India – Austria Relations

Political relations

Diplomatic relations between India and Austria were established in 1949. Traditionally India-Austria relations have been warm and friendly. There has been a regular exchange of high level visits between the two countries:

High Level Bilateral Visits

1955 Prime Minister Pandit Nehru
1971 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi
1980 Chancellor Bruno Kreisky
1983 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi
1984 Chancellor Fred Sinowatz
1995 EAM Pranab Mukherjee
1999 President K. R. Narayanan
2005 President Heinz Fischer
2007 Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik
2009 Speaker of Lok Sabha Meira Kumar
2010 Vice Chancellor Josef Pröll
2011 President of National Council of Austrian Parliament Barbara Prammer
2011 President PratibhaDevisinghPatil
2012 President of National Council of Austrian Parliament Barbara Prammer

President of India, Pratibha Devi Singh Patil visited Austria from 4-7 October 2011. The talks covered entire gamut of bilateral relations and international issues of mutual concern. Special emphasis was put on strengthening economic and commercial cooperation, scientific cooperation and people to people exchanges. President Fischer strongly supported India’s place in a reformed UN Security Council. He said that ‘We recognize that the world is changing fast and that the current composition in the Security Council does not reflect the realities of the new world order currently emerging. Your country deserves to play a bigger role in the Security Council’.

Austrian Federal President Dr. Heinz Fischer visited India in February 2005. The Joint Statement issued during the visit highlighted the need to keep up the momentum of exchanging high level visits, expanding and deepening cooperation in power, environment, health infrastructure, biotechnology, information technology, engineering and transport, intensifying cooperation between universities and research institutions, expanding direct air-links between the two countries, condemning terrorism and a dialogue on UN related issues.

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Smt. Meira Kumar led an Indian Parliamentary Delegation to Austria from 14-17 September 2009. Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Josef Pröll accompanied by Federal Minister of Economy, Family & Youth, Mr. Reinhold Mitterlehner, and a 50-member business delegation, visited India from 17-19 February 2010. The President of National Council of Austrian Parliament, Mag. Barbara Prammer visited India from 5-11 February 2011 on an invitation extended by Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mrs. Meira Kumar.
Prof. Saugata Roy, Minister of State for Urban Development visit Austria from 17-19 June 2012 under ADB Technical Assistance to understand best practices in Urban Transport in Austria and to develop similar transport solution in India. The delegation met Mr. Wolfgang Hesoum, General Manager, Siemens AG and Mr. GuenterSteinbauer, Managing Director & Chairman of the Executive Board of Wiener Linien, Vienna.

Austrian Federal Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology, Ms. Doris Bures visited India from 1-4 October 2012. During her visit, she met our Minister for Roads and Surface Transport, Shri C.P. Joshi, Minister for Urban Development, Shri Kamal Nath, and Minister for Shipping, Shri G.K. Vasan.

President of the Austrian National Council, Barbara Prammer visited India to attend the 7th Annual Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament organized by the Indian Parliament and by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in New Delhi from 3-4 October 2012 on the topic of “Gender-Aware Parliaments”.

Austrian Federal Minister for Environment, Forestry, Agriculture and Water Management, NikolausBerlakovich visited India from 16-19 October 2012 to attend a meeting of Conference of State Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Hyderabad.

Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs, H.E. Vayalar Ravi, visited Austria from 3-4 February 2013 along with a 2-member delegation at an invitation from Austrian Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, H.E. Mr. Rudolf Hundstorfer. A Social Security Agreement was signed between India and Austria on 4 February 2013.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Smt. Preneet Kaur led the Indian delegation at the 5th Global Forum of United Nations Summit of Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) held in Vienna on 27-28 February. The theme of the 5th Global Forum of the UNAOC was ‘promoting responsible leadership in diversity and dialogue’. MOS (PK) met the President of the UN General Assembly VukJeremic on the sidelines of the Forum. She also met Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger during her visit.

Indian Minister of Culture ChandreshKumari visited Austria from 5-8 April 2013. During her visit, the Minister met the Austrian Federal Minister of Education, Arts and Culture Claudia Schmied and visited the Conservation Centre at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna as well as the exhibition “India of the Maharajas” currently on display at SchlossSchallaburg.

Dr. Reinhold Lopatka, State Secretary in the Austrian Foreign Ministry led the delegation to India on 11-12 November 2013 to attend the 11th Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (ASEM-FMM) in New Delhi. Dr. Lopatka called on Minister of State for External Affairs, Smt. Praneet Kaur during his visit to India.

**Bilateral Agreements**

Bilateral agreements/MoUs in force include:

(i) Air Services Agreement (1989), MoU on Air Services (June 1997);
(ii) Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (1999);
(iii) Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (1999);
(iv) Agreement on Bilateral Economic Relations and Economic, Industrial, Technical and Technological Cooperation (1999);
(v) MoU on Infrastructure Cooperation in the field of Railways (May 2002);
(vi) Agreement on Cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology (Nov 2007);
(vii) MoU for Infrastructure Cooperation in the Health Sector (February 2005);
(viii) MoU between FICCI and Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) (October 2003)
 and CII and WKO (Nov 1996).
(ix) MoU for cooperation in the field of Agriculture (September 2010)
(x) MoU on scientific cooperation signed between Department of Science and Technology, Government of India and Austrian Science Fund (October 2011)
(xi) MoU on cooperation in the field of Railways signed between Ministry of Railways of India and the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria (October 2011).
(xii) MoU on technology cooperation in the fields if Shipping and Ports (October 2012)
(xiii) Social Security Agreement (February 2013)

Institutional Mechanisms

The main institutional mechanism at governmental level between India and Austria are the Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) and the Joint Economic Commission (JEC). The 14th JEC met in Vienna in 2015; the 5th FOC were held in Vienna in February 2011.

Economic relations

Austria, a member of the European Union since 1995 is an important link for India in its relationship with Europe, especially with countries of central and Eastern Europe. The Indo-Austrian Joint Economic Commission (JEC) established in 1983 is active and on-going (13th session was organized in India on 11 September 2013) between the governmental Ministries and Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the two countries. There has been cooperation in the fields of steel, manufacturing technology, railway and transport, equipment, metallurgy through a large number of collaborations, technology transfers and joint ventures.

Indo-Austrian Bilateral Trade

India’s main exports to Austria are Footwear, Textiles, Articles Of Leather, Articles Of Apparel And Clothing Accessories, Vehicles, Rolling Stock (And Parts And Accessories Thereof), Machinery And Mechanical Appliances (And Parts Thereof), Electrical Machinery And Equipment, Organic Chemicals and Pharmaceutical Products.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indian Exports</th>
<th>Diff. in %</th>
<th>Indian Imports</th>
<th>Diff. in %</th>
<th>Total trade</th>
<th>Diff. in % (total-trade)</th>
<th>Trade Balance</th>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>310.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>372.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>682.7</td>
<td>18.2</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>338.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>527.5</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>866.1</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>-188.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>415.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>608.9</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>1024.0</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>-193.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>439.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>560.4</td>
<td>-8.0</td>
<td>999.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>-121.0</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>483.1</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>654.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>1138.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>-171.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>558.7</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>817.7</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>1376.4</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>-259.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>552.93</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
<td>626.11</td>
<td>-23.4</td>
<td>1179.04</td>
<td>-14.33</td>
<td>-73.18</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>565.85</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>648.50</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1214.35</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>-82.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>617.87</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>594.33</td>
<td>-8.3</td>
<td>1212.20</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>23.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>538.00</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>507.00</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1045.00</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
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<td>(upto Sept)</td>
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**Industrial Collaboration**

The first Indo-Austrian industrial collaboration was signed as early as 1956, for supply of steel manufacturing technology for the Rourkela steel plant. Since then, there have been 200 collaborations, including 100 technical collaboration and 60 joint venture agreements between Indian and Austrian firms.

**Space**

Austria’s first two satellites TUGSAT-1/BRITE and UniBRITE were launched by India’s PSLV-C20 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on 25 February 2013. The two satellites are developed in collaboration with the Institute of Communication Networks and Satellite Communications (IKS) at the Technical University of Graz (TUG), Institute for Astronomy of the University of Vienna, and the Space Flight Lab (SFL) at the University of Toronto Institute Of Aerospace Studies (UTIAS).

**Culture**

Although there is no formal Cultural Exchange Programme between India and Austria, artistes of both countries have been performing regularly in each other’s country.

Artists including Ustad Shujaat Hussain Khan, Ustad Zakir Hussain, Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Sopori father and son and various other artists visited Austria and performed successfully in 2013. Maestro Zubin Mehta continues to be associated with Vienna Philharmonic and has given New Year performances at the famous Music Verein. The New Year Concert of 2015 was conducted by Zubin Mehta.

An ICCR sponsored 3-member Flute group led by Pandit Nityanand Haldipur visited Austria and made two performances on 17& 18 November, 2015. The troupe presented one performances at Off Theater in Vienna and the second at the Anton Brucnker Music University in Linz.

The Film Museum Vienna presented a overview of Ritwik Ghatak’s films January 29 to February 12, 2015 in a major international celebration of the legendary Indian Film Maker. Of late, Bollywood films have begun to be screened at top cineplexes in Vienna. A number of Bollywood films are being filmed in Austria, given its scenic locales.

Yoga and Ayurveda are extremely popular in Austria and numerous Austrians participated in the 1st International Day of Yoga celebrations through out Austria.

**Indology studies in Vienna:** In 1845, Sanskrit began to be taught at the University of Vienna. A chair for Sanskrit studies was established which was later converted into a chair for Indology. In 1955 it transformed itself into a separate Institute for South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies whose main focus is Indology. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for establishment a Short –Term Chair of Indian Studies at the University of Vienna was signed between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCCR) and University of Vienna in February 2011. Till date four experts on History, Anthropology and Sociology have served as Chair at the Institute.

Recent enhancement of financial support by the Ministry of Culture to the India-Austria Friendship Organizations has enabled the Embassy of India to establish relationship with different organizations to organize seminars, symposia, cultural events etc: Institute for
There are an estimated over 20,000 Indians (majority from Kerala and Punjab) living in Austria – working primarily in the Health Care business and self-employed sectors.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India Vienna website: www.indianembassy.at
Embassy of India Vienna facebook: www.facebook.com/IndianEmbassyVienna
Embassy of India Vienna Twitter handle: @IndiainAustria
Embassy of India Vienna newsletter: www.indianembassy.at/newsletter.php

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