy Group from Bangalore, has developed an IT Park in the town of Indjija near Belgrade. It is an ambitious project with an estimated value of around USD 650 million when all phases of the project are completed. First phase commitment was for USD 20 million has been completed and the soft launch of the second phase took place during the visit of Hon'ble MOS(PK) in November 2013. The IT Park in Indjija is strategically positioned at the crossroads of Western and Eastern Europe, on Pan-European Corridors 7 and 10. The campus will include IT corporate offices, a data center and an IT Academy. It has the potential to become a regional IT hub.

- The Serbian company "Agropanonka MTZ Finke" in collaboration with Mahindra & Mahindra India opened an assembly line for Mahindra tractors in Novi Sad in April 2013. The plan is to annually assemble 1,000 Mahindra tractors.
- Indian tractor manufacturer Sonalika signed a strategic partnership with the Serbian company "FPM Agromehanika" from Boljevac in March 2013. Agromehanika will assemble Sonalika tractors under the brand Solis. The plan is to assemble from 1000 to 4000 tractors annually by 2016 for the Serbian and regional markets.
- Indian companies Amalgamations Limited (TAFE), Ranbaxy, Himalaya Herbals and Panacea Biotech have local representatives in Serbia.
- Another Indian company M/s. Usha Industries signed a joint venture in November 2005 with a Serbian state-owned company-JPPEU for lifting Boron ore for export to India. The company plans to invest over 2-3 million Euros in installing machinery specific to Serbian boron ore.

Cultural Relations

Serbia is a culturally vibrant country and Serbians value people to people contacts. There is a lot of interest in Indian culture and Indian TV serials like Ballika Badhu shown on local TV are very popular. Mission has been taking initiatives to enhance and deepen its activities both in the traditional fields of cultural promotions, but also exploring innovative ideas in expanding its outreach.

With the Embassy's initiative, an Indian Cultural Centre has been created harnessing energies of local India-centric organisations such as the Yoga federation of Serbia, Yoga Academy, Yoga TV etc to take the cultural diplomacy to the next level. Indian cultural events like film festival, food festival, Mahatma Gandhi anniversary etc. are regularly held by the Mission and local TV and media organisations are mobilised to create and spread awareness of India.

There is a tremendous interest in Yoga in Serbia with almost all streams of Yoga being taught and practiced. An International conference on Yoga is being organised to be held in September 2014. Mission with the assistance of MEA XP Division has part funded a book of Yoga in Serbian "Yoga – Mind and Body" by Professor Dusan Pajin.

There is also lot of interest in Serbia on Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore visited Serbia in 1926 and gave two lectures in the Belgrade University. Serbia has two streets named after Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru with the busts of the two leaders. The streets were named in 1970s and the busts of the leaders installed in late 1990 (Pt. Nehru) & 2005 (Mahatma Gandhi). Films/exhibitions based on Mahatma Gandhi have been regularly screened/hosted in Serbia. Events are held for garlanding of the busts of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru during Gandhi Jayanti and Pt. Nehru's birth celebration.

In recent months, the following cultural activities were scheduled:

- a) In collaboration with the Museum of Yugoslav Film Archive (Kinoteka) a well-attended Festival of Indian Films "100 Years of Indian Cinema" was organized from 17-22 September 2013 at Kinoteka Cinema Hall, Belgrade. The Film Street of Belgrade did open-air screening of 'Taare Zameen Par' and "Gandhi".
- b) Gandhi Jayanti was celebrated with the garlanding of the bust of the Mahatma in New Belgrade. Representatives from the Media, Yoga federation, members of Indian and Serbian Community were present during the function. The Deputy Mayor of New Belgrade represented the Municipality of New Belgrade. A well-attended screening of the film "Making of the Mahatma" was organized at the University of Belgrade. Professor Dusan Pajin gave a public lecture devoted to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi at the University of Belgrade on 25th September 2013. Nehru Jayanti was similarly celebrated.
- c) Photographic Exhibitions of Mahatma Gandhi were organized at Svilajnac and Belgrade during September 2013.
- d) For the first time Indian Embassy participated in the Belgrade International Book Fair 20-27th October 2013 in association with the Government of India Tourist Office, Frankfurt and National Book Trust, India. It is proposed to make the participation an annual event which is visited by several thousands from the country and the region.
- e) Mr. Goran Paskljevic, Serbian Film Director attended the 44th International Film Festival, held in Goa, India, in November 2013 as the President of the Jury. A retrospective of his Serbian films were held in 4 cities of India. Mr. Stefan Arsenijevic, a Serbian Film Director is a jury member in the International Children Film Festival organised by the City Montessori School, Lucknow from 7-15th April 2014.
- f) The Embassy of India in cooperation with the Government of India Tourism Office, Frankfurt has started a Brand India campaign "Incredible India" by displaying beautiful video clips of Indian nature, people and culture on LED billboards in Belgrade city and exterior branding of two Belgrade city transport busses plying in Belgrade.
- g) In collaboration with the Tourist Office, Frankfurt, Mission participated in the 36th International Fair of Tourism held in Belgrade from 27th February to 2nd March 2014. The 'Incredible India' Stall was inaugurated by Ambassador along with the Speaker, National Assembly of Serbia and the Minister of Regional Development and Local Self-Government & and Minister of Economy of Serbia. The Indian Stall was visited by thousands of visitors including Mr. Goran Paskaljevic, famous Serbian Director who was the President of the Jury in the Goa Film Festival held in November 2013; President of Serbian Tourism Organization, members of the diplomatic corps, tour operators etc.

- h) India Fashion Show as part of the Belgrade Fashion Week was held in April 2014 with collections of Mr. Manish Arora, internationally renowned Indian Fashion designer. This was held in collaboration with Government of India Tourist Office, Frankfurt. The event evoked overwhelming response from the Serbian industry and fashion community apart from local media.
- i) Indian Wrestling team participated in the World Wrestling Championship 2013 held at Zrenjanin from 18 to 26th August 2013. Indian Team won two medals: Mr. Balraj got Silver in 76 Kg. Free Style and Mr. Jatin got Bronze in 42 Kg. Free Style. I
- j) Indian Women's Boxing team consisting of seniors, juniors and sub-juniors participated in the 3rd Nations Cup Boxing Tournament held in Vrbas, Serbia from 8th to 12th January 2014. The Indian senior team won 1 silver and 4 bronze medals and the junior team (under 19) won two gold medals, 3 silver and 3 bronze medals, and sub-junior (under 17) won 3 gold medals and 2 bronze medals. The Indian team was placed as overall runners-up in the tournament.
- k) At the International Conference "Serbia between East and West; Science, Education, Culture and Art" organised by the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, on 27th September, three India related papers were presented: Inter-Cultural Perspectives, Tagore and Serbia by Prof. Dipanita Datta of Jadhavpur University, Tagore's educational ideas by Prof. Aleksandra Maksic and South Asian/Indian Studies in Russia by Prof. Sergei Serebriany.

Major forthcoming events are:

- a) A Rajasthani Folk Dance Troupe is to visit Serbia from 21st to 25th May and will be part of India's participation in the Novi Sad International Agriculture Fair.
- b) A Kathak Dance Troupe is to visit Serbia from 20th 25th May to perform in different cities of Serbia.

Indian Community

There are no PIOs of note in Serbia.

For more information and latest updates please visit
Embassy of India, Belgrade website:
<http://eoibelgrade.gov.in/>

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