

India-Ireland Relations

Historical Background

Ireland's connections with India go back to the nineteenth century, when hundreds of Irish missionaries and educationists set up educational, healthcare and social help institutions across the length and breadth of British India. Around the same time, several Irish nationals served in British India as soldiers, civil servants, doctors and engineers, many of them making distinguished contributions to social and economic projects in India. The descendants of these Irish men and women continue to harbour warm feelings for India.

Political Relations

At the political level, the connections developed between the nationalist movements of the two countries in the late nineteenth century when the Indian National Congress and the Irish nationalist movement maintained close contacts. The relations were further enhanced by the mutual admiration of Jawaharlal Nehru and the Irish leader Eamon De Valera in their common struggle against foreign rule in their respective countries. Extensive references to the Irish connections are seen in "Glimpses of World History". Other Indian leaders like Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and Vithalbhai Patel were also in touch with Irish nationalist leaders. The mutual influence is evident in the fact that Part IV of the Indian Constitution – the Directive Principles of State Policy – is drawn from Article 45 of the Irish Constitution.

In the field of literature, close interaction existed between Nobel laureates Rabindranath Tagore and W.B. Yeats.

To celebrate these historical links, a road in Chanakyapuri in New Delhi was named Eamon de Valera Marg in March 2007. In September 2011, a bust of Rabindranath Tagore was installed in St. Stephen's Green, the only non-Irishman to be so honoured at this most prestigious of locations in Dublin.

Formal diplomatic links were established in 1947. India opened an Embassy in Dublin in 1951 and Ireland in New Delhi in 1964. Recognising the importance of high level visits in forging ties between two countries, political leaders exchanged visits when India became independent and Ireland declared itself a republic. Irish Presidents Eamon de Valera [1948], Dr Patrick Hillery [1979] and Mrs Mary Robinson [1993] visited India. Indian Presidents Dr S. Radhakrishnan [1964] and Shri N. Sanjiva Reddy [1982] visited Ireland. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited Ireland in 1949 and 1956. Irish PM Garrett Fitzgerald visited India for the funeral of Smt Indira Gandhi in 1984. PM Bertie Ahern paid an official visit to India in January 2006.

Five rounds of bilateral Foreign Office Consultations have taken place, the last in New Delhi in September 2009.

Economic Relations

The close political solidarity between India and Ireland did not translate into strong trade links in the early decades at independence because of different levels of development

of the two countries, distinct domestic preoccupations and geographical distance. The resurgence of the 1990s reignited mutual interest in intensification of business links, resulting in rapid growth in bilateral trade in recent years. India was added as a focus country after 2004, with emphasis added by the visit to India of the Irish PM in January 2006 with a large trade delegation. Bilateral trade has shown a significant growth rate; the annual trade turnover in goods and services was about Euro 1 billion in 2010. In the first 4 months of 2011, the trade turnover rose by nearly 45% over the corresponding period in 2010. The launch of an Ireland-India Business Association in 2008 has significantly enhanced interactions between the business communities of the two countries.

Investment

Wockhardt, Ranbaxy and Reliance Life Sciences have all acquired pharmaceutical manufacturing units in Ireland. Crompton Greaves has [though a Belgian subsidiary] acquired a transformer manufacturing unit and a substation equipment unit in Ireland. Deepak Fasteners has taken over the Irish unit of the industrial fasteners brand Unbrako. Tata Consultancy Services has an office in Dublin and extensive business in Ireland. In May 2010, Hindustan Zinc purchased Ireland's biggest zinc mine [Lisheen] from the Anglo-American group.

A number of Irish IT companies have opened offices in different cities in India. Many multinationals operating in Ireland have outsourced their back offices and after-sales servicing to India. Irish company CRH invested €290 million to obtain controlling rights in a Hyderabad-based cement company, '*My Home Industries*'. Irish food-processing company Total Produce has launched a joint venture in 2008 with Tata Chemicals, and another with a Delhi-based company for fresh food depots in Haryana and Delhi for supply to retail markets. Medical research company ICON has set up a clinical trials research laboratory in Bangalore with research centres in New Delhi, Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram. Irish interest in India as a tourist destination is growing, partly owing to the Incredible India campaign.

Education

Ireland is becoming a significant destination for Indian students seeking higher education, particularly for post-graduate, doctoral and post-doctoral students in the areas of engineering/technology. Attracting more students from India, including at the under-graduate level, is a major focus area of some of Ireland's high-quality universities. About 850 Indian students study in Irish higher education institutions. Ireland's premier university, Trinity College, launched a South Asia Initiative, with its main thrust on India, covering multidisciplinary research and study. An ICCR funded Chair in Indian Studies commenced from January 2011. The College has also established an India Studies Chair in its History Department from December 2010 partly funded by the Indian community in Ireland.

Science and Technology

A bilateral programme of cooperation in Science & Technology was signed in May 2009. The visit highlighted strong mutual interest in collaboration between Indian and Irish research institutions in frontier areas such as microelectronics, biotechnology,

nanosciences etc. Efforts are underway to promote cooperative arrangements between research institutions through joint research projects and exchanges of researchers.

Culture

A bilateral cultural agreement was signed during the visit of the Irish Prime Minister to India in January 2006. There is genuine interest in Indian culture in Ireland and private organisations regularly arrange Indian cultural performances in the country. A variety of Indian spiritual leaders visit Ireland regularly. Practice of yoga is widespread in Ireland. Ayurvedic and other naturopathic systems are growing in popularity.

Indian Community

There are about 25,000 Indians or persons of Indian origin in Ireland. The bulk of the community is in healthcare [doctors and nurses], IT, engineering and senior management positions. The community is well-regarded locally and has integrated well into Irish society. Given its profile, the community is an important resource for the promotion of India-Ireland relations.

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