

Embassy of India, Warsaw

Lithuania: Bilateral Brief

I Historical Background

It is widely acknowledged that the Lithuanian and Sanskrit languages have much in common. Lithuanian, being the Indo-European language grammatically closest to Sanskrit, signifies possible close ancient links. Experts suggest that more than 100 root words (and 10,000 derivatives) may be common between the two languages. Until conversion to Christianity in 13th century, the people in Lithuania worshipped nature and had a trinity of gods - Perkunas, Patrimpas, and Pikuolis.

In more recent times, the first direct knowledge about India reached Lithuania through Lithuanian Christian missionaries who started serving in India since the 16th century. A prominent Lithuanian philosopher and ideologue of the 19th century national movement, Vydunas (real name Vilhelmas Storost, 1868-1953; also known as the Mahatma Gandhi of Lithuania) was extremely interested in Indian philosophy and he even created his own philosophical system, closely based on the Vedanta. He practiced Ayurveda. He argued that before the introduction of Christianity, Lithuanian spiritual culture had a lot of similarities with Hinduism, including the concept of Trinity. In the 1930s and 1940s, two Lithuanian travelers - Antanas Poska and Matas Salcius - spent several years studying Sanskrit and Indian culture and travelling in India.

Sanskrit became part of the academic curricula of the Vilnius University in the 1970s, when Prof. Ricardas Mironas started teaching the language in the Department of Philology. He translated 13 hymns of the Rig Veda into the Lithuanian language and became the third recipient of the Jawaharlal Nehru Award (the first two were poets Vacys Reimeris and Eduardas Miezelaitis).

II. Political relations

India recognized Lithuania (along with the other Baltic States, Latvia and Estonia) on 7 September 1991, after acceptance of their independence by the erstwhile USSR. Diplomatic relations were established with Lithuania on 25 February 1992. Lithuania opened its Embassy in New Delhi on 1 July 2008, and has three Honorary Consuls in India i.e. in Mumbai, Bengaluru and Kolkata. An Honorary Consul of India in Vilnius has been operational since October 2014.

Bilateral Visits

Visit of Hon'ble Vice-President of India: Hon'ble Vice-President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu paid an official visit to Lithuania from August 17-19 2019, leading a high level delegation including Shri Sanjay Dhotre, Minister of State for HRD, Communications, Electronics and IT and three Members of Parliament - Shri Ramesh Bidhuri, Shri Manas Ranjan Bhunia and Smt Raneer Narah. This was the

first high level visit from India to Lithuania since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992 .During the visit, HVP held delegation level talks with the President Nauseda and met the Prime Minister and the Speaker of Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas). The HVP addressed, the Indo-Lithuanian Business Meeting and members of the Indian community. Hon'ble Vice-President also visited Kaunas which is the 2nd largest city of Lithuania. Aside from a meeting with the Mayor, he paid a visit to the Kaunas Technical University. Three MOU's, namely, cultural exchange programme (CEP), agricultural work plan and exchange of protocol for implementing the extradition treaty were signed during the visit.

Visit of MoS (Agriculture) to Lithuania: During a visit to Lithuania from 30 September to 3 October, 2015, MoS (Agriculture) Shri Mohanbhai Kundariya and PM of Lithuania jointly unveiled a sculptural composition of Mahatma Gandhi and his Lithuanian friend, Hermann Kallenbach at Kallenbach's birthplace, Rusne.

Other important visits from India include the following: Shri Salman Khurshid, MoS (External Affairs) in August 1995; Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MoS (External Affairs) in October, 2005, Shri Anand Sharma, MoS (External Affairs) in March 2007, MoS for Mrs. Preneet Kaur in 2011.

High Level visits from Lithuania, the major bilateral visits to India include: (i) Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius in September 1995. (ii) State Visit by President Valdas Adamkussit in February 2001, accompanied by his wife, as also by the Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis. The Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Vygaudas Ušackas, visited India in December 2009 and met EAM and the Minister of New and Renewable Energy. The Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Linas Linkevicius, visited New Delhi to attend the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM11) in November 2013. The Lithuanian Minister of Culture, Sarunas Birutis, visited New Delhi on 8-12 March 2016, to attend the World Culture Festival. The Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Linas Linkevicius, visited New Delhi in October 2017, on his second visit to India, in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations.

Bilateral Agreements

23. The following agreements have been signed between India and Lithuania:

(i) Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation (July 1993) (ii) Protocol on Bilateral Consultations between the Foreign Offices (August 1995) (iii) Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services (November 1999) (iv) Agreement on Air Services (February 2001) (v) Agreement on Cooperation in Culture, Science and Education (February 2001) (vi) Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation (October 2001) (vii) Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA): March, 2011) (viii) Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA) (July 2011) (ix) Agreement on the exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic passports (November

2013) has come into operation on 30 July 2014 (x) Cultural Exchange Program (CEP) for the years 2016-18 (xi) MoU on Agriculture and Allied Sector: July 2016. (xii) Extradition Treaty: (October 2017) (xiii) Protocol amending the Bilateral Air Services Agreement (October 2017) (xiv) Cultural Exchange Program for the period 2019-21 (xv) Agriculture Work Plan 2020-2022 on 18-20 July 2016, (xvi) Extradition Treaty: Protocol of exchange of documents of ratification was signed during the visit of HVP to Lithuania in August 2019.

Foreign Office Consultations: Under the Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations signed in Vilnius in August 1995, eight rounds of FOCs have been held so far. These talks have focused on bilateral, regional and international issues. The 8th round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Lithuania was held on 16 March 2022 in New Delhi. The Indian side was led by Ms. Neeta Bhushan, Additional Secretary (Central Europe) in the Ministry of External Affairs and the Lithuanian side was led by Mr. Audrius Brūzga, Director General of Latin America, Africa, Asia and Pacific Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania.

India-Lithuania Forum: The India Lithuania Forum was inaugurated in the Lithuanian Parliament in September 2010. This forum provides support to various NGOs, individuals and institutions that are interested in India to reinforce India's multi-faceted relationship encompassing culture, education, business and science.

III. Economic Relations

As per Indian statistics, the bilateral trade between India and Lithuania reached a record high of US\$ 367.15 million in the year 2016-17 before decreasing to US\$ 339.51 Million in 2018-19. In 2021-22, the bilateral trade stood at US\$ 531.77 million. Major Indian imports from Lithuania include: edible vegetables, wood and articles of wood, textiles, plastics and articles thereof, electrical machinery and equipment, iron and steel, optical, photographic and measuring instruments, copper, zinc and articles thereof. Major Indian exports to Lithuania include: nuclear boilers and reactors, pharmaceutical products, fish, organic chemicals, tobacco and manufactured tobacco, textile articles, iron and steel, plastic and articles thereof, miscellaneous chemical products etc.

The bilateral trade figures as per Indian statistics for the period 2014-15 to 2021-22 are as under:

(in US \$ million)

Year:	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
India's exports	103.23	88.09	95.99	103.84	127.38	110.76	163.66	330.85
India's imports	111.91	214.35	271.16	189.38	212.13	262.09	321.05	200.92

Total	215.15	302.44	367.15	293.22	339.51	372.86	484.71	531.77
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Source: Ministry of Commerce, GOI statistics

Indian Investment in Lithuania

HCL Technologies investment: HCL Technologies Lithuania UAB, a 100% subsidiary of HCL Technologies Ltd., and engaged in business consulting, solution implementation and ongoing application management, started its operation in August of 2016. HCL's Operation Centre was formally inaugurated on December 11, 2019 in Vilnius, Lithuania. Their main customers are Barclays Bank, Kraft Foods & Mondelez Global LLC. It has two centers in Vilnius – a near shore site for Europe region and a language capability center for the global business.

Indorama development: An important development in the economic field has been the investment of about US\$200 million by Indorama, a Lohia Group company, from their Thailand branch, in the Klaipeda Economic Zone in a plant to manufacture plastic resin. This investment has given visibility to India in Lithuania. It is the largest single line PET resin plant in Europe with lowest carbon footprint.

Tonbo Imaging investment: In September 2018, Indian company Tonbo Imaging entered Lithuania by opening office in Vilnius. The company develops advanced imaging and sensor systems for defense, security and intelligent transportation systems. The company plans to establish a research and development team of over 50 specialists in Kaunas, Lithuania.

India Chamber of Commerce in Lithuania: In October 2018, the Indian Chamber of Commerce in Lithuania (ICCL) was established. ICCL is a platform for representing Lithuanian business environment to the entrepreneurs from India and vice versa.

IV. Cultural Relations

Indology: Study of Indian languages (mainly Hindi and Sanskrit) has been carried out at the Vilnius University for several decades. A separate center of Indian studies, under the Department of Oriental Studies, was set up in the Vilnius University in 1996. In August 2006, the Vilnius University had hosted the 2nd Regional Conference of Central & Eastern Europe on Indian Studies (CEEIS) under the auspices of ICCR. A compilation of 108 common words of Sanskrit in Lithuanian languages has been brought out by the Oriental Centre of the Vilnius University jointly with the Lithuanian Embassy.

Yoga: Lithuanians have great interest in Indian cultural traditions, including Yoga. An estimated 70% Lithuanians visiting India have spiritual and yogic interests. Yoga and Sanskrit are also taught in several Lithuanian cities. International Day of Yoga is being celebrated every year in Vilnius and several other cities of Lithuania.

ITEC: Under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Program (ITEC), since 1993, over 400 Lithuanian nominees have attended various courses in diplomacy, English, banking, mass communications, financial management, urban development management, IT, auditing etc. The Lithuanian leadership at the highest level has expressed appreciation for the ITEC program.

Friendship Societies: Two friendship societies - Indian Cultural and Information Centre (ICIC) [established in 2005], and Indian Lithuanian forum (ILF) Vilnius [established in 2010] - are currently operational in Lithuania to promote Indian culture through performing arts, cinema, literature and festivals.

Visas: Visa services have been outsourced since September 2010. There has been a surge in Lithuanian e-TV visa applications. Lithuania was included in the e-TV scheme of Government of India effective from 1st May 2015.

Indian Community: The Indian community is around 1000, including students. Over the last few years, some Indian IT experts have come to Lithuania to work on IT projects. 15 Indian families work in the Klaipeda plant of the Lohia Group. The number of Indian students studying full time in Lithuania now stand at around 900.

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