

India-Serbia Bilateral Relations

Political Relations

India and Serbia (formerly 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 consultation and dialogue between the concerned parties. In line with its policy, India has consistently opposed Kosovo's membership of various international bodies. Serbia has consistently supported India in multilateral fora including India's candidatures to various international organizations.

After the formation of the new Serbian government on August 11, 2016, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic, First Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic, and Speaker, National Assembly, Ms Maja Gojkovic, were extended formal invitations to visit India. On the sidelines of 71st UNGA, Minister of State for External Affairs M.J. Akbar met Serbian First Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic during which the Serbian side conveyed gratitude for India's consistent support on the Kosovo issue. Serbian leadership condemned the Uri terror attacks and expressed solidarity with India in the fight against terrorism.

MOS (PMO) Dr. Jitendra Singh visited Serbia from 12-16 October 2016 and met top Serbian leadership, including 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. A roundtable was held with professionals and businessmen. MOS (PMO) addressed the Serbian civil society at the Gandhi Jayanti and International Day of Non-Violence event at Gandhi Street in New Belgrade.

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

- Non-Permanent Membership of UNSC (2011-12)
- CAG's appointment as External Auditor of IAEA (2011)
- Re-election to the UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD - 2011)
- Election to the International Court of Justice (2012)
- Re-election to the Council of Administrations & the Postal Operations Council of Universal Postal Union (2012)
- Re-election to the Council of Int'l Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Part-II (2013)
- Re-election to the International Law Commission (2012-16)
- Election to ICAO (2013)
- 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)
- Post of Director (Capacity Building) at the World Customs Organization (2015 - the Indian candidate did not win)
- Re-election to the Council of International Maritime Organization (IMO) in Category 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)
- Non-Permanent Membership of UNSC (2021-22)

MOU on Cooperation in the field of IT & Electronics was signed in October 2016. MOU on Cooperation in the fields of Culture, Arts, Youth, Sports & Mass Media is ready for signatures. Revised text of the Air Services Agreement has been recently finalized to improve air connectivity. MOUs on Agriculture and Science & Technology are in the process of implementation. The existing agreements include Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection Agreement (BIPPA - under revision), Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC) & Trade Agreement (MFN status). All working group meetings have been held.

Around 140 Serbian ITEC-trainees have undergone training in India including in IT, telecommunications, WTO, English language, SMEs, management, finance, textiles, rural development, environment, etc. Serbia has been allocated 25 slots for 2016-17.

Indian passport holders with Schengen/UK/US visas are now allowed visa free entry into Serbia for 90 days to boost business and tourism. India has extended e-Tourist Visa (eTV) facility which is gaining popularity and over 250 Serbian nationals have utilized the facility this year. The number of Serbian tourists registered 20% year on growth in 2016.

Economic & Commercial Relations

In 2015, bilateral trade between India and Serbia amounted to US\$ 145.6 million with Indian exports at US\$ 140.0 million and imports at US\$ 5.6 million.

Indian investments in Serbia are as follows:

- Euro 15 million (USD 20 million) has been invested by Bangalore-based real estate company Embassy Group in development of an IT Park in the town of Indjija near Belgrade.
- Punjab-based Sonalika Group established an assembly line of tractors in Boljavac, Serbia in collaboration with the Serbian company FPM Agromehanika AD under the brand SOLIS in 2014. The two companies are presently negotiating joint investment for the second phase of the project which was initially planned for assembly of 1000 tractors annually at an investment of USD 14 million.
- Mahindra Tractors also have an assembly line through Serbian company Agropanonka.
- TAFE Tractors (Amalgamations Group, Chennai) are sold here and they are looking at acquiring Serbia's IMT brand.
- Indian pharma companies, namely, Himalaya Herbals, Panacea Biotec, HiMedia Laboratories, etc have local representatives.

The first India-Serbia Business Forum was launched in Belgrade on 27th June 2016. Sectors such as ICT, Agriculture, Biotechnology, Textile, Film Making, Pharmaceuticals were identified as having immediate potential for improving bilateral trade. Duty differential for Indian imports and complex registration procedures for Indian pharma products were cited as some of the hurdles. In a study by Deloitte (Serbia), sectors of opportunity identified for Indian companies are chemical industry, agri-machinery industry, pharma, transportation, agriculture, mining and textile.

Business visas to Serbian companies have grown by 22%. Serbian companies regularly participate 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, Indian Fashion Jewellery & Accessories Show (IFJAS), INDIASOFT. Mission participates in local and regional fairs in Serbia including Tourism Fair, Book Fair, Agriculture Fair, Auteur Film Festival, etc.

Cultural Relations

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 at Jagodina (2016); (iv) AYUSH Information Cell in the Embassy; (v) Festival of India (2017); (vi) Deputation of 'Tabla' teacher; (vii) International Ayurveda Symposium, Belgrade (May 2016). The 2nd International Day of yoga (IDY) on June 19, 2016 at the ramparts of the National Assembly of Serbia was graced by H.E. Ms. Tamara Vučić, wife of Serbian PM.

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

- (i) Belgrade International Book Fair;
- (ii) Belgrade International Tourism Fair (Incredible India);
- (iii) Belgrade Fashion Week (Manish Arora);
- (iv) Belgrade Design Week (Satya Sheel); and
- (v) Auteur Film Festival ('Court' & 'The Fourth Direction').

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" Indian percussion group led by Pandit Sadanand Naimpalli (2015)
- Bharatnatyam group led by Ms Jyotsana Jagannathan (2015)
- Guitar group led by Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt for 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)

Recent Indian exhibitions held in Serbia include:

- Saree Exhibition and Saree 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 Chandigarh Rock Garden at Jagodina Museum (2016)

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; etc. (2015, 2016). Hindi Diwas, Ambedkar Jayanti and Sardar Patel Jayanti are commemorated through local universities, schools and organizations.

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

- Establishment of an AYUSH Information Cell (2016-17).
- Workshop on “Traditional Medicine – Goals & Challenges” in the Serbian Ministry of Health (April 2015).
- Training of three Serbian medical doctors specializing in Yoga, Ayurveda & Homeopathy in AYUSH institutions for clinical application of Indian traditional medicines in primary health care centres of Serbia (2015-16).
- ‘Ayurveda Tourism’ at the 38th International Tourism Fair of Belgrade in February 2016. Ayurveda workshop and free consultations on Ayurveda were organized during the fair in cooperation with Serbian medical practitioners belonging to Ayurveda Association of Serbia.
- International Ayurveda Symposium in Belgrade on 9-10 May 2016 jointly organised by the Serbian Association for Ayurveda, Serbian Society for Public Health, “Maharishi College for Perfect Health” and Vanoushadhi Vidhya Peeth, India.
- ‘Padma Shri’ conferred on Mr Predrag K Nikic, President of the Yoga Federation of Serbia (2016).
- Commissioning of special video “Yoga from the rooftops of Serbia” (2015).
- 24-page special supplement on Yoga published in the monthly business magazine CorD on the occasion of IDY 2015.
- 2nd IDY celebrated across Serbia in cooperation with the Serbian government and the UN followed by Yoga and Ayurveda workshops (June 2016).

India receives positive coverage in Serbian print media. Special supplements on India are regularly published. The national broadcaster Radio & Television of Serbia (RTS) regularly telecasts Indian documentaries. Local TV channels telecast Indian TV Serials and of late, a local channel PRVA TV has started telecast of Bollywood movies. Indian film shootings have commenced in Serbia. First India-Serbia joint production ‘Dev Bhoomi’ by Serbian Director Goran Paskaljevic was shot in Uttaranchal. There are no resident correspondents in India or Serbia.

Indian Community

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

Embassy of India, Belgrade : <https://eoibelgrade.gov.in/>
Embassy of India - Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInSerbia>
Embassy of India - Twitter : <https://twitter.com/IndiaInSerbia>
Monthly India Newsletter : <https://www.eoibelgrade.gov.in/pages.php?id=56>

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