



## **FRIENDSHIP**

*“The friendship between India and Serbia has a long history rooted in the shared values of Non-Alignment and cultural ties. Over the years, the two countries have built upon these values and created a partnership based on both principle and pragmatism.”* — **H.E. NARINDER CHAUHAN**, Indian Ambassador to Serbia

# INDIA

*Unique Market  
For The World*



# *Rising Economy Founded On Strong Cultural Foundations*

India celebrates its Republic Day on 26<sup>th</sup> January, with numerous ceremonies and parades commemorating this date

**H.E. NARINDER CHAUHAN**, INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO SERBIA

**W**ith the strong cultural foundation of over 1.3 billion people with different religions, sub-cultures, societal norms and changing paradigms, India today ranks among the fastest-growing economies in the world.

• **Your Excellency, which of India's achievements during the last year would you highlight?**

- Success of parliamentary form of government, rule of law and people's faith in democratic process and institutions are the biggest achievements of independent India. India of 2017 is vastly different from India of 1947. The opening up of economy in 1991 and series of subsequent reforms since then have ameliorated the effects of colonization and not only lifted million out of poverty but expanded the market for goods and services, delivered financial prosperity and higher purchasing power to millions of middle class citizens. India is home to 1.30 billion people – 18% of the world's population and world's largest youth population. India's economic success in recent years has helped to ensure that South Asia is the fastest-growing region in the world. Some of the achievements during 2017 are:

• The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the space agency of India, scripted history by successfully launching a record 104 satellites from seven countries on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2017. This is the highest number of satellites ever launched

in a single mission. Among other achievements in space include launch of 2230 kg South Asia Satellite (GSAT-9) and GSAT-17, India's third communication satellite in May 2017. South Asia Satellite is a communication satellite built by ISRO to provide a variety of communication services over the South Asian region.

• The Goods and Services Tax (GST), India's biggest tax reform in 70 years of independence, came into force at midnight on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2017, amid a historic midnight session of Parliament. GST is a single tax on the supply of goods



INDIAN REPUBLIC DAY PARADE ON RAJ PATH IN NEW DELHI



**AMBASSADOR NARINDER CHAUHAN MEETS PM ANA BRNABIC**

**Digitalization is one the top priorities of PM Ms.Ana Brnabic. Serbian companies have been visiting India to provide technical support to Indian companies & institutions, particularly in the ICT sector**

and services, right from the manufacturer to the consumer which aims to remove tax barriers between Indian states and create a single market.

- India jumped 30 spots to secure a place among the top-100 countries on World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking 2018, driven by reforms in access to credit, power supplies and protection of minority investors. With this year's performance, India became the first ever country to record highest jump in World Bank's ease of doing business ranking. India is among the top 10 'Improvers' globally, having done better in 8 out of 10 business parameters.

- The work on India's first high speed rail project (bullet train) between Mumbai and Ahmedabad has commenced. The rail project promises to transform railways and 'create new India'.

- India remains the most competitive country in South Asia, appearing at No. 40 in the Global Competitiveness Report 2017-18 among 137 countries by the World Economic

Forum (WEF). India has moved up 12 places from 52<sup>nd</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> position in the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (TTCI) of the World Economic Forum, released on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

- In November India's Manushi Chhillar won the coveted Miss World 2017 crown and became the 6<sup>th</sup> Miss World from India.
- On 9<sup>th</sup> June India became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
- In October, India successfully organised the FIFA U-17 World Cup.
- India's longest bridge - the 9.15 km long Dhola-Sadiya bridge over the River Brahmaputra, in Assam - was inaugurated in May 2017.

**• In the eyes of foreign observers, India is both one of the world's largest economies and a country where diversity, traditional values and social relations have been preserved. How would you explain this fusion?**

- I believe that social relations as well as cultural diversity plays a key role in economic growth. India boasts of an immensely rich and diverse cultural heritage including numerous languages, traditions and people. India holds its uniqueness in

its diversity and hence has adapted itself to international changes with poise and comfort. While our economy has welcomed international companies with open arms to invest since liberalisation in 1990s, Indians have been prudent and pro-active in adopting

global approach and skills. With the strong cultural foundation of over 1.3 billion people with different religions, sub-cultures, societal norms and changing paradigms, India today ranks among the fastest-growing economies in the world. Being a major economic, military, technological and space power, India is poised for a quantum leap in terms of economic success in the not so distant future. The rising economy of India founded on such strong cultural footing makes India a unique market for the world. India is witnessing all-round transformation and different sectors of the economy have become vibrant. Significant progress has been registered in vital areas of renewable energy, railways, roads, power, space, health, infrastructure etc. India's current economic growth has improved its standing on the world's political stage and many nations are moving to forge better relationships with India.

**• India and Serbia have celebrated 70 years of diplomatic relations. How do you see cooperation between the two countries?**

## MARKET

The rising economy of India founded on such strong cultural footing makes India a unique market for the world

## POTENTIAL

Serbian economy is in transition and India is an emerging economy. There is lot of untapped potential in India-Serbia trade relations

## INFRASTRUCTURE

India can play an important role in building the infrastructure as well as software and security infrastructure for a truly Digital Serbia

- The friendship between India and Serbia has a long history rooted in the shared values of Non-Alignment and cultural ties. Over the years, the two countries have built upon these values and created a partnership based on both principle and pragmatism. India and Serbia support each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We are like minded countries with common positions on many international issues. Earlier this year, we were privileged to receive in India H.E. Aleksandar Vučić where very warm meetings were held with Prime Minister Modi and Indian business community. Since the visit, we have seen forward movement in several areas of the 'new relationship with India' that President Vučić and PM Brnabić have referred to in their public addresses. Another big step is the participation in World Food India (Nov 2017) by Serbian agro-companies led by H.E. Branislav Nedimović, Minister of Agriculture. Minister Nedimović held bilateral meeting with Mr Radha Mohan Singh, Indian Minister of Agriculture, and Mrs Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Minister of Food Processing Industries, to discuss future bilateral cooperation as a follow-up of the meeting between the two prime ministers earlier in the year. Due to combined and persistent efforts, bilateral trade has seen year-on-year growth of 30.5%.

Several Indian companies have taken interest in Serbian infrastructure projects, agri-machinery and food production. More than 200 business visas have been given to Serbian companies to visit India.

The two governments have put the necessary instruments in place including BIPA, DTAC, Trade Agreement (MFN status), Tourism, Revised Air Services Agreement, Agricultural Cooperation, S&T, IT & Electronics, Archives, etc. In our effort to enhance business opportunities, the India-Serbia Business Forum was launched in June 2016 followed by second meeting in February 2017 where duty differential for Indian imports and complex registration procedures for Indian pharma products were identified as some of the hurdles. Very constructive ideas emerged from the Working Group on Agriculture where India expressed interest in import of pulses, soyabean, oil seeds and Serbia emphasized on export of fruits & vegetables to India apart from import of agriculture machinery. The two sides are negotiating phytosanitary agreement to ease export/import of fruits, vegetables and processed products. India made expression of interest in importing copper & gold from Serbia during the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the Joint Economic Committee (JEC). The Medicines and Medical Devices Agency of Serbia



AMBASSADOR CHAUHAN WITH SERBIAN PM BRNABIĆ

***Serbian companies are looking to working with India for our Digital India, Start Up India programmes. Indian investors are interested in agri-machinery, infrastructure, pharma, healthcare sectors...***

(ALIMS) and Indian agency, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) are working on agreement for cooperation on issues of the quality of medicines. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the India-Serbia Joint Committee on Science & Technology was held in Belgrade in October 2017, where a new Programme of Cooperation was signed with increased fields of cooperation. It was agreed to hold workshops on (a) biotechnology & human health and (b) ICT and thereafter announce joint calls in the second half of 2018. The Joint Working Group on IT & Electronics in October 2017 exchanged cooperation agendas in the field of e-Governance, Cloud Computing, IoT, Big Data, Start-up ecosystem etc.

In November 2017, Serbia participated in the Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS-2017) in New Delhi and 8<sup>th</sup> Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES 2017) in Hyderabad.

Both sides have liberalised visa regimes and hope to see increased trade and tourism in future. Recently eight prominent Serbian tour operators undertook a familiarisation visit to India

(Sept 2017) and held a workshop with 25 top Indian tour operators and government officials. Likewise a group of five Indian tour operators and three Travel Writers visited Serbia on familiarisation tour in October 2017 to form a network in order to enhance two-way tourism.

India has provided significant technical assistance to Serbia through its fully funded programme of Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) and Serbian nationals can benefit from the programme.

On the culture front, we have been able to successfully



• **Your partners in Serbia thank you for supporting the territorial integrity of the country. Does India still not support Kosovo's membership in international organisations?**

- We take pride in the historic and special relationship with Serbia, which remains one of mutual trust, understanding and support to each other on issues of core interest. There are no outstanding or unresolved bilateral issues. Serbia and India have a good track record of consistent and unconditional support to each other in multilateral fora and for elections in multilateral bodies.

**Significant progress has been registered in vital areas of renewable energy, railways, roads, power, space, health, infrastructure etc. India's current economic growth has improved its standing on the world's political stage**

connect our two countries' cultures and tried to bring India closer to Serbia through dance, art, photographs, films etc. Indian cultural troupes continue to attract large audiences.

I am confident that in the coming year India and Serbia will work together to re-energise and redefine political, cultural as well as trade & economic ties.

• **Can economic cooperation between our two friendly countries be raised to a higher level; which areas you consider as being interesting for cooperation?**

- Economic and commercial cooperation occupies prominent position in the bilateral matrix. Serbian economy is in transition and India is an emerging economy. There is lot of untapped potential in India-Serbia trade relations. Coming after 30 years, the visit of Hon'ble Aleksandar Vučić to India in January 2017 has invigorated economic ties. We have seen a spike in visits by big business houses led by TATAs, GMR, RELIANCE, TAFE etc. CG Food India has invested in a noodle factory in Ruma and are now exporting too. Indian companies based in UAE are also investing. There is growing exchange of visits between Indian & Serbian tech companies. Serbian company Schneider DMS NS is working in "Smart Cities" project of Government of India. Yugoimport and sister companies are partnering for Make in India. Serbian companies are looking to working with India for our Digital India, Start Up India programmes. Indian investors are interested in agri-machinery, infrastructure, pharma, healthcare sectors. These partnerships can help us reach new heights in our trade and



commercial partnership. The sectors for enhancement of bilateral trade include retail medicaments, metals, petroleum products, bio technology, agro and agro-chemical products, mobile phones, petrochemicals, personal care products, Ayurveda and herbal products etc. Agro & agro processing, mining, ICT, healthcare, tourism, renewable energy sources, etc. are other sectors with potential for joint projects. India can play an important role in developing e-Government in Serbia. Serbian businesses are becoming aware of the huge Indian market and the opportunities it creates for them.

- During your recent talks with the Serbian PM, you presented the 'Digital India' project and proposed cooperation between IT companies. Can it gain more tangible forms?

- Digitisation is one of the top priorities of PM Ms. Ana Brnabic. Serbian companies have been visiting India to provide technical support to Indian companies & institutions, particularly in



**AMBASSADOR CHAUHAN PROMOTING INDIAN IT AT IT CONFERENCES IN SERBIA**

***Economic and commercial cooperation occupies prominent position in the bilateral matrix. Serbian economy is in transition and India is an emerging economy. There is lot of untapped potential in India-Serbia trade relations***

the ICT sector. Digitisation initiatives in Serbia will provide business opportunities in various sectors, where India can be an important partner. Owing to the enabling policies by the Indian government, the 'Make in India' and 'Digital India' initiative, local manufacturing in the Electronics Industry is currently a hot topic. India-Serbia cooperation in this sector will enable Serbia to achieve its goal of digitisation.

ICT has been identified as one of the possible area of cooperation under the bilateral S&T agreement. The bilateral MOU on IT & Electronics aims to establish the institutional relation between the two countries and to encourage the business entities and IT companies from Serbia and India to work together. The two sides exchanged cooperation agendas in the field of e-Governance, Cloud Computing, IoT, Big Data, Start-up ecosystem etc. at the Joint Working Group meeting in Oct 2017. We can share the vision, approach, strategy and implementation methodology and management structure needed for developing and evolving e-government. Both countries can also enhance cooperation as per the Programme of Cooperation signed under the MOU on Agriculture and allied sectors, which envisages exchanges of information particularly for ICT in agriculture extension.

India can play an important role in building the infrastructure as well as software and security infrastructure for a truly Digital Serbia. In order to develop sufficient skills to support digital initiative in Serbia, Indian institutions



**SERBIAN AGRICULTURE MINISTER BRANISLAV NEDIMOVIĆ IN INDIA**

can provide training and education to adopt digital technologies so that the benefits of digitisation can reach all sections of Serbian society.

- **The Serbian Government decided in August to abolish visas for Indian citizens. Do you think this can encourage economic cooperation and interest in visiting Serbia?**

- I believe that the Serbian government's decision to abolish visa for Indians will go a long way in enhancing people to people contact and eventually bilateral trade.

- **When you first came to Serbia you were surprised by the popularity of Indian TV series, while today some Indian films are being shot in cooperation with partners from Serbia. What are the prospects for greater cooperation between two countries in the domain of culture?**

- Serbia cherishes Indian culture, Yoga, Ayurveda, as well as our films, TV serials and cuisine. The Indian cultural manifestations we bring to Serbia are very popular and



**'READ INDIA' AT THE RECENT BELGRADE INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR**

draw full houses. Recently, the Kriyative Theatre Group participated in INFANT Festival and BELEF Festival. Indian folklore ensemble from Punjab participated in FIDAF "Belgrade Award". In August, the renowned Bharatnatyam dancer Ms Geeta Chandran and her group gave 70<sup>th</sup> Independence Day concert. Growing Serbian interest in India is evident by the institution of Hindi Chair at University of Novi Sad, India studies at Belgrade University and Permanent exhibition of Chandigarh's Rock Garden at the Museum of Naive and Marginal Arts. Regular student exchanges take place under the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Expertise (IAESTE). There is close collaboration in the field of films and film

shootings have begun both ways. Prominent Serbian Film Producer & Director Goran Paskaljevic, shot the first ever Indo-Serbian film co-production 'Dev Bhoomi' (Land of the God) in India. The shooting of Indian films in Serbia has commenced and Indian films have been participating in the Auteur Film Festival. Recently a delegation of Indian film professionals visited Serbia to explore film making opportunity and met senior government officials, Serbian Film Commission, Serbian film producers, production houses, studios, casting agencies, etc. The Embassy has been regularly organising Indian film festivals through various cultural centres in Serbia. Interest in Yoga & Ayurveda is boosted by successive International Day of Yoga events every June followed by Ayurveda & Homeopathy workshops. ■



**INDIA'S KAMRAN PATEL SHOWCASED AT OCTOBER'S BELGRADE FASHION WEEK**