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, nourished by the personal friendship of Nehru and Tito and sustained by regular exchange of high level visits until the end of 1980s. Despite the breakup of former Yugoslavia, India and Serbia have continued with the tradition of supporting each other on issues of core interest. Government of India has in recent years consistently supported Serbia against Unilateral Declaration of Independence by Kosovo, an autonomous province of Serbia and currently under the interim administration of UN. India’s stand was reiterated during the visit of Smt. Preneet Kaur, formerly Hon’ble Minister of State for External Affairs in November 2013; two Agreements were signed: India-Serbia Agreement on Serbia’s Accession to WTO and the 99-year lease of Embassy Residence; the first phase of Embassy Group’s IT Park was commissioned.

The new governments of both Serbia and India quickly established contacts after the respective national elections in March/May 2014; PM Narendra Modi and PM Aleksander Vucic exchanged warm messages reiterating their commitment to renew the historic friendship. Government of India provided immediate financial assistance of USD 100,000/- during the catastrophic floods in Serbia in May 2014. Rashtrapati Jji had a bilateral meeting with the President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolic in Moscow in May 2015 wherein India’s stand on Kosovo was reaffirmed. Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic inaugurated the India Pavilion at the 37th Belgrade International Fair of Tourism in February 2015 by lighting the traditional lamp. The Serbian government co-sponsored India’s Resolution at the UN and extended support for the International Day of Yoga celebrations on June 21, 2015. Serbia's First DPM & Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic was chief guest at the 69th Independence Day reception on 15 August 2015. Speaker of the Serbian Parliament Maja Gojkovic was guest of honour at the Gandhi Jayanti & Int'l Day of Non-violence celebrations at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial at Gandhi Street in New Belgrade on 1 October 2015. In a significant move, the Serbian government has allowed visa-free entry upto 90 days for Indian (& other) passports holding Schengen/UK & US visas.

Existing Agreements/MOUs provide 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, Agreements on Cooperation in S&T, in Agriculture & Allied Sectors, Tourism, Visa Exemption for Diplomatic & Official passports, Foreign Service Training, and Institutional mechanisms such as Foreign Office Consultations and Joint Economic Committee etc. Draft MOU on Culture, Arts, Youth, Sports and Mass Media is ready for signatures. Negotiations for an MOU on Cooperation in ICT are ongoing and negotiations for a revised Air Services Agreement have been initiated.

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 Jeremik, former Serbian Foreign Minister, as President of UNGA in 2012-13 and Serbia's candidature for ECOSOC for the term 2014-16. India voted in favour of Serbia's motion against Kosovo's admission at the UNESCO General Conference held in Paris on 9 Nov which helped Serbia secure a victory. Serbia supported the Indian candidates for re-election to the International Law Commission (2012-16), ICAO, UN Board of Auditors, the Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural heritage for the term 2014-2018; the Human Rights Council for 2015-17; Council of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Region E (Asia and Australia) for the term 2015-
18. Serbia also supported India for the post of Director (Capacity Building) at the World Customs Organization held in June 2015 (the Indian candidate did not win) and India’s re-election to the Council of International Maritime Organization (IMO) in Category B at IMO’s 29th Session held in London in Nov 2015.

ITEC Cooperation - More than 100 Serbian ITEC-trainees have undergone mid-career training in India in sectors like IT, communications, English language, SMEs, management, finance, textiles, rural development, environment, etc. All past participants have praised the quality of the courses. Serbia has been allocated 25 slots for 2015-16.

Defence - India purchases some defence equipment, including guns and arms, from Serbia. Kiran-I training aircraft engines are serviced by Serbian company Glotec Ltd. Serbian defence industry led by YugolImport SDPR and Sloboda Arms are participating in Defexpo and Aeroexpo. Indian defence industry consortium have entered into MOUs with Serbian companies for manufacturing of advanced mounted gun systems & air defence systems through transfer of technology under the ‘Make in India’ initiative. Yugolimport visited India (24-26 Nov 2015) at the invitation of Bharat Dynamics Limited, Hyderabad in connection with refurbishment work of vintage KVADRAT missiles. Serbia utilised one slot in the UN Peacekeeping course in India and in reciprocity offered to India a course in CBRN.

Economic & Commercial Relations

More than 50 Serbian companies visited India in 2015 to provide technical support to Indian companies and institutions, particularly in the ICT sector. In addition, a delegation from the National Petroleum Committee of Serbia attended the World Petroleum Council (WPC) Meetings held at New Delhi from 26-30 Oct, 2015. A 2-member team from the Serbian R&D company Sentronis AD were invited by Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) (Nov 2015) for installation and commissioning of 3D magnetic field mapping system purchased by BARC from Sentronis AD. Prof. Dr. Branko Matovic and Dr. Biljana Babic from the Vinca Institute of Nuclear Sciences, Belgrade were invited by IIT-Madras (Jan 2016) for assisting their Department of Metallurgical & Materials Engg. in performing some experiments and deliver scientific lectures.

India-Serbia Joint Economic Committee (JEC) held its second meeting through video conferencing in October 2014. Currently, the main Indian exports to Serbia include Pharmaceutical & chemical products, cotton yarn & textile, readymade garments & footwear, metals, iron & steel products, coffee, sesame seeds and industrial machinery while the main items of import from Serbia are cigarettes/tobacco, Industrial machinery/parts, organic chemicals, office machinery, plastic products, etc. Mission vigorously encourages Indian companies to trade with and invest in Serbia and vice versa. Recent bilateral trade figures are given below (in US$ Million):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015 (upto Nov)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India’s exports</td>
<td>113.36</td>
<td>152.55</td>
<td>153.56</td>
<td>173.88</td>
<td>139.86</td>
<td>127.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>India’s imports</td>
<td>09.66</td>
<td>08.39</td>
<td>4.87</td>
<td>08.74</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>5.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total trade</td>
<td>123.02</td>
<td>160.94</td>
<td>158.43</td>
<td>182.62</td>
<td>148.60</td>
<td>132.80</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In 2015, Serbian companies continued to avail of Indian hospitality packages to participate in (i) India Engineering Sourcing Show (IESS); (ii) India International Handwoven Fair (IIHF); (iii) Gujarat International Handloom & Handicraft Meet “GURJARI”; and Indain Fashion Jewellery & Accessories Show (IFJAS). Serbian models are in great demand by Indian fashion companies.

An official of Serbian Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection attended the exhibition 'AGRIMACH' INDIA 2015’ organized by FICCI in New Delhi from 3-5 December 2015 in partnership with Ministry of Agriculture.
GOI flagship programmes like Make in India, Digital India, Smart Cities Projects, etc. were promoted at the Conference on Women Entrepreneurs (Sep); Digital Conference (Sep); Conference on HR Serbia (Nov). A Workshop on "India - National Economic Projects & Opportunities for Collaboration" was jointly organized (Sep) with the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. RITES Ltd. visited Serbia from 7-9 Apr 2015 to explore participation in Serbian infrastructural and road projects. Serbian subsidiaries of Indian agri-machinery companies such as TAFE, Mahindra and Sonalika have been regularly participating in the Novi Sad International Agriculture Fair held in the month of May every year.

Indian Investments in Serbia

- 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 and the first phase with an initial investment of EUR 15 million (US$20 million) is ready for commissioning. The IT Park has the potential to become an IT hub in Serbia and the region.
- The Serbian company "Agropanonka MTZ Finke" in collaboration with Mahindra & Mahindra opened an assembly line for Mahindra tractors in Novi Sad. The plan is to annually assemble 1,000 Mahindra tractors.
- International Tractors Limited (Sonalika Group) has started assembly line of tractors under the brand SOLIS, in the Serbian city of Boljevac. The two sides have planned to assemble 200 tractors annually by 2015 and to invest USD 14 million in order to assemble 1000 tractors annually by 2017 to cover the regional markets.
- Indian companies Amalgamations Limited (TAFE Tractors), Ranbaxy, Himalaya Herbals and Panacea Biotech have local representatives in Serbia.

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’, ‘Uttaran’ and ‘Na Aana Is Des Laado’ telecast locally are very popular. Mission has taken several initiatives for harnessing energies of local India-centric organisations to take cultural diplomacy to the next level.

Yoga, Ayurveda and Homeopathy are recognized in Serbian law. Yoga is popular with all streams of Yoga being taught and practiced. The Ministry partly funded Serbian book “Yoga - Mind and Body” by an Indologist Professor Dusan Pajin. An eminent local expert on traditional medicines, Prof. Vuk Stambolovic, currently serving as Vice President, Commission of Traditional Medicine, Ministry of Health, helped the Mission in organizing an expert level meeting on “Traditional Medicine – Goals & Challenges” in the Serbian Ministry of Health in April 2015 to facilitate interaction between the heads of local Yoga, Ayurveda & Homeopathy institutions and senior officials of the Ministry. Three medical doctors specializing in Yoga, Ayurveda & Homeopathy have recently visited India for training in AYUSH institutions for clinical application of Indian traditional medicines in primary health care centres of Serbia. Other planned activities include establishment of Ayurveda Information Cell/Centre and International Ayurveda Conference in Belgrade. On 21 June 2015, IDY celebrations were held at the Studentski Park and the picturesque Kalemegdan Fortress in Belgrade and in 50 other cities of Serbia. IDY created greater awareness of the health benefits of Yoga and strengthened Embassy’s relations with different Municipalities of Serbia.

Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and International Day of Non-violence is regularly commemorated at the Gandhi street in Belgrade. In March 2015, the Mission organized a unique interactive multi-media presentation on Mahatma Gandhi by the noted author and speaker Mr. Birad Rajaram Yajnik which was attended by nearly 3000 Serbian nationals and dignitaries.

Embassy's initiatives in recent years in public diplomacy have included participation in Belgrade International Book Fair, Belgrade International Tourism Fair, Belgrade Fashion Week
and Belgrade Design Week. ICCR-led performance groups and exhibitions continued to be popular in Serbia in 2015 including Rudra Veena group, “Katkatha” Puppet Group, Tabla Group and Bharatnatyam dance Group. On the occasion of 69th Independence Day of India, Exhibition “Temples, Forts and Palaces – 2000 Years of Indian Architecture” was hosted by the Gallery of the National Bank of Serbia (20-31 Aug, 2015) and a concert of Indian classical instruments was held in Belgrade, Novi Sad & Zrenjanin (1-3 Sept 2015).

IndiaSerbia Photography Contest Exhibition was held at the Museum of Applied Arts in Belgrade (Feb. 2015). Days of Indian Culture were organized by Leskovac and Zrenjanin Municipalities including ICCR Exhibitions on ‘Digital Prints of Artwork by Tagore’ and ‘Temples, Forts and Palaces of India’ and film screenings. Three Serbian artists participated in the 1st International Watercolor Society India Biennale 2015 held in New Delhi from 3-8 December 2015. Prominent Serbian Cartoonist Toso Borkovic of daily ‘Vecernje Novosti’ won the first prize for his Cartoon with Education as the theme at the International Web Cartoon contest held in India in July 2015.

University of Belgrade commenced a new course ‘Cultural History of India’ in 2015 on popular demand. Regular student exchanges take place under the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Expertise (IAESTE); between 2012 and 2015, 31 Indian and 30 Serbian students benefitted from this programme. An eight-member Serbian team participated in the 46th International Physics Olympiad held at Mumbai in July 2015 and won 3 medals and 2 certificates.

There is close collaboration in the field of films. Prominent Serbian Film Producer & Director Goran Paskaljevic, shot the first ever Indo-Serbian film co-production 'Dev Bhoomi' (Land of the God), based on the theme of girl child education in the backdrop of Uttarakhand. The first Indian film – remake of the French film “Untouchables” – was shot in Serbia. Indian film director Gurvinder Singh’s feature film ‘The Fourth Direction’ won the Grand Prix “Aleksandar Sasa Petrovic” Award for the best film at the 21st Auteur Film Festival held in Belgrade in Dec. 2015. Serbian film director Goran Radovanovic’s film ‘Enclave’ received special mention from the jury at the 46th International Film Festival of India held in Goa from 20-30 Nov 2015. Mr. Nenad Dukic, a noted Serbian film critic, was invited as official jury at the 14th Pune International Film Festival.

Regular exchanges of sportspersons have taken place, including recent participation of Indian Chess player Mr. Siva Mahadevan in the GM Tournament “Sumarice” in Serbia, Serbian tennis players in Indian ITF Tennis Tournaments, 28-member Indian women boxing team in the 5th Nations Cup Boxing Tournament in Serbia; and appointment of Mr. Marko Zarkovic as an international basketball coach by the Rajasthan State Sports Council.

The number of Serbian tourists visiting India showed year on growth of 17% in 2015.

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

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Belgrade Website : [http://eoibelgrade.gov.in/](http://eoibelgrade.gov.in/)
Embassy of India - Facebook : [https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInSerbia](https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInSerbia)
Embassy of India - Twitter : [https://twitter.com/IndiaInSerbia](https://twitter.com/IndiaInSerbia)

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