

India-Czech Republic Bilateral Relations

Political Relations

India-Czech Republic historic relations have acquired a new dimension, over the past one year period, with the culmination of 4 VVIP/VIP visits and 11 major business forums, leading to a substantial up-gradation in the bilateral relationship. This includes :

- (i) Rashtrapatiji's State visit to Prague in September, 2018, after a gap of 22 years, when 8 new agreements/MoUs were signed in the fields of Trade, Defence, S&T, Culture, Education and Visa Waiver for Diplomatic Passport holders. India-Czech Republic Joint Statement issued during the visit encompasses various elements of our multifaceted & growing relationship.
- (ii) Czech Prime Minister Mr. Andrej Babis' official visit to India for the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2019, after a gap of 12 years, where Czech Republic was the partner country.
- (iii) Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Shri C.R. Chaudhary's visit to Prague for 11th Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation in October, 2018 with signing of a 104 para protocol.
- (iv) Czech Defence Minister Mr. Lubomir Metnar's official visit to India for the Aero India in February, 2019 at Bengaluru.
- (v) All the 4 visits above included substantive business delegations. In addition, 7 other business missions were exchanged, bringing it to a total of 11 business missions in last one year. These, inter-alia, included Ministry of Defence delegation at the International Defence and Security Technologies Fair; ASSOCHAM led 48 young Indian electronics companies to AMPER fair in Brno; Czech Republic as a partner country at West Bengal Global Summit; a major MSME delegation visited for the Czech Industrial Cluster in Bengaluru; and an Energy Mission from Czech Republic visited India; India's participation at the MSV International Engineering Fair in Brno and India Investment Meet in October, 2019; Kerala and Goa held Tourism road shows; and Incredible India's participation in Holiday World Fair, 2019.

Background : Our relations with former Czechoslovakia, and with the Czech Republic, have always been warm, friendly and have a long history. In the medieval ages the Kingdom of Bohemia (now a part of Czech Republic) traded with India in precious goods and Indian spices. The Czech Bata Works was established in Batanagar, Calcutta in 1930s. Skoda Auto established itself in India in 2001. The Czechoslovak Consulate opened in Bombay in 1920 and later in Calcutta. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore visited Czechoslovakia in 1921 and 1926; Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose visited between 1933 and 1938; and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru accompanied by his daughter Indira Gandhi visited Prague in 1938.

Diplomatic relations were established with Czechoslovakia on November 18, 1947 and have been maintained with high level visits and interactions since then. Former Indian Presidents Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Giani Zail Singh and R. Venkataraman visited Czechoslovakia in 1965, 1983 and 1988 respectively. PM Jawaharlal Nehru paid a visit in 1955; PM Smt. Indira Gandhi in August 1972 and PM Rajiv Gandhi in August 1986. High level visits have been maintained after the

Czech Republic came into existence subsequent to the peaceful bifurcation of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993 into Czech Republic and Slovakia after a political transition in 1989. Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier made the first high level contact after the Velvet Revolution in November 1990. The VVIP Visits since then include:

From Indian Side: President Shri Shankar Dayal Sharma in October 1996 ; Vice President Shri M. Hamid Ansari in June 2010; and President Shri Ram Nath Kovind in September, 2018.

From Czech side: President Mr. Vaclav Havel in February 1994; PM Mr. Milos Zeman in March 2001; President Mr. Vaclav Klaus in November 2005; PM Mr. Jiri Paroubek in January 2006; and PM Mr. Andrej Babis in January, 2019.

EAM level visits: Last by Shri S.M. Krishna in June, 2009; Czech Foreign Minister Mr. Lubomir Zaoralek visited India in December, 2016. EAM and Czech Foreign Minister Tomas Petricek met on 25th September, 2019 on the sidelines of UNGA and extended invitations.

International Cooperation: We cooperate internationally including in Export Control regimes like Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar, Hague Code of Conduct and the Australia Group. We have agreed towards cooperation in fight against terrorism and in strengthening global non-proliferation efforts. Czech Republic supports India's full membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

Bilateral Dialogue Mechanisms : 11th session of Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation held in Prague in October, 2018; (ii) Joint Working Group on Heavy Engineering held in Brno in October, 2019; (iii) Joint Defence Committee (JDC), met in November, 2016 in Prague; (iv) Consular Consultations held in Prague in April, 2018; and (v) Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) held in May, 2013 in Prague.

Agreements : Existing agreements include Agreement/MoUs in the fields of Civil aviation, Defence, Economic cooperation, Social security, Science and Technology, Culture and Education, Consular, Civil Nuclear cooperation etc. 8 Agreement/MoUs were signed during the visit of President Ram Nath Kovind in September, 2018 which included : (i) Visa waiver for Diplomatic Passports; (ii) MoU between CSIR and Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS); (iii) Work plan between DST and M/o Youth, Education and Sports for Joint Projects for 2019-2022 with a Joint call for proposals made; (iv) MoU between TIFR & ELI Beamlines for research in laser technology; (v) MoU between BEML and TATRA Trucks on strategic cooperation; (vi) MoU between PHDCC and Association of Medium and Small Enterprises (AMSP) on promotion of SMEs; (vii) MoU between CCS Haryana Agricultural University Hisar and Czech University of Life Sciences; and (viii) MoU between University of Economics Prague and IIM, Bangalore on exchange of students; all these agreements are under implementation.

Commercial Relations

Since 2012, bilateral trade has amounted to more than one billion U.S. dollars. Our trade and economic relations are on an upswing with bilateral trade reaching US\$ 1574 million in 2018 (with India's exports of USD 866 mi and imports worth USD 708 mi). The bilateral trade turnover reached USD 1467 million in 2017 [with India's exports - USD 797 million and India's imports USD 670 million) (*as per Czech statistics*).

India's main products of Export to Czech Republic are Iron and Steel products, Medicinal and Pharmaceutical products (Drug formulations and biologicals), Apparel and Clothing, electrical machinery and equipment, residual chemical and allied products, auto components/parts, manmade yarn, fabrics, electronic instruments, engineering items etc. India's main products of Imports from Czech Republic include industrial machinery, electrical Machinery and equipment, auto components/parts; IC engines and parts, pumps, construction machinery, engineering items, electronic instruments, rubber product except footwear.

Major Indian companies such as Infosys, Tata Tea, Alok Industries/Mileta Horice a.s., Glenmark Pharmaceuticals and Lloyd Electric and Engineering Ltd. have made investments in the Czech Republic. 50 Czech companies have invested in India including Skoda Auto, Skoda Power, Bonatrans, Home Credit etc. in transportation, power, automotive and financing sectors. In 2018, Skoda Auto has committed a US\$ 1 billion investment into its project India 2.0.

Cultural Relations

Regular cultural and educational exchanges are held, including (i) Festival of India in 3 cities: Prague, Brno and Ostrava in June 2019; (ii) Bapu@150 : Czech Post released a commemorative postage stamp in June, 2019; June 5, 2019 World Environment Day dedicated to Bapu with planting of 150 trees in presence of Czech PM Andrej Babis; (iii) Yoga is popular with celebrations of the International Day of Yoga and mushrooming of Yoga studios across the country.

Indian Community

Czech Republic is increasingly becoming a hub for Indian professionals, students, researchers, tourists & businessmen. The number of Indians in Czech Republic has increased to 4500 including over 1000 students, temporary professionals and old residents. Over 1 lakh Indian tourists visit Czech Republic annually and about 10-12 thousand Czech nationals visit India annually. India's e-visa scheme is presently being utilized by 90% of Czech visitors.

Useful resources

Website of Embassy of India, Prague : www.eoiprague.gov.in

Facebook page : www.facebook.com/IndiaInCzechRepublic/

Twitter : www.twitter.com/IndiaCzech

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