

Here is the full word-for-word English translation of the interview with H.E. Arun Goel, Indian Ambassador to Croatia, as published in *Glas Slavonije* on June 28–29, 2025:

Q: Given that this was a historic, first visit of Prime Minister Modi to Croatia, the bilateral relations between the two countries have now been elevated to an even higher level... What do you see as further progress in the development of bilateral relations?

I asked H.E. Arun Goel, Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Republic of Croatia.

Ambassador Arun Goel:

As you said, this is the first visit of an Indian Prime Minister since the declaration of independence of Croatia in 1991. You are right, this is a historic moment because Croats gained their independence after their first kingdom in the year 925, with a gap of 1050 years.

If we look at the connection between India and this part of the world, according to one version, it is as old as the Celtic period. If we turn to more recent history, in the 18th century, Croatian scientists worked on Sanskrit and Sanskrit epics such as the *Ramayana* or *Rigveda*. So, the interest of Croats in Indian culture has long been significant, and those works in the 18th century became some of the fundamental texts for the study of Indo-European languages.

The way Croats helped in establishing connections between India and Europe goes back centuries. In this context, where people have been connected to each other for thousands of years, the visit of Prime Minister Modi — the first visit of an Indian Prime Minister to Croatia — is a historic moment for both nations.

Of course, we have had very close, warm contacts in recent decades, but I believe this visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Croatia will put bilateral relations in a different light. It will open many new opportunities, where we will see a huge increase in various areas, whether it's trade, science and technology, agriculture, labor mobility, or culture. This visit will be a turning point compared to the previous period — everything before and after 2025. It should also reflect on the current global order, which is undergoing profound changes.

Both Croatia and India had partnerships before, but many of the previous partners probably won't be as reliable in the future, so we must find new partners. But how to find a new partner? There is always some doubt about the reasons for the partnership. But when we look at Croatia and India, as I said, we've had mutual trust and mutual respect for hundreds of years. This is not about a new partnership, but about strengthening the partnership between old friends. I mean Indo-Croatian relations. This visit will lay the foundation for a new beginning in bilateral relations and the role of our two nations in multilateral organizations of crucial importance.

Q: During the visit, Prime Minister Modi spoke with both the Croatian Prime Minister and the Croatian President. How would you evaluate those conversations and the agreements reached?

Ambassador Arun Goel:

During this visit, there were detailed discussions on almost all topics. Four Memorandums of Understanding were signed, but I would say that even more are in preparation, given the discussions held.

Among the four documents that were signed, one is a cooperation program in the field of **science and technology**, which will cover the next four years. However, this program can be extended for

another four years, so in a way, it is a permanent program. The specific areas covered by this program are **artificial intelligence, ICT, oceanography, environment, biotechnology, pharmacology, and clean energy**. And with mutual consent, any other area can be added. Within the cooperation program, a joint committee will be established that will discuss areas of cooperation and how to create favorable conditions for implementation. It will also deal with how to facilitate and support the implementation of joint programs.

Furthermore, the cooperation program aims to exchange experiences arising from bilateral scientific and technological cooperation. The program will facilitate the **exchange of young researchers and scientists**.

The second signed document is a **Memorandum of Understanding in the field of agriculture and related sectors**. It will aim to promote cooperation through joint activities, programs, exchange of scientific materials, information, and personnel. It covers as many as 30 areas in the agriculture sector and related activities. Two-year work plans will be developed, and exchange of delegations, experts, scientists, as well as exchange of materials and information will be facilitated. The parties will share **intellectual property rights**. The activity is planned for five years, with the possibility of extension for another five years.

The third signed document is a **Cultural Exchange Program for the period from 2026 to 2030**, which will deal with cultural exchanges, particularly regarding cultural heritage, libraries, museums, literature, research and documentation, festivals, and **audiovisual activities**.

The fourth signed document concerns the **Hindi language chair at the University of Zagreb**. As you know, this chair has existed since 2009, so its work will be extended for five more years, until 2030.

Q: How can better working conditions and job security be achieved for Indian workers in Croatia?

Ambassador Arun Goel:

As is known, until about three years ago, we did not have a single Indian worker in Croatia. After the last three years, we now have almost **20,000 workers**. They work all over Croatia, in the areas of food delivery, agriculture, shipping, construction, tourism, and various other services.

So far, their experiences have been mostly good. Except for two minor incidents, which, however, do not represent the norm of treatment toward our workers. Those incidents were probably exceptions because Croats do not have a negative attitude toward Indian workers. And when the incidents happened, the Croatian Prime Minister immediately condemned them.

It is well known that due to the demographic situation, Croatia needs labor to maintain its economic growth rate. And Croatian labor, as you know, has been emigrating from Croatia for decades.

In the interest of Croatia's economic growth, workers coming from abroad — in this case from India — should be treated well. When I meet Indian workers, in conversations I hear that they are quite satisfied with their experience of living and the quality of life in Croatia. The level of safety in Croatia is very high. There is no crime related to foreigners, which allows for absolutely pleasant work here.

To make work even safer, the Croatian Government is passing laws related to foreign workers. In that sense, we look forward to the imminent signing of a **Memorandum of Understanding on labor mobility**. That will facilitate temporary migration of workers from India to Croatia.

As you know, there are agencies and intermediaries for employment in India and Croatia, who ensure the arrival of qualified workers in the food industry, agriculture, construction, or shipbuilding. I could conclude that employers in this business are fair, but **intermediaries violate regulations**. Because of that, a worker may have problems.

So, once the Memorandum of Understanding is signed in the near future, we will have a regulatory system that will deter dishonest intermediaries from manipulating the system or taking advantage of poor workers. The employer-employee relationship will then become more direct. Since this is a trend that will continue for some time, it is in the interest of both sides — and especially Croatian employers — that Indian workers feel safe, because that will encourage the arrival of new workers.

Croatian employers are fair, they respect the obligations they assumed when bringing our workers. Looking ahead, I think the general atmosphere among most Croatian employers will become increasingly positive. In this sense, the Croatian economy could gain workers from India who will feel safe in Croatian society. And in order for the workers to feel comfortable, like at home, the Indian Embassy undertakes various activities through employers or in other ways so that Indians feel at home. One such activity is the implementation of various cultural programs through which Croats — not only employers but also the general public — become more open to **Indian culture**.

Commentary statements other guests:

MILIO MARIN

"The EU Should Reaffirm Its Founding Principles"

Prof. Dr. Emilio Marin is President of the Croatian Diplomatic Club (HDK), former ambassador to the Holy See and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, member of the French Academy of Sciences and Arts, and professor emeritus.

Q: How important is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to our country from a political and economic point of view?

Emilio Marin:

I am neither a politician nor an economist, so I would rather respond from the perspective of diplomacy, taking into account the circumstances of history, science, and culture. There is no doubt that the visit of the leader of such a great country to our country — which is, territorially and in population, relatively small — is of exceptional importance and should fill us with pride and a sense of increased relevance.

"Peace is the path to peace" — that thought of the great Indian Gandhi is inscribed on the pedestal of his bust in Zagreb's Bunde park. I mention this not by accident, nor primarily due to its obvious timeliness. The Croatian Diplomatic Club recently hosted a lecture by academician Mislav Ježić on the connections between Gandhi and our Radić. That legacy — along with others, including the scientific one where Zagreb professors, the late academic Radoslav Katičić and academic Ježić, were undoubtedly key figures — is also political capital for Croatia.

We are pleased that at HDK we also hosted a lecture by the Indian ambassador to Croatia, thereby expressing respect for a great country and a great culture.

Q: The world is changing rapidly, and the challenges we face — geopolitical, economic, or environmental — require understanding, reflection, and cooperative problem-solving. In this context, how do you view the European Union, and with it, Croatia?

Emilio Marin:

Of course, the EU, like any country, must also align itself with realities. However, I would not emphasize change in terms of adapting to a much larger and more populous continent. Rather, I would say that the EU needs to reflect on why its model as a peace-time project — which was so successful for its members and attractive to those who are not — has fallen into difficulty.

Following that line of thought, I believe the EU would better cope with the contemporary situation if it reaffirmed its **founding principles**. I have spoken on this several times, particularly last year in Osijek, at the university, during the event marking the **35th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall**, co-organized with the German Embassy in Croatia.

Moreover, the EU, Europe, and the Mediterranean have a special role in achieving the **North–South axis**, i.e., with **Africa**, which is a global, somewhat neglected topic. With that axis, the EU would become a far more important global player — including in **Asia**.

(Interview by I. Stašević)

IZABELA MAJIĆ

India's Pharmaceutical Industry Is Rapidly Developing

Izabela Majić, Master of Science, graduated in Sweden, in Stockholm, and has continued to pursue further pharmaceutical education. Before launching her own company, she held several executive positions in global pharmaceutical companies, including in India and the UK.

Q: You've been working successfully in the pharmaceutical market for more than 20 years, and for the past six years as co-owner of the company IBS-Experts International in India. How do you deal with uncertainty in the pharmaceutical industry, and what is the future of Indian pharma?

Izabela Majić:

One of our companies, headquartered in Europe and partnered with India — **IBS-Experts International d.o.o.**, co-owned by me and my partner — helps Indian pharmaceutical manufacturers enter **regulated markets** such as Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Middle East. We also support European manufacturers in exporting **short-supply pharmaceutical products** to the Indian market.

I consider it a privilege to develop this kind of business, aimed at **improving global patient health**.

India's pharmaceutical industry is responding well to global challenges, thanks to **systematic and planned support** from the Indian government, led by Prime Minister Modi. The government recognized early that **medicines and pharmaceutical ingredients** are essential goods, on par with **food and energy**.

The Indian government and the pharmaceutical industry are cooperating effectively to achieve **self-sufficiency and production continuity** by bringing the manufacturing of **key raw materials and active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs)** back to India.

The Indian pharmaceutical industry, which has so far mostly been known for **producing generic medicines**, is now investing significant resources — with **government incentives** — in the development of **innovative products**.

Substantial funds are also being directed toward **digitization and global integration**, which benefits **patients in Europe** as well.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this work is the **privilege of discovering other cultures**, especially the incredibly rich **Indian culture**. In India, we have many good friends with whom we share meaningful life moments just like we do with our own families — **births, graduations, weddings...**

This means that travel is no longer just a classic business trip for us — it is, in addition to work, also a **meeting with dear people**.

(Interview by I. Stašević)