

India-Latvia Relations

Relations between India and Latvia are warm and friendly, based on shared commitment to democracy. Popular interest in Indian culture among the Latvian people has strengthened ties. Bilateral contracts date back to the time when Latvia was part of the Soviet Union and had a twinned status with Rajasthan. India recognized Latvia as a sovereign and independent state on September 7, 1991 and established diplomatic relations on February 25, 1992. The Latvian Government opened its Embassy in New Delhi in January 2014. The Indian Mission in Stockholm is concurrently accredited to Latvia.

Political Relations

Since establishment of diplomatic relations, there have been a number of visits from Latvia to India, including by the Latvian President in 1997, by Speaker in 2003, Deputy Prime Minister in 2003, Foreign Minister in 2006 and in September & November 2013, Minister for Culture in 2007 and Minister for E-Governance in 2007. An important visit was that of the Latvian Economics Minister accompanied by a business delegation visited India in February, 2010. From India, there have been three visits by Minister of State for External Affairs, the last one by Smt. Preneet Kaur in 2011. The 5th round of Foreign Office Consultations was held in April 2012 in Riga and the last round (6th) of Foreign Office Consultations was held in New Delhi on February 3, 2015.

Ms. Vrinda Sarup, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy led a 3-member delegation to Riga from April 27-28, 2015 to attend the 5th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Education Ministers' Meeting. A three member AYUSH delegation led by Dr. K.S. Dhiman (KSD), Director General, Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) visited Riga to attend the International Scientific Network on Ayurveda organized by the University of Latvia on May 28-29, 2015. They also called on the Deputy State Secretary of Health on May 29, 2015 and discussed possible collaboration in the field of Ayurveda and establishment of AYUSH Chair in Latvian Universities.

Following institutional agreements/arrangements have been put in place for promoting trade, investments and other relations:- (i) Declaration of Principles and Directions of Co-operation signed in September, 1995; (ii) Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in the fields of Culture, Arts, Education, Science, Mass-Media and Sports signed in Sept 1995; (iii) Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between Latvia and India signed in Sept 1995; (iv) Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations signed in September 1995; (v) Air Services Agreement signed in October 1997; (vi) Agreement on the Inter- Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation signed in June, 2001; (vii) Cultural Exchange Agreement was signed in May 2006; (viii) Bilateral Investment

Protection Agreement signed in February, 2010. (ix) Agreement on Health was signed on 28th February, 2012; and (xi) Agreement on Prevention of Double Taxation and Tax Evasion was signed in September 2013.

In December 2010, an India-Latvia Parliamentary Friendship Group in Latvian Parliament has been set up. A similar Friendship Group has also been set up in Parliament of India. The then Speaker of Latvian Parliament had visited India in October 2012 and had invited her Indian counterpart to Latvia. The invitation had been accepted in principle with dates to be decided through diplomatic channels.

The Chairman of the Latvia-India Friendship Group and Member of Parliament, Mr. AtisLejins visited India from April 3-12, 2015 under the Distinguished Visitors Programme of ICCR.

Economic & Commercial Relations

Bilateral trade figures are tabulated below and reflect that the decline between 2011-2013 which followed a period of steady growth over the five previous years has halted and the value has again touched US\$ 200 million. Major Indian exports are tea, coffee, tools, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, garments, iron & steel etc. Major Indian imports include chemicals, fertilizers, iron & steel, machinery etc. There is scope for growth of textiles, agro-products, gems and jewellery, chemical dyes and pharmaceuticals.

Bilateral Trade since 2008

Year	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
India's Exports	47.17	103.19	96.18	104.08	102.07	98.12
India's Imports	154.94	196.32	141.53	73.63	103.89	36.22
Total	202.11	299.51	237.71	177.71	205.96	134.34

Source: Ministry of Commerce, India. Figures in US\$ million and year refer to financial year i.e. April-March.

Consequent to Latvia's accession to the EU, Indian companies can access the EU market through investment in Latvia. Its geostrategic location as a potential gateway to the CIS countries as well as Russia along with its excellent all weather ports add to the potential. Taking these factors along with the investment friendly policies of the Latvian government and the recent steady economic growth which saw Latvia emerge as the fastest growing member of the Euro-zone provide good opportunities for Indian

firms. However, investments in both directions are below potential. As per Latvian Register of companies, till 2013, there were 87 Indian companies registered in Latvia but the total investment is only about US\$ 1 million. Potential areas of investment from India include pharmaceuticals and healthcare, telecommunications, IT and software development, heavy engineering and biotechnology. Cumulative figures of Latvian FDI in India are less than US \$ 0.1 million.

Cultural and Educational Relations

Under the Cultural Exchange Programme for 2006-08 between the two countries and even after it was put on hold in 2008 at Latvian Government's request, several Indian cultural troupes have performed in Latvia; mostly sponsored by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations.

Latvians have been regular beneficiaries of ITEC training programmes, the courses for foreign diplomats offered by the FSI as well as scholarships provided by ICCR.

The University of Latvia has established a "Centre on Indian Studies and Culture" which was formally inaugurated on 9th September, 2013. It is organizing Yoga classes and Hindi classes as well as other activities to promote India. The University of Latvia and several other Latvian Universities are keen to establish collaborative relations with Indian Universities as well as to receive students from India. Seven Universities came together to open a Study in Latvia Centre (SLC) in Chennai in February, 2014.

Indian Community

There is a small Indian community in Latvia numbering around 150 and mostly engaged in business activities. This includes around 100 Indian students studying medicine and technical courses in Latvian Universities. Number of persons of Indian origin is about 20.

Useful Resources

Embassy of India to Sweden and Latvia website: <http://www.indianembassy.se/>

Embassy of India, Stockholm Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndianEmbassyStockholm>

Embassy of India, Stockholm Youtube: <http://youtube.com/user/eoistockholmsweden/videos>

Newsletter: <http://issuu.com.stockholm/docs>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/eoistockholm>

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