

## India - Albania Relations

**Political Relations:** India established diplomatic relations with Albania in 1956 with the Indian Ambassador in Rome concurrently accredited to Tirana. They were suspended in 1964-65. In 1984, Albania signaled its interest for better relations with India and India's Ambassador in Bucharest accredited to Tirana from 27 April, 1990. A spate of high level visits followed thereafter from either side. A Parliamentary delegation led by Speaker of the Albanian Parliament Jozefina Topalli visited India in December, 2010 and met Mrs. Meira Kumar, Speaker Lok Sabha. MOS (PK) Mrs. Preneet Kaur visited Albania from July 7-10, 2012 along with a business delegation of CII and called on PM, Speaker, Deputy PM and Minister of Economy, FM, and had delegation-level talks with FM. Agreed Minutes were signed between CII and Albanian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry. CII delegation had interaction with National Investment Board of Albania. Albanian Minister for Energy and Industry visited India (18-22 January 2015) during which he had meetings with MOS (PK), MOS (IC), ASSOCHAM and others.

Albania opened its Embassy in New Delhi in early 2008 and the first Albanian Ambassador to India presented his credentials to the President in October, 2010. Since August, 2014 Albania has closed its Embassy in New Delhi together with some other Asian countries as part of austerity measure. Albanians obtain visa from Indian Embassy in Bucharest whereas Indians obtain visas at Albanian Embassy in China. Bilateral relations between India and Albania are cordial and friendly. Mother Teresa is an important bond between the two countries. The International Airport in Tirana is named after Mother (Nene) Teresa who is regarded as an Albanian national icon.

A Protocol for Foreign Office Consultations was signed and Foreign office Consultations were held in February 2003 in Tirana and in January 2006 in New Delhi. Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with Albania was signed in New Delhi on July 8, 2013. Discussions have also taken place on Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPA). More recently, an agreement for visa free travel for holders of diplomatic and official passports of either country was signed with Albania in November 2015. India has also appointed an Honorary Consul in Albania since 2004 to look after India's interests and to provide support to Indian community in Albania. The First Lady of Albania Mrs. Odeta Nishani visited India in December 2015 to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> World Confluence of Humanity, Power and Spirituality, held in New Delhi, 22-23 December 2015.

### Commercial Relations

India Albania bilateral trade has been rather modest. During 2014-15 India's bilateral trade with Albania stood at US\$ 70.18 million (Imports US\$ 50.76 million and Exports US\$ 19.42). Principal export commodities were Aluminum and articles thereof, Pharmaceuticals, coffee, tea, spices, chemicals, vegetable products, mechanical and electrical machinery and equipment, textiles, construction material, sugar products, tires and plastic products. There are several shops in Albania which sell Indian products such as textiles, fashion garments, souvenirs, furniture and furnishings. India imports chemical industry products, copper ore concentrates, plant extracts for pharmaceutical use, inorganic chemicals and metal alloys. During the recent bilateral exchanges Albania has expressed keen interest in attracting Indian investment in the field of energy, agriculture, infrastructure, chemicals, IT parks, pharmaceuticals etc. An Indian investor has made a modest investment in chromium mining industry in Albania.

## **Cultural Relations**

The people of Albania have an abiding interest in Indian culture, dances and films. There is a strong interest among Albanian students for availing ICCR and ITEC scholarships. In addition Albanians visit India for yoga, spiritualism and study of Indian languages, dances etc. Local TV Channels occasionally telecast India movies, documentaries and programmes. Some Indian movies were also shot in Albania. An ICCR sponsored cultural troupe visited Albania and performed on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of Albania's independence in November 2012. Albanians have utilized ITEC training courses quite effectively since their introduction in 1995. Albanian diplomats have also shown keen interest in PCFD Courses organized by FSI and many diplomats have already benefitted from training at FSI. There has also been a steady increase of visitors to India from Albania.

## **Indian community:**

The Indian community in Albania is less than 100. Some Indian nationals are engaged in the pharmaceutical sector, importing and selling Indian medicines. There are a few Indian professionals employed with multinational companies and banks. A few Indians have made a mark as ophthalmological surgeons and optometrists. An Honorary Consul has also been appointed in Tirana to look after the Indian community in Albania. Indian nationals have been facing difficulties in obtaining Albanian visa due to a restrictive visa regime. An informal Indian Association has been formed under the patronage of Embassy and MOS (PK) met the members during her visit in 2012. An Indian Restaurant 'Chakra Jone' was opened in Tirana in 2013.

## **Useful Resources:**

Embassy of India, Bucharest website:

<http://eoiromania.in/>

\*\*\*\*\*

**February 2016**