

India - Croatia Relations

The Republic of Croatia (Republika Hrvatska in Croatian language, population around 4 million) proclaimed independence on 25 June 1991 after breaking away from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

India formally recognized Croatia in May 1992 and diplomatic relations were established on 9 July 1992. Croatia opened its Resident Mission in New Delhi in February 1995. The Indian Mission in Zagreb was opened on 28 April 1996, and upgraded to Ambassadorial level in January 1998.

During the days of former Yugoslavia, Croatia played an important role in the close links between India and Yugoslavia. Croatia accounted for more than two-thirds of trade between the two nations, including large scale purchases of Croatian ships by India in the 1970s and 1980s. Marshal Tito, who ruled Yugoslavia for more than three decades, was a Croat, and maintained close relations with the Indian leadership. Prime Minister Nehru and Marshal Tito were also pioneers of the Non-Aligned Movement.

These friendly linkages with India have continued after Croatia's independence, though Croatia's initial focus after independence was on addressing the ethnic conflict that followed the breakup of former Yugoslavia, and thereafter on integration with NATO (1 April 2009) and the European Union (1 July 2013). Croatia has joined the Schengen Zone and adopted the Euro currency on 1st January, 2023, fulfilling all criteria in challenging times.

In recent years, Croatia has resumed looking at other parts of the world, particularly Asia. India and Croatia currently enjoy robust bilateral political and cultural ties, and both countries are focussed on imparting greater economic content to the relationship. There is also close cooperation at the multilateral level.

High level visits

From Croatian side, there was a series of high-level visits in the years after independence. Then President Stjepan Mesić paid a State Visit to India in November 2002. Visits at the level of Dy PM took place in April 1995 (Mate Granić, who was also Foreign Minister) and November 2000 (Goran Granić). Ministerial visits took place in April 1992 (Zvonimir Separović, Foreign Minister), November 1998 (Nenad Porges, Minister of Economy), March 1999 (Bozo Biškupić, Minister of Culture), May 2001 (Tonino Picula, Foreign Minister) and September 2003 (Pave Zupan Rusković, Minister of Tourism). After a gap, high-level visits resumed with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marija Pejcinovic Buric visiting India in October 2018.

From the Indian side, President Shri Ram Nath Kovind paid a State Visit to Croatia in March 2019. Former Vice-President Shri M. Hamid Ansari visited Croatia in June 2010. Other ministerial visits are Shri Pranab Mukherjee, Commerce Minister (September 1994), Dr. B.B. Ramaiah, MOS (Commerce) (September 1997), Shri Shatrughan Sinha, Minister of Shipping (August 2003), Shri Digvijay Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs

(September 2003), Smt. Bhavnaben Chikhalia, Minister of State for Tourism & Culture and Parliamentary Affairs (October 2003), Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences (February 2007), Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of State for External Affairs (September 2007), Smt. Preneet Kaur, Minister of State for External Affairs (February 2014), General (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd), Minister of State for External Affairs (April 2016) and Smt. Nirmla Sitharaman, Minister of Commerce and Industry [Independent Charge] (February 2017).

Over the years, a number of Croatian Members of Parliament (*Parliament is known as Sabor*) have visited India, including Vladimir Šeks, Acting Speaker (March 1999), Zdravko Tomac, Deputy Speaker (January 2003), Marija Lugaric (January 2007), Furio Radin, Chairman, Committee on Human and National Minority Rights (Feb 2008), Luka Bebic, Speaker (March 2010) & Veljko Kajtazi, MP for National Minorities and President of Indo-Croatian Parliamentary Friendship Group (March 2018). From the Indian side, Speakers of Lok Sabha have visited in July 1997 (Shri P.A. Sangma) and July 2002 (Shri Manohar Joshi).

On 22 December 2020, a meeting through virtual conference was organised between Minister of State for External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan and his counterpart Mr. Frano Matušić, State Secretary for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Republic of Croatia. The joint press release issued on this meeting is available at the MEA press release portal which clearly identifies contours of bilateral cooperation between India and Croatia.

On the fringes of the COP26 conference in Glasgow on 1 Nov 2021, Croatian PM Plenković met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi about which the former tweeted.

On 3rd September 2021, EAM Dr. S Jaishankar paid the first ever Official visit by Indian EAM to Croatia. He met with Prime Minister of Croatia H.E. Mr. Andrej Plenković in Zagreb and discussed opportunities to further expand bilateral cooperation, including in pharma, digital and infrastructure as well as "pressing global issues", including the situation in Afghanistan. EAM Dr. S Jaishankar also met with his Croatian counterpart Gordan Grlić Radman.

Nine rounds of Foreign Office Consultations at Secretary-level took place between 1995 and 2011, and an attempt to resume them was made in April 2021 when COVID19 pandemic postponed its happening after all arrangements. However, on 4th November 2022 tenth round of India-Croatia Foreign Office Consultations were held in Zagreb, led by the Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Shri Sanjay Verma & Director General for Political Affairs at Ministry of Foreign & European Affairs, Mr. Petar Mihatov. On 2-4 March, 2023 Croatian Foreign Minister H.E. Gordan Grlić-Radman visited New Delhi to attend Raisina Dialogue. In the bilateral meeting with the External Affairs Minister, Dr. Jaishankar, the two Ministers signed the MoU on Defence Cooperation, apart from discussing other important areas of bilateral relationship. In a gesture showing the importance of sports in India-Croatia relationship, Foreign Minister Radman presented EAM with the Croatian national football team jersey with number 10 and EAM's name written on it (jersey number 10 is actually worn by most popular Croatian footballer Luka Modric).

Important Bilateral Agreements/MoUs

Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement (2017). The Joint Economic Commission under the Agreement met in New Delhi in November 2017.

Maritime Transport Agreement (1997).

Agreement on Cooperation in Culture, Science & Technology, Education and Sports (1999).

Agreement on Cooperation between Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Croatia and Foreign Service Institute (FSI), Ministry of External Affairs (2000).

Modified Air Services Agreement (2000). Croatian Airlines and Air India entered into a Code Share Agreement in November 2016, which came into effect on 1 April 2017.

Agreement on Cooperation in the Fight against International Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs, Terrorism, etc. (2001).

Agreement on Agricultural Cooperation (2002).

Agreement on Exemption of Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic and Official / Service Passports (2007).

Agreement on Cooperation in Health and Medicine (2010). The first JWG on Health and Medicine was held in Delhi in February 2018.

Agreement on Double Taxation Avoidance (2014).

Agreement on Gainful Occupation of Family Members of Diplomatic and Consular Posts (2018).

Cooperation between Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR) and EXIM Bank of India (2000).

Cooperation between Export Credit & Guarantee Corporation of India Ltd. (ECGC) and Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR) (2002).

Programme of Cooperation in Science and Technology for 2005-08 (2005).

Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 2005-07 (2005), which was followed by subsequent renewals. During visit of former Croatian FM Ms. Marija Pejcionvic Buric to India in October 2018, CEP was renewed for 2019-22.

Educational Exchange Programme (2006), renewable every five years.

MoU between ICCR and University of Zagreb for establishment of ICCR Chair of Hindi (2009). The MoU was renewed during President's State Visit to Croatia (2019).

MoU for establishment of ICCR Sanskrit Chair between ICCR and University of Zagreb (2019).

MoU on tourism cooperation between Ministry of Tourism of India and Ministry of Tourism of Croatia (2019).

MoU on sports cooperation between Sports Authority of India and Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Zagreb (2019).

Economic and Commercial Relations

Croatian GDP is estimated at Euro 58.21 billion (2021), with per capita GDP at Euro 14,969 (2021) [*Source: Croatian National Bank*]. Its total foreign trade in goods in 2022 was Euro 60.35 billion (2022), with imports of Euro 38.29 (2022) billion and exports of Euro 22.06 billion (2022) [*Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics*]. Latest available figures of India's trade with Croatia are given below (both Indian and Croatian statistics):

Croatia-India Bilateral Trade *(In millions)*

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Croatia's Exports	\$32.27	\$35.70	\$56.72	\$31.90	\$72.25	\$54.81
Croatia's Imports	\$167.18	\$150.28	\$144.98	\$137.47	\$365.38	\$459.36
Total Trade	\$199.45	\$185.98	\$201.70	\$169.37	\$437.63	\$514.17

(Source: Department of Commerce)

India's exports include aluminium ingots, chemicals and fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, machinery and equipment, metals, readymade garments and textiles, rubber and plastics, while we import plastic & rubber machinery, instruments and appliances for measuring and testing, food products and wood products. 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 of Rijeka and Ploce.

According to latest available figures published by Croatian National Bank, Indian total direct investment into Croatia, during the period 2001- Q3 2022, amounted to Euro 40.05 million, while Croatia had Euro 5.55 million of direct investment into India in the same period. Although Croatian economy is relatively small with limited prospects for outward FDI, there is potential for collaboration in complementary sectors like infrastructure, defence, tourism, automotive, construction, ship-building, renewable energy, agro processing, IT and pharmaceuticals.

In pursuit of the Article III of the Agreement on Economic Cooperation between the Government of India and Government of Croatia signed on 14th Feb 2017, the Second Session of the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation was held in a virtual format on 13 October, 2022. The Joint Commission Session was co-chaired by Ms. Nidhi Mani Tripathi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Department of Commerce), Government of India on the Indian side and by Ms. Nataša Mikuš Žigman, State Secretary, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, the Government of the Republic of Croatia on the Croatian side. The Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation meeting is a good development of bringing our two line Ministries on the same page about the opportunities in the relevant sectors. We need to

ensure that some of the areas highlighted there, especially in the digital transition, green technologies and in healthcare are pursued for bottom up opportunities that exist between our two countries. The cooperation that has begun in the area of digital technologies and startups should be given due attention by the institutions of two sides including financial support to ensure that our two startup ecosystems interact more frequently and create mutually beneficial opportunities contributing to global solutions. The past examples of Infobip in this regard is instructive and should be utilised as we move forward. Similarly, Indian investments into Croatia are likely to increase as we move forward and Croatia establishes itself through the upgradation of Rijeka port as the hub for trade with the region and Europe in general.

As regards investments, despite being a small market, some Indian companies are now present in Croatia. ACG World Wide acquired Lukaps (Ludbreg) in 2007 and has since become a major supplier of gelatine capsules to EU. It plans to expand further by doubling its capacity in 2023 and with the establishment of an R&D Centre. It also acquired a Croatian IT company, IN2 Trace, specializing in pharmaceutical serialization solutions, in April 2017.

Capital Group of India through the Croatian Subsidiary Karma Group has invested in past two years in Agro & real estate sector in Croatia Orient Green Power (Europe) owned by Orient Green Power (Chennai) invested in construction of wind power plants near Sibenik in 2011. Infosys Engineering Delivery Centre was officially opened (Karlovac) in 2017 after taking over GE engineering operations, with 100 qualified engineers, making it the main near shore Centre for Europe. JGL, a Croatian pharmaceutical company signed two five-year license agreements with Dr. Reddy's in 2017. Croatian-Hungarian trading company A&A BIOENERGY VIRO invested in cogeneration plant for wood biomass of 3 MW electric power output at the Antunovac Entrepreneurial Zone in Virovitica in November 2019. Power plant uses the Indian turbine which was purchased from TRIVENI TURBINES Ltd. (Bangalore, Karnataka) based on shortest delivery deadline and references. TRIVENI TURBINE's employees were present during commissioning and testing of the turbine. Karma Agro signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Government of Petrinja, which envisages up to €50 million investments in agriculture in the Petrinja area in growing hazelnut, walnut and chestnut plantations.

The Embassy has been encouraging Indian companies to position themselves in Croatia as it can serve as a gateway not only for entry into the little-known Balkan market estimated at more than 20 million people, but also Western Europe.

Croatian company Altpro, specialist in research, development and production of safety and signaling equipment for rolling stock and infrastructure, signed a contract with Indian company Sigma (owned by Texmaco) for supplying its product "Train Detection System" and ToT. In April 2019, Altpro got the approval from Research Designs & Standards Organisation (RDSO) for exporting its products to Indian market. Altpro has unique technology in the world when it comes to train detections systems and it is exporting its product to over 47 countries.

Croatian engineering major Končar signed several contracts with Indian industrial groups such as Jaypee and Virgo for mutual cooperation. Končar is actively involved in some small hydro power projects in India. It is also in touch with some Indian companies for cooperation in the field of non-conventional sources of energy, particular wind energy. Končar is currently cooperating with Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Limited (TANGEDCO) and most of its business activities are located in southern India.

Infobip, one of Croatia's leading IT companies, has been doing business with Indian companies since 2009. Founded in 2006, Infobip has grown into one of the world's leading communication platforms for the processing and delivery of SMS messages, push notifications, OTT messages, voice messages and emails for its business clients. Infobip collaborates with some of the largest, leading companies in India and it has offices in New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Pune. Each one of these cities has more inhabitants than that of entire Croatia.

Telegra, Croatian artificial intelligence traffic management company installed Electronic Toll Collection System (ETCS) at one of the highways in India and exported some of Croatian Road Traffic Signalling Equipment to India. Telegra's current business activity in India is maintaining this ETC system.

MM Farmachem, the Croatian pharmaceutical company has been doing business with Indian companies since 2004. It has office in Hyderabad and it employs 10 Indian workers. It imports API (Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients) from India and supplies to South-East Europe. It also obtains, for its buyers, all necessary documentation regarding registration of the medicines in the particular country.

Kanaan, Croatian food processing company is in touch with Indian company SV Agri for cooperation in the field of agriculture, particular in the ToT regarding planting of "seeds potatoes".

According to data published (10/02) by the Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics (DZS), in 2019, Croatia had a total of 69,131 Indian tourist arrivals or 7.27% more than in 2018, with 153,354 overnight stays, 8.12% more than in 2018. The pandemic has drastically reduced the number in 2020 & 2021.

Hon'ble President of India H.E. Shri Ram Nath Kovind, visited Croatia in March 2019. A 35-member business delegation consisting of members from Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) also visited Croatia on the occasion. The India-Croatia Business Forum and B2B meetings were held in coordination with the Croatian Chamber of Economy (CCE). The occasion was also used for signing MOUs between the Croatian Chamber of Economy and FICCI, ASSOCHAM, CII.

A "Virtual India-Croatia Business Forum 2021" between Indian and Croatian

companies was organised jointly by FICCI, Croatian Chamber of Commerce and this Embassy on 13th April 2021 in which 23 Croatian Companies and 45 Indian companies participated and where both FICCI and Croatian Chamber of Commerce gave presentations about India-Croatia trade, about avenues for investment / investment opportunities in both countries and about procedure, rules and regulations and related digital links in the internet where such information could be found.

In an interview in the August 2022 edition of Croatian Business Magazine Lider, Mr. Deepak Bagla, Managing Director & CEO, Invest India, highlighted the forefront of bringing global companies and investments into the Indian market which enabled New India to allocate in the past 8 years, over USD 523 billion across over 62 sectors. On 21 Sept, at the 14th Annual Big Plans Day Conference organized by Business Magazine group Lider at Zagreb Fair Congress Center, Mr. Deepak Bagla, CEO & MD of Invest India presented to over 300 business leaders of Croatia, the unique transformation that is taking place in India and the opportunities that it opens up to our global business partners. The event was attended by H.E. Mr. Zoran Milanovic, President of Croatia, Davor Filipovic, Economy Minister, Irena Weber, Chief Director of the Croatian Employers' Association (HUP), Sandra Švaljek, Deputy Governor of the Croatian National Bank (HNB) among other dignitaries.

Cultural Relations

India has been well known in Croatia for centuries, and the earliest Croatian visitors to India were Missionaries. Links have been found between the Principality of Dubrovnik and Goa, and the Church of Sao Braz was reportedly built by Croatians around 1563 in Goa. Ivan Filip Vezdin, a Croat, is credited with publishing the first printed Sanskrit grammar in 1790, and plaque to commemorate him was unveiled in Trivandrum in 1999.

In contemporary times, a Department of Indology has been functioning at the University of Zagreb for more than 50 years. There is also widespread interest in Yoga and Ayurveda in Croatia. There are several India-oriented cultural Societies in Croatia, comprising mostly of Croatian nationals, such as Yoga in Daily Life, Art of Living, ISKCON, Bhakti Marga, Vedic Centre. A number of Croatian students have learnt various forms of Indian classical dance in India under ICCR scholarships as well as on self-financing basis. In response to demand for Hindi, a Hindi Chair was set up by ICCR in 2009 at the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb, which was renewed in 2019 during visit of Rashtrapatiji to Croatia. Similarly, an MoU was signed during Rashtrapatiji's visit to Croatia in 2019 for establishment of a Sanskrit Chair in the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb, which has started from the 2022 fall Semester. The Indology Department has been active in promoting Sanskrit and Hindi in Croatia. Croatian troupes also participate from time to time in cultural festivals in India.

A Cultural Exchange programme for the period 2019-22 was signed during the October 2018 visit of former Croatian DPM and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Ms. Marija Pejcinovic Buric to India. This is expected to be renewed soon.

Numerous events are organized on a regular basis by the Embassy to showcase Indian culture in Croatia. Among recent activities, a regional seminar on Hindi teachings in Europe was held in March 2020 as part of World Hindi Day celebrations, with participation of scholars from across Croatia as well as from Poland, Portugal, Hungary and Bulgaria, etc. Multi-faceted 'India Day' events are organized in various provinces periodically, including Yoga workshops, screening of films, exposure to Indian cuisine, exhibitions on various themes, planting of peace trees, etc. Since 2016, a tradition has commenced of taking out the annual 'Ratha Yatra' in downtown Zagreb, to replicate the age-old ancient tradition of Odisha. Mr. Veljko Kajtazi, President of India-Croatia Friendship Group in the Croatian Parliament, visited India in March 2018 at ICCR's invitation.

Annual International Day of Yoga (IDY) celebration attracts large participation. IDY celebrations have been taking place since its inception in 2015. In 2021, the 7th IDY was celebrated in 40 cities in Croatia. First International Yoga Science Conference was held in Zagreb on 16 June 2019 with participation of Yoga teachers, scientists and experts from Europe, USA and Russia. The 7th International Vedic Conference was organized by the Indology Department of Zagreb University in Dubrovnik on 19-24 August 2019. Mahatma Gandhi bust, donated by ICCR during Rashtrapatiji's visit in March 2019, was unveiled by Croatian PM and Mayor of Zagreb at the famous Bundeck Park in Zagreb on 2nd October 2019 to mark Gandhi@150. Mission organized various seminars, exhibitions, events, publicity activities, etc. throughout 2019 to celebrate Gandhi@150 and 550th Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji. As part of Festival of India (FOI) in Croatia in 2019, four Indian dance troupes, sponsored by Ministry of Culture, performed in 12 cities across Croatia. As part of FOI, Food Festival of India was organized in Zagreb and Split in February 2020 with the participation of 2 eminent Chefs from India. A 10-member Kalaripayattu martial dance troupe from Kerala performed in the famous Rijeka Carnival and in Zagreb in February 2020. A year long festival titled "India: Indus Valley and Beyond" showcasing Indian civilization in all its manifestations through lectures, workshop, travelogues and exhibitions started in Archaeological Museum of Zagreb, in partnership with the Mission, on 02 March 2020.

DG ICCR visited Croatia from 25-27 October 2021 and met with Mrs. Nina Obuljen Koržinek, Minister of Culture of Croatia. The Minister expressed hope that in the next year it will be possible to realize more intensive exchange in the field of culture.

On 2 October 2022 at Bundeck Park in Zagreb, Mahatma Gandhi's 153rd birth anniversary was celebrated in Zagreb with the presence of about 75 friends of India along with remembrance of Second PM Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri on his 118th birth anniversary. The event was marked as International Day of Non-Violence with the organisation of a seminar on the topic "Non-violence is a weapon of the strong" in the evening at FER, University of Zagreb. The Embassy of India, Zagreb, FER, University of

Zagreb & Croatian Indian Society partnered the special evening celebrating Culture, Customs, Conversation, Creativity & Cuisine.

Sports Cooperation

An important milestone in India-Croatia sports cooperation was the appointment of Croatia's famous footballer Igor Stimac as the head coach of Indian national football team for a two year term starting from 15 May 2019, which was further extended by one more year recently. Three Croatian football players have been contracted recently by Indian clubs and a few Indian male and female players have attended training programme in Croatia in 2022. These engagements in the area of football would surely bring positive momentum to Indian football scene using the best practices developed by Croatia.

Indian Tennis Team visited Zagreb to play Davis Cup against Croatia in March 2020. Twenty eight membered Indian shooting team delegation came to Croatia for their Tokyo Olympics preparations and stayed for two months before going to Tokyo. Vishwanathan Anand, who is a Chess Grandmaster of India and five time World Champion, has played twice in the Grand Chess Tour in Zagreb, first in 2019 and recently in July 2021.

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Celebrations in Croatia

Since the launch of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations in India from 12th March 2021 till 15th August 2023, many events have been organized in Croatia with the partnership of different stakeholders and institutions who are working towards strengthening India-Croatia cultural relationship. The events included the painting competition, exhibitions, sports events, virtual as well as physical webinars and seminars.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat programme on 30th January 2022, Prime Minister Modi spoke about having received 75 post cards from friendly country Croatia on which students of School of Applied Arts & Design in Zagreb have congratulated people of India on Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav and thanks Croatia and its people on behalf of people of India.

Multiple events related to celebration of AzadiKaAmritMahotsav were organized during the year, including 75th Independence Day Reception in Zagreb with the presence of Foreign Minister, Deputy Speaker of Parliament and the former President of Croatia, among many other dignitaries and 73rd Republic Day Reception in Zagreb with the presence of State Secretary of Foreign Affairs.

A special month-long Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations was organized between 25th January-26th February 2022 with 16 events spread over 8 cities of Croatia in 32 days, in which all 6 pillars of Amrit Mahotsav were given focus. The most

successful three performances by the ICCR sponsored contemporary dance group "PARADOX" led by Terence Lewis brought the feel of India to the Croatian friends in three Croatian cities where people could appreciate the diversity and depth of Indian culture and heritage in 90 minutes' special choreography created for this occasion by the name "Indradhanush".

The complete details of those could be seen at the link: <https://mea.gov.in/india-at75-photos.htm?96>.

On 23 March, "India corner" at the School of Applied Arts and Design (Principal Mr. Filip Pintarić) was opened for the students of ŠPUD, Zagreb where books in the field of India's literature, philosophy & culture are available.

On 8th March, International Women's Day 2022 with the theme "Women @ the Heart of Health & Happiness", was celebrated with 5Cs namely Culture, Customs, Conversation, Creativity & Cuisine, with participation of 75 women of substance at FER in Zagreb under broader Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations in Croatia.

A festive cultural program was held in Rijeka in Yoga in Daily Life Cultural Hall commemorating 30 years of diplomatic relations between India and Croatia and 75 years of independence of the Republic of India with the presentation of traditional Indian wear and dance, Croatian folk costumes from different regions of Croatia, performance of the Folklore ensemble "Zora" from Opatija.

In the presence of H E Ms Nikolina Brnjac, Tourism & Sports Minister of Croatia and other dignitaries, official opening of the International Tourism Fair Place2Go took place on 8 April 2022 at Arena Zagreb with India as the partner country. The event brought together small businesses, family farms, companies and tourism boards from all over Croatia, as well as exhibitors from 12 other countries including India, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, and the Maldives, who presented their tourism products and services until 10 April. The second day of fair on 9th April brought the feel of India with Talk Show, Saree Fashion Show, & Bollywood Dances.

This year, as a symbol of the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence, the multiple stakeholders in Croatia decided, along with the Embassy of India in Zagreb, to celebrate the 8th IDY2022 during 1-21 June in 75 different locations. This was the first time that IDY this year was marked in such a large number of locations with the spike in the number of participants compared to previous years. Yoga workshops were also organized. Also, several sessions of yoga for kids, for the elderly and for pregnant women were organised.

India presented Sarod maestro Arnab Bhattacharya accompanied by Table player Rohen Bose in the 73rd *Dubrovnik Summer Festival; Split Summer Festival; Ludbreg; & Zagreb* on 12, 14, 16 & 17 August 2022 respectively on the occasion of *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* celebrating 75th anniversary of India's Independence. These four programmes were organised coinciding with 75th anniversary of India's

Independence, with the support of ICCR and local hosts in Croatia. On 17 August both musicians gave their captivating performance before the guests present on the National Day Reception hosted by Ambassador on the occasion of 75th Anniversary of Independence Day at Zagreb.

Ambassador attended opening of the ALU Perspectives 2 and the "Petolik" exhibition, in which Lalit Kala Akademi presented 15 art works each of 5 contemporary Indian artists artworks for display at the Art Zagreb Fair from the 15-18 September, 2022 at the Academy of Fine Arts, Zagreb as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

On 12 Oct, Foreign Minister of Croatia H.E. Mr. Gordan Grlić Radman participated in the ceremony for presentation of the book "Croatia-India ties: 30 chapters for 30 years of diplomatic relations", at the Faculty of Philosophy, Zagreb University on the occasion of marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of India-Croatia diplomatic relations.

On 5 Nov, on the occasion of National Unity Day 2022, the Croatia-India Society hosted a seminar "Celebrating National Unity Week of India with Global Unity of P3 (Pro Planet People): LiFE" with a welcome speech by the Ambassador Srivastava, presentations by Ms Dunja Mazzocco Drvar, Director for Climate Activities of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development on "The Croatian experience on Green transition and Sustainable Development and Bilateral Opportunities for Cooperation in the Context of the Mission LiFE" and by Prof. Ivan Andrijanić, Head of the Department of Indology and Far Eastern Studies on "Sardar Patel: The Iron Man of India who Unified the Country after 1947."

On 16 Nov, Ambassador Srivastava made a presentation in the Memorial apartment of the late 1st Croatian female journalist Memorijalni stan Marije Juric Zagorke on the topic "Unsung Heroines of the Indian Freedom Movement" and presented the comic book released in Jan 2022 by the Minister of State for External Affairs of India, Mrs. Meenakshi Lekhi, about "20 Women Freedom Fighters of India".

AYUSH Cell Activities

Embassy of India in Zagreb has an AYUSH supported Cell for supporting the Croatian friends and institutions who are pursuing traditional systems like Yoga and Ayurveda for long time. The summary of AYUSH Cell's activities for the year 2021 can be seen at the link: <https://www.indianembassyzagreb.gov.in/docs/16377357895.pdf>. Embassy also organized the first International Yoga & Ayurveda Conference in Zagreb on 3-5 October 2021 with the participation of about 40 experts from Croatia, India and other countries in Europe. In all, about 200 persons participated in the conference. The complete details of the conference are available at the website at link : https://www.indianembassyzagreb.gov.in/news_detail/?newsid=185.

On 6 October, Delegation of AYUSH had a meeting with representatives of Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster in Rijeka, followed by a presentation of the Cluster and

the signing of a MOU between the Kvarner Health & Tourism Cluster in Rijeka & All India Institute of Ayurveda of Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India with a shared desire to develop collaboration in the study of traditional medical systems including Ayurveda.

AYUSH Cell of the Embassy has organised regular fortnightly webinars/virtual sessions with local & International experts from Yoga & Ayurveda for the last 18 months.

Year 2022 saw the 75 events under IDY as a special gesture to commemorate 75 years of India's Independence.

6th Ayurveda Day (November 2) was celebrated in Rijeka with Healthy Nutrition as key theme; Grad Rijeks is developing a healthy lifestyle focused policy by promoting traditional systems. 7th Ayurveda Day was celebrated in Zagreb on 10 Oct, 2022 with 6 Croatian culinary and hospitality sector professionals preparing together Ayurvedic meals under the theme of "Ayurvedic Aahar for Enhancing Immunity".

Digital & Startup Ecosystem Cooperation

Indian Digital Revolution in the past five years, has created a great success story for the people by the people of the people of India. It is a great story for democratizing the digital opportunities in the world's largest Democracy. Croatian budding innovation ecosystem would benefit immensely by connecting to Indian ecosystem. We are very happy to see some initial efforts in the past one year made by our Embassy here and some deliverables have already been achieved. On 20th December 2021, India-Croatia Startup Bridge was launched between the responsible institutions of the two sides HAMAG BICRO from Croatia and Startup India from India. The objectives of the bridge initiative are knowledge sharing, creating networking opportunities, organizing joint programmes, capacity building and creating opportunities for cross investments.

India-Croatia Startup 50-day long challenge was organised from 10 April 2022 in collaboration with Infobip, Končar - Electric Vehicles Inc., and HexGn, supported by the Embassy of India, Zagreb, after the establishment of the Bilateral Startup Bridge on 20/12/2021 between India and Croatia to exploit the potential of the two innovation ecosystems. HAMAG-BICRO, Croatia and Startup India invited startups to apply for the India-Croatia startup challenge thus organized. Over 300 submissions and 13 winners pointed to the vast potential that exists between India & Croatia. Indian Educational Startup *CIRÉE EDUTECH LLP* was declared the winner of challenge on 14 June 2022 in the concluding ceremony. The above event was widely covered in the local media by publication of a number of articles.

Skill Development & Human Resources Cooperation

Demography is an important area of complementarity between India and Croatia. India's experience in skill development and skills focused New Education Policy

provides great possibilities for Croatian companies to benefit from the predictable and desired skill set possessing human resources from India through the cooperation with Skill Development Ministry and National Skill Development Corporation of India. We have organized many virtual meetings between different stakeholders to share the relevant information to take this potentially beneficial cooperation forward.

Defence & Maritime Cooperation

The MoU on Defence Cooperaton between two countries is ready for signing. The cooperation as such is taking place between the institutions and the companies and we should continue to explore further opportunities in this regard. There are some initiatives in the pipelines for cooperation in defence R&D. Similarly, Croatian defence companies should look at opened up Indian defence market for new opportunities without having the baggage of past experience as we are now in an era of new India. Invest India has expressed dedicated support to Crotian companies in this regard.

Tourism, Cultural Cooperation and People-to-People contacts

In this area, we have made tremendous visibility despite the pandemic in terms of the events and initiatives that have been launched in the past 18 months in Croatia, espeically celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, traditional healthcare related events in the field of yoga and ayurveda and the cultural events to celebrate the 30 years of establishment of diplomatic relationship between the two countries. The Cultural Exchange Programme of 2019-2022 is being renewed for next cycle soon to ensure continuation of our excellent cultural cooperation in the coming years.

Mobility & Migration

This is an area which requires very serious consideration at G2G level because commercial and economic logic is already moving ahead with speed, as we see over 2000 Indian workers moving into Croatia in the past two years. In order to ensure welfare of workers as well as scrupulous contractual obligations from both sides, we need to create a G2G enabling environment through signing of MoU on Mobility and Migration. India has already done so with some countries in Europe and we should also expedite a similar agreement between India and Croatia.

Science & Technology, Innovation & R&D

This is an area where there are lots of opportunities and the two sides aim to revive our joint call agreements which were signed over a decade back. The university to university cooperation agreements signed in the past 18 months among six different institutions from both sides, is an indication of the appetite and opportunities.

Academic & University Cooperation:

In order to strengthen P2P connections through Academic cooperation between India and Croatia, new partnerships were launched such as:

- University of Zagreb Faculty of Electronics & Computers (FER) with IIT GandhiNagar
- University of Zagreb Faculty of Economics & Business (FEB) with IIM Lucknow
- University of Osijek Faculty of Electronics & IT (FERIT) with IIT Indore
- University of Rijeka with Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) Bhubaneswar
- University of Dubrovnik and National Institute of Oceanography (Goa)
- University of Varazdin and Sharda University, Noida.
- Ongoing ICCR Hindi Chair at University of Zagreb
- ICCR Sanskrit Chair at University of Zagreb

Indian Community

The Indian community in Croatia has changed over the last two years rapidly due to demographic situation in Croatia where a lot of foreign workers are being employed for carrying out work in different sectors of economy. On 31 December, 2022, the number of Indians residing in Croatian territory jumped to over 7500 from a figure of roughly 2500 in December, 2021. Many of the Indian workers are working on short to medium term contracts and therefore at least, 90% of the people among currently residing are those who form a part of the mobile population staying in Croatia for a specific contractual period. Of the Indians residing in Croatia, around 32 are PIOs and 25 Indian students.

Indian tourists to Croatia have been increasing sharply over the last few years, but with Croatia in the queue to join the Schengen Zone, visa issuance process is cumbersome (however, dual / multiple entry Schengen visa holders can enter Croatia without a Croatian visa).

On 10 January 2023, Mr. Joginder Singh Nijjar, a renowned member of the Indian community in Croatia, received the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award 2023 in recognition of his contribution in the field of Art & Culture/Education. Mr. Singh was conferred the award by the Hon'ble President of India during Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention 2023 held in Indore.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Zagreb-Website: <http://www.indianembassyzagreb.gov.in/>

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

Embassy of India, Zagreb-Twitter: https://twitter.com/India_Croatia

Embassy of India, Zagreb-Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/india_in_croatia/

Embassy of India Monthly Newsletter:

<https://www.indianembassyzagreb.gov.in/page/embassy-of-india-zagreb-newsletter/>

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