

## India - Croatia Relations

Relations between India and Croatia have been friendly since the days of the former Yugoslavia (SFRY). Marshal Tito, a Croat, who ruled Yugoslavia for more than three decades, maintained close relations with the then Indian leadership. Nehru and Tito were also pioneers of NAM. Croatia dominated bilateral trade relations accounting for more than two-thirds of trade between India and the former Yugoslavia. This included large scale purchases of Croatian ships by India in the 1970s and 1980s. India recognized Croatia in May 1992 and established diplomatic relations with it on 9 July 1992. Croatia opened its resident mission at New Delhi in February 1995. The Indian Mission in Zagreb was opened on 28 April 1996, and upgraded to Ambassadorial level in January 1998. Bilateral relations remained friendly at the political level but the economic ties have lagged since the Tito era, and the effort is to provide resurgence to this aspect of the relationship. There is good cooperation between the two countries at the multilateral level.



**MOS (VKS) meeting with Zeljko Reiner,  
Speaker of the Croatian Parliament, 14  
Apr 2016**

### **VVIP Visits:**

- (a) **From Croatia:** Former Croatian President Stjepan Mesić paid a State Visit to India, 12-16 November 2002. In the Joint Statement, Croatia expressed support for India's claim for permanent membership of the UNSC.
- (b) **From India:** Vice-President M. Hamid Ansari visited Croatia, 9-11 June 2010 at the invitation of Croatian President Ivo Josipovic.

### **Ministerial Level Visits:**

- (a) **From Croatia:** 1. Dr. Zvonimir Separović, Foreign Minister (April 1992). 2. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Dr. Mate Granić (April 1995). 3. Nenad Porges, Minister of Economy (November 1998). 4. Bozo Biškupić, Minister of Culture (March 1999). 5. Dr. Goran Granić, Deputy Prime Minister (November 2000). 6. Foreign Minister Tonino Picula (May 2001). 7. Ms. Pave Zupan Rusković, Minister of Tourism (September 2003).
- (b) **From India:** 1. Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Commerce Minister (September 1994). 2. Dr. B.B. Ramaiah, MOS (Commerce) (September 1997). 3. Shri Shatrughan Sinha, Minister of Shipping (August 2003). 4. Shri Digvijay Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs (September 2003). 5. Smt. Bhavnaben Chikhaliya, Minister of State for Tourism & Culture and Parliamentary Affairs (October 2003). 6. Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences (February 2007). 7. Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of State for External Affairs (September 2007) 8. Smt Preneet Kaur, Minister of State for External Affairs (February 2014) 9. General (retired) V.K. Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs (April, 2016)

### **Parliamentary Delegations:**

- (a) **From Croatia:** 1. Mr. Vladimir Šeks, then Acting Speaker of Croatian Parliament (Sabor) (March 1999). 2. Zdravko Tomac, Deputy Speaker of Croatian Parliament (January 2003). 3. Ms. Marija Lugaric, a Member of Parliament (January 2007). 4. Dr.

Furio Radin, Member of Parliament and Chairman, Committee on Human and National Minority Rights (February 2008). 5. Mr. Luka Bebic, Speaker of Croatian Parliament (March 2010).

- (b) **From India:** 1. Shri P.A. Sangma, Speaker, Lok Sabha (July 1997). 2. Shri Manohar Joshi, Speaker, Lok Sabha (July 2002).

**Foreign Office Consultations:** The Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) was signed in April 1995. So far, nine FOCs have taken place alternatively in Zagreb and New Delhi. The last round was held in New Delhi on 6 May 2011. The next round is being scheduled in Zagreb for 2017.

#### **Main Bilateral Agreements/ MoUs:**

(a) **Agreements:** 1. Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (1994) (finalized and ready for signature). 2. Maritime Transport Agreement (1997). 3. Agreement on Cooperation in Culture, Science and Technology, Education and Sports (1999). 4. Agreement on Cooperation between the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Croatia and the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), Ministry of External Affairs (2000). 5. Air Services Agreement (2000) (*being modified to finalise Code Share Arrangement*). 6. Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (2001) (*being renewed under the new BIT format*). 7. Agreement on cooperation in the Fight against International Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Terrorism etc. (2001). 8. Agreement on Agricultural Cooperation (2002). 9. Agreement on Exemption of Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic and Official/Service Passports (2007). 10. Agreement on Cooperation in Health and Medicine (June 2010). 11. Agreement on Double Taxation Avoidance (February 2014).

(b) **MoUs:** 1. Cooperation between Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR) and EXIM Bank of India (2000). 2. Cooperation between Export Credit & Guarantee Corporation of India Ltd. (ECGC) and Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development [HBOR (2002)]. 3. Cooperation in Information Technology between Electronics & Computer Software Export Promotion Council of India and the Croatian Information Technology Society (2004). 4. Exchange Programme in Culture for 2005-07 (2005). 5. Programme of Cooperation in Science and Technology for 2005-08 (2005). 6. Educational Exchange Programme (2006) (*up for renewal*). 7. Programme of Cooperation in the Culture for 2010-12 (June 2010) (*being renewed*).

#### **Economic and Commercial Relations**

Croatia is a middle sized economy with GDP valued at estimated US\$ 50.05 billion (2016) and Per Capita Income of US\$ 11,560 (2015). Its foreign trade is valued at US\$ 20.58 billion with imports and exports at US\$12.84 billion (2015). The main trading partners are EU and the Balkans, while China which has emerged as a major exporter to Croatia.

India's trade with Croatia is modest. For 2015, it amounted to Euro 122 million, compared to Euro 101.7 million for 2014, reflecting an increase of 20%. During the period Jan-Sep 2016, Indian exports were valued at Euro 81.58 million (3.40%) and imports at Euro 16.29 million (-17.05%). There is potential for increasing India's exports in segments such as textiles, leather, pharmaceuticals, basic chemical products, coffee, tea, industrial and electrical machinery. Opportunities also exist for India to use Croatia as a gateway to the South-East European markets using its major ports such as Rijeka and Ploce.

India's trade figures with Croatia are given below:

### Croatia-India Bilateral Trade

*(In million)*

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	Jan-Sep 2016
Croatia's Exports (% change y-o-y)	€ 16.51 (-24.95%)	€ 6.82 (-58.7%)	€ 13.50 97.95%	€ 17.53 30.04%	€ 16.29 (-17.05%)
Croatia's Imports (% change y-o-y)	€ 64.16 (-46.7%)	€ 72.67 13.7%	€ 88.19 21.34%	104.5 18.41%	€ 81.58 (3.40%)
Total Trade (% change y-o-y)	€ 80.67 (-43.33%)	79,49 (-1.5%)	€ 101.69 27.91%	€ 122.03 19.97%	€ 97.87 (-0,66%)

As Croatia has moved out of recession in 2016, our bilateral trade is also expected to grow. A strong market expansion drive by way of participation in trade fairs, organising buyer-seller meets, sector specific trade show, seminars, etc in potential areas of growth are planned for the year.

With respect to investment promotion, efforts are being made to encourage Croatia to be our partner in Gol's socio-economic schemes like 'Make in India', 'Smart Cities', 'Digital India', etc. through their cutting-edge technologies and investments, which can open up significant markets for them not only in India but also for export to South-East Asia, Central Asia and Africa. Although Croatian economy is relatively small with limited prospects for FDI, there is potential for collaboration in complementary sectors like infrastructure, defence industry, tourism, ship-building, renewable energy, agro processing, IT and start-ups as well as tram technology. Croatia is also reported to have oil and gas reserves in the Adriatic coast, which will be in our interest.

Simultaneously, the Mission has been encouraging Indian companies to position themselves in Croatia as it can serve as a gateway not only for Western Europe but for entry into the little known Balkan market which is estimated at more than 20 million people. Preliminary market studies has been undertaken by the Mission (September 2015) in sectors of textiles, garments, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, leather & footwear, vehicles, ship-building, hospitality and IT and start-ups, and shared with Apex chambers as well as business industry in India. So far, two Indian pharmaceuticals companies have invested in Croatia – the ACG World Wide, which acquired the Croatian company Lukaps in 2007 and CIPLA, which acquired the Croatian Celeris in 2013. Infosys took over the engineering operations of GE Croatia in June 2016, based in Karlovac making it its Central European Service Delivery Network with 85 research and R&D engineers



**ACG Lukaps facilities in Ludbreg (Croatia)**

We continue to encourage other Indian companies to look for stakes in Croatian companies, especially in the small and medium sector, which have innovative technologies but are presently unable to achieve their full potential due to lack of capital and markets.

## Cultural Relations

The Programme for Cooperation in the field of Culture (2010-12), is currently being renegotiated. A number of Croatian students have learnt various forms of Indian classical dance in reputed Indian schools under ICCR scholarships as well as on self-financing basis. The ICCR set up a Hindi Chair in 2009 at the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb which has been functional for more than 50 years and has been a key vehicle for the promotion of Sanskrit and Hindi.

'Hindi Diwas' is annually celebrated in collaboration with the Indology Department (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zagreb), with projection of Hindi poetry, essays, skits, music and dance. Prizes were given out to meritorious students.

To mark the 125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Embassy organised photo exhibitions at Zagreb Parliament, University of Pula, University of Varazdin, University of Zagreb during the month of May 2016. All the exhibits were donated to these institutions. Two separate photo exhibitions, with display of 78 authentic photographs of Mother Teresa by Croatian photographer Zvonimir Athletic, by Missionaries of Charities were opened in Zagreb: (i) 'Mother Teresa: A Road to Sainthood' on 26 Aug 2016 and (ii) "Mother Teresa: Life, Spirituality and Message" on 01 Sep 2016. In 1995, Mother Teresa received Croatian citizenship. She was also proclaimed an honorary citizen of the city of Zagreb.



**Indology Dept students singing a Bollywood song, 30 Nov 2016**

Embassy's collaboration with the Hindu Society, comprising of 2000-3000 Croats who have embraced Indian philosophy and way of life remains strong. Support is provided to the Society and its various branches throughout the country for celebration of Indian festivals, seminars and other events, as well as assistance for participation in religious events in India, like the 'Kumbha Mela'. There is increasing trend amongst Croatian travellers to visit India on spiritual journeys – to be one with the self, as well as with nature. A Recent event (20 Oct 2016) was the organization of the Photo Exhibition: "Himalayas – Where Clouds Carry the Messages" with stunning photographs of the Himalayas. Other organizations that receive Embassy support are Yoga in Daily Life, ISKCON, Art of Living, Sathya Sai Centre and Centre of Vedic Studies.

There has been a serious effort to promote Indian films. The Indian Film 'Jugni' was screened (23 Aug 2016) at the Avvantura Film Festival Zadar. 'Peeku' was also screened (23 Sep 2016) at the International Movie Festival "Silk Road-the Road of Dialogue", organised by Marco Polo Institute.

Programmes to promote Indian Tourism have been intensified. A successful '**Know India**' Seminar was co-hosted (19 Oct 2016) in Zagreb with the India Tourism Office, Frankfurt, with participation of prominent tour operators/ hotel industry/ media/ Tourist Boards/ Ministry of Tourism representatives. Key challenges to promotion of touristic exchanges were identified and constructive suggestions received. Embassy in cooperation with India

Tourism Office and Indian Chef Stephen Lobo organised (22 Oct 2016) a short seminar "Spice Indian Style" about spices and tasting of Indian dishes during the Dubrovnik Good Food Festival.

The Embassy has been hosting ICCR cultural troupe in various regions of Croatia. 'Stree Shakti' group performed at Zagreb, Zadar and Sibenik (March 2016). 6 member percussion group led by Pt. Tanmoy Bose performed in Zagreb (October 2016). Demonstration workshops are integral part of the programme.

The 8th edition of annual cultural event "Days of Indian Culture", dedicated to various aspects of Indian culture, was organised in Zagreb (16 Jun-2 Jul 2016) in collaboration with LOTOS cultural organisation. The event had components of films, music, lectures on Indian themes, cuisine, Ayurveda and schools awareness programme.

There is increasing interest throughout Croatia in Ayurveda and Yoga. An Ayurveda Association of local practitioners was set-up (Feb 2016). The first National Day of Ayurveda was organized in Zagreb (Oct 2016). The concept of International Day of Yoga (IDY) has been embraced by the local populous enthusiastically. IDY-2016 was celebrated (19 Jun 2016) in capital Zagreb and 13 other cities, in main public squares covering all regions of Croatia. Allied events were conducted comprising of free Yoga classes in all cities, talks on specific Yoga themes and screening of Yoga documentaries.

Although, the Church continues to have a strong influence on the political and social life in Croatia, the authorities are slowly thawing to the idea that Hinduism (and other Indian religions) can co-exist peacefully with the dominant religion in the country. For the first time, a historic 'Ratha Yatra', embodying the two thousand year old tradition of Orissa, was allowed to be taken out in downtown Zagreb (06 Aug 2016). A new temple and Centre was opened (28 Aug 2016) in Split by Bhakti Marga Croatia, the first temple dedicated to Shri Narashimhadev and Lord Adishesa in Croatia. Bhakti Marga is a spiritual organization founded by Paramahansa Sri Swami Vishwananda.

Of all the Indian festivals, Diwali, in particular, is celebrated as an inter-religious event with the participation of all religious heads in Zagreb. The main theme projected is that of tolerance, peace, unity in diversity and collective resolve to combat terrorism – which resonates well across all sections of society. For 2016, a Photo Exhibition on 'Yoga in Water' was displayed at the event aimed at promotion of Yoga and Ayurveda.

### **Indian Community**

The Indian community in Croatia is very small. There are about 80 in Croatia, of which 38 are PIOs/OCIs. Only a few are engaged in small businesses, some in educational and IT institutions, and the rest being housewives married to Croatian nationals, cooks etc.

#### **Useful Resources:**

Embassy of India, Zagreb-Website: <http://www.indianembassy.hr>

Embassy of India Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Indiaincroatia/>

Embassy of India, Zagreb-Twitter: [https://twitter.com/India\\_Croatia](https://twitter.com/India_Croatia)

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**As on 9 Dec, 2016**