



India



Sharing Common Views



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■ **Given that you arrived in Serbia only recently, what do you see as today's priorities of the bilateral cooperation that was established 70 years ago?**

Whilst I only took over as Indian Ambassador in Belgrade a few months back, I did have some prior knowledge of the country and the region, as I served as Director General dealing with Central Europe at the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi immediately before com-

ing here. I am, thus, familiar with the historical background of our bilateral ties, as well as the current developments. In the early days following India's gaining independence, the leaders of the two countries played pioneering roles in the Non-Aligned Movement, which was the need of the hour, particularly for developing countries. Despite the geopolitical shift, India and Serbia still share common views on many global issues. Our bilateral ties are robust. Closer economic cooperation is also being greatly emphasised by the leaders of both sides. We certainly need greater trade and investment, and closer people-to-people contact.

■ **Indian Vice President Naidu visited Serbia recently. How would you assess the effects of his discussions with Serbian officials?**

The visit of the Hon'ble Vice President of India to Serbia was of great significance, as it was a high-level visit from India after a gap of 29 years. The visit also took place in response to the visit of then Serbian PM (now President) Vučić in 2017, which was the first high-level visit to Indian from Serbia after thirty years. During the visit of Vice President Naidu, the leaders of both countries acknowledged the need to continue regular exchanges at different levels. Both countries also agreed to cooperate closely in various multilateral fora. It is widely accepted that the United Nations is in particular need of urgent reforms and that a more representative, legitimate and effective UN Security Council reflecting current geopolitical realities is now needed more than ever to better address today's global conflicts and crises. Both Serbia and India recognise ter-

rorism as a serious global threat. To tackle this menace, India proposed back in 1996 a draft 'Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism', for codifying well-accepted norms of global cooperation on counter terrorism in a formal instrument of international law. Both leaders felt the need for further progress on this. In another significant development during the visit, national postal services Serbia Post and India Post jointly released postage stamps featuring Nikola Tesla (a great Serb innovator and inventor) and Swami Vivekananda (a great Indian spiritual leader). These two visionaries were known to each other and Tesla was deeply impressed by the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda.

■ **Has implementation of the two Agreements signed during the aforementioned visit started – related to cooperation in the field of protection of plant-life and in air traffic? What specifically will these agreements ease when it comes to cooperation between the two countries?**

During the visit of Vice President Naidu, two Agreements – namely an Agreement on Cooperation in Plant Health and Plant Quarantine and an Air Services Agreement – were signed. The first Agreement is meant to facilitate bilateral trade in plants and plant products. Agriculture plays a major role in the Serbian economy and there are great prospects for exporting agricultural products from Serbia to India, and even vice versa. In fact, exports of some agricultural products have already begun. This Agreement has provided a framework for greater and safer trade in agricultural products between the two countries. The Air Services Agreement signed during the visit replaces the previous such Agreement signed by India and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 2003. Moreover, the global civil aviation industry has gone through major changes in the past fifteen years. The new Air Services Agreement incorporates the changes required in modern times and will provide better air connectivity between the two countries in due course. This will be particularly useful as India offers its online e-Visa to Serbian citizens and Serbia has abolished visa requirements for short visits by Indians.

■ **Vice President Naidu and Serbian President Vučić participated in the Indian-Serbian Business Forum. Is there any interest in strengthening economic cooperation?**

In discussions held during the visit, the leaders of both countries acknowledged that the current level of trade and investment is far below the true potential. Annual bilateral trade totals around US\$200 million. Considering that India is a major importing nation with annual global trade figures of US\$769 billion, Serbian exporters can develop an India-specific strategy to capture a greater share of the Indian market. India is also a major foreign investor. In the past three years, Indian companies have invested US\$40 billion abroad. The total financial commitment in that period is US\$120 billion. In the case of Serbia, Indian companies have already invested in sectors like tractor manufacturing, an IT Park, food processing, the manufacturing of aluminium panels, waste disposal containers, railway

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equipment etc. Considering that Serbia is a member of the EU Customs Union and has FTAs with Russia and many other countries, there is great potential to attract further investment from India. In the IT sector, India has the capabilities and Serbia can gain from this expertise. Tourism promotion, attracting Indian tourists to Serbia and vice versa, can be another new area for closer economic cooperation.

■ **Indian company TAFE became the owner of Serbia's IMT factory during 2018. Have you had the opportunity to acquaint yourself with the plans of the Indian owners of this once very successful company?**

Agriculture plays a major role in the Serbian economy. This provides a great opportunity to supply Serbia with high-quality tractors at affordable prices. Indian company TAFE, which had a long association with Serbia, correctly sensed the need and acquired this

leading Serbian tractor brand and its factory to manufacture TAFE tractors in Serbia under the IMT brand name. The company's business plan is progressing well. In fact, two other leading tractor companies from India – Mahindra and Sonalika – also have their own assembly lines in Serbia with Serbian partners. There is also great scope for similar cooperation for other agricultural machinery.

■ **You are aware that the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is in crisis. India has not recognised the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo. Do you believe that – alongside the European Union – the United Nations should also be more actively involved in resolving this issue?**

On the Kosovo issue, India always maintains its principled stance and supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia. India recognises the legitimacy of the role of the United Nations, as well as UN Security Council Resolutions on this issue. India supports the peaceful resolution of this issue through discussion and dialogue. During his visit to Serbia in September 2018, Vice President Naidu unequivocally reiterated India's principled position on this issue. India keenly monitors developments on this important and serious issue.

■ **How will you celebrate India's Republic Day on 26th January?**

The Republic Day of India (26th January) is of great significance to the history of the independent India. It was on this date in 1950 that the Constitution of India came into effect, creating the provision for a democratic government system and completing the country's transition to an independent republic. The date is celebrated throughout India, as well as at all Indian diplomatic Missions abroad. At the Indian Embassy in Belgrade we will have a flag hoisting ceremony in the morning for members of the Indian community in Serbia. There will additionally be a reception to which Serbian dignitaries, senior government officials, Serbian business leaders, representatives of the Serbian media, diplomatic corps, friends of India etc. will be invited. I also plan to organise a performance of Indian dance by Serbian dancers at the Reception.

Forging A Deeper Friendship

Indian Vice President H.E. M. Venkaiah Naidu's official visit to Serbia, from 14th to 16th September 2018, stands as testimony to the strong historical relationship shared between these two friendly nations

The Honourable Vice President of India, H.E. M. Venkaiah Naidu, paid an official visit to Serbia from 14th to 16th September 2018. This was the first high-level visit of an Indian dignitary to Serbia after a gap of three decades and came during the year in which the two countries celebrated the 70th anniversary of the establishing of bilateral diplomatic relations. The Vice President was accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising Shiv Pratap Shukla, Minister of State for Finance, four Indian Members of Parliament, senior officials, a business delegation and representatives of the media. During his high-level engagements, Vice President Naidu held detailed discussions on a range of bilateral and multilateral issues with Serbian President Aleksander Vučić, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić and National Assembly of Serbia Speaker Maja Gojković, as well as addressing a business forum.

During his meeting with President Vučić, Vice President Naidu discussed important aspects of bilateral relations, as well as global and regional issues that are of common interest to both countries.

The two leaders expressed their commit-



VICE PRESIDENT NAIDU WAS RECEIVED UPON ARRIVAL IN BELGRADE BY SERBIAN AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & WATER RESOURCES MINISTER BRANISLAV NEDIMOVIĆ AND H.E. INDIAN AMBASSADOR SUBRATA BHATTACHARJEE

ment to building upon the long-standing friendly ties between the two countries. In the area of economic cooperation, the two agreed to enhance cooperation in priority areas like agriculture, food processing, defence manufacturing, science and technology, information technology, infrastructure, tourism and pharmaceuticals. During the joint me-



INDIAN VICE PRESIDENT NAIDU'S MEETING WITH SERBIAN PRESIDENT VUČIĆ

dia briefing, President Vučić complimented India's political leadership on the country's stellar economic results. As he said, "India is witnessing exceptional economic progress. We are happy for the country that has been our long-time friend and well wisher". He also thanked India for supporting Serbia's territorial integrity. President Vučić then hosted a banquet in honour of Vice President Naidu.

Vice President Naidu met with National Assembly of Serbia Speaker Maja Gojković and held detailed discussions on a range of bilateral and multilateral issues. In a rare gesture, the visiting vice president was invited to address a special session of the Serbian National Assembly. He did so in the same parliament hall where former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru addressed world leaders upon the launch of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), alongside then veteran Yugoslav leader Marshal Tito. In his hour-long address to the lawmakers of the host country,



VICE PRESIDENT NAIDU ADDRESSED TO SERBIA'S PARLIAMENT

Serbian Prime Minister Brnabić also hosted a working lunch for the Vice President.



MS. ANA BRNABIC, PRIME MINISTER WITH INDIAN VICE PRESIDENT NAIDU'S

Vice President Naidu and President Vučić jointly addressed the India-Serbia Business Forum on 15th September, which included the participation of a large number of Serbian companies and an Indian business delegation. The forum included discussions regarding bilateral cooperation in the areas of agriculture, energy, pharmacy, the IT industry, tourism, education etc. Speaking at the Forum, the Vice President gave a detailed account of the rapid strides being taken by India in various fields, including enabling, predictable and reform-orientated financial

and investment ecosystems offering mutually beneficial partnerships. President Vučić took the opportunity to invite Indian investors to Serbia, which would open them up to new markets thanks to Serbia's existing Free Trade Agreements. So far there have been few cases of investments by Indian companies in Serbia, with Indian tractor manufacturer TAFE taking over Serbia's IMT (Industry of Motors and Tractors). Moreover, the Embassy Group of India has invested \$20 million in the construction of an IT park in Serbia. Bilateral trade between India and Serbia reached a total of approximately 200 million euros in 2017.



THE VICE PRESIDENT LAID A FLORAL TRIBUTE AT THE FOOT OF THE BUST OF MAHATMA GANDHI IN BELGRADE

With full military honours and the playing of the two national anthems, Vice President Naidu – accompanied by Serbian Defence Minister Aleksandar Vulin – laid a wreath beside the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on Belgrade's Mount Avala.

To commemorate the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishing of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Serbia's



national postal service, Pošta Srbije, and India's Department of Post jointly released commemorative stamps featuring renowned Serbian scientist and inventor Nikola Tesla and India's great spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda. Vice President Naidu noted that Swami Vivekananda's thoughts and ideas had left a deep impression on Tesla's works.



SIGNING TWO AGREEMENTS



In the presence of Indian Vice President Naidu and Serbian President Vučić, both sides signed two agreements: Indian Ambassador to Serbia H.E. Subrata Bhattacharjee and Serbian Construction, Transport & Infrastructure Minister Zorana Mihajlović signed a revised Air Services Agreement, aimed at boosting trade and tourism. The signing of the agreement on air services has created possibilities to establish direct flights between the two countries and future commercial code-sharing agreements between airlines.

The other agreement, on Cooperation in Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine, was co-signed by Serbian Agriculture, Forestry & Water Management Minister Branslav Nedimović and Ambassador Bhattacharjee. This agreement seeks to improve bilateral trade in fruit, vegetables, processed foods etc.

ISRO: Flying high!

India's space agency, Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is counted among the top six Government space agencies in the world today. Its vision to 'harness space technology for national development' has truly set very high standards for the rest of the world. ISRO has in fact put India in an elite club of nations with outstanding space technology advancements with more than 100 satellite launches.

- ISRO built India's first satellite, Aryabhata, which was launched by the Soviet Union on 19 April 1975.

- In 1980, 'Rohini' became the first satellite to be placed in orbit by an Indian-made launch vehicle, SLV-3.

- ISRO sent a lunar orbiter, Chandrayaan-1, on 22 October 2008 and a Mars orbiter, "Mars Orbiter Mission", on 5 November 2013, which entered Mars orbit on 24 September 2014, making India the first nation to succeed on its first attempt to Mars, and ISRO the fourth space agency in the world as well as the first space agency in Asia to reach Mars orbit.

- On February 15, 2017, ISRO created history by lifting off 104 satellites (including 101 foreign) using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

- On 5th June 2017, India scored a double success, launching its latest - and heaviest till that time - communication satellite GSAT-19 with its brand new and heaviest rocket - the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle-Mark III (GSLV-Mk III) with a cryogenic engine. The 640-tonne GSLV Mk III, also called 'fat boy', weights equal to 200 full-grown Asian elephants.

- India's GSAT-29 communication satellite was successfully launched by the second



developmental flight of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle MarkIII (GSLV MkIII-D2) on 14 November 2018.

- India's most powerful and advanced communication satellite GSAT-11 was successfully launched on 6 December 2018. GSAT-11 is the next generation high throughput communication satellite that will play a vital role in providing broadband services across the country. The satellite, weighing 5,854 kg, is the heaviest Indian-made equipment that the ISRO put into its orbit.

- ISRO's aims at launching India's first human mission by 2022.

Indian Space Research Organization was

formed in 1969 to provide the space based services and to develop the technologies to achieve the same independently. ISRO maintains one of the largest fleet of communication satellites (INSAT) and remote sensing (IRS) satellites, that cater to the ever growing demand for fast and reliable communication and earth observation respectively. ISRO develops and delivers application specific satellite products and tools: broadcasts, communications, weather forecasts, disaster management tools, Geographic Information Systems, cartography, navigation, telemedicine, dedicated distance education satellites being some of them.

Surajkund International Crafts Mela (Fair)



A splash of colour, the rhythm of drum beats and joie de vivre come together at Surajkund in Faridabad, Haryana (India), during the first fortnight of February every year. The curtain rises on the acclaimed annual Surajkund International Crafts Mela on 1st February, opening a celebration of Indian folk traditions and cultural heritage. Occupying a place of pride on the international tourist calendar, more than a million visitors, including thousands of foreign tourists, create crowds at this fair. The Surajkund Fair is unique for its showcasing of the richness and diversity of handicrafts, hand-looms and the cultural fabric of India, while it is also the world's largest crafts fair.

Over the years, this annual fair has come to occupy a place of pride and prominence on the Indian tourist calendar. Previous editions of the fair have attracted more than 1.2 million visitors, with events unfolding through a wonderful range of textiles, paintings, wood stock, ivory work, pottery,

terracotta, stonework, lacquerware, cane and grass products.

This largest crafts fair in the world is jointly hosted by the Indian Union Ministries of Tourism, Textiles, Culture and External Affairs, in coordination with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Tourism Department of the State of Haryana. More than 20 countries and all Indian states will participate in 2019's 33rd Surajkund International Crafts Fair.

The multi-cuisine Food Court provides ethnic cuisine from all over the world, which proves immensely popular with visitors. The scintillating folk performances at the two 'Chaupals' (open air theatres) and mesmerising evening recitals at the 'Natyashala' (Theatre) only add to entertainment content. There are designated areas for amusement, adventure sports and fairground rides, making this a must-visit event. The Surajkund International Crafts Mela offers visitors a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



Ease Of Doing Business - India Scaling New Ranks

India's ranking on the list of the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index for 2019 climbed 23 places to 77th among 190 surveyed countries, making it the only country to rank among the top 10 improvers for the second consecutive year.

India's leap is significant when one considers that India improved its rank by 30 places last year – a rare feat for such large and diverse countries as India. As a result of continued efforts exerted by the Government of India, the country has improved its ranking by 53 places in the last two years and 65 in the last four. India has improved its ranking in six of ten indicators, moving closer to international best practises (Distance to Frontier score) on seven of ten indicators. The most dramatic improvements, however, have been registered in indicators related to 'Construction Permits' and 'Cross-Border Trade'. In the issuance of construction permits, India improved its ranking from 181st in 2017 to 52nd in 2018, marking an improvement of 129 places in a single year. In terms of 'Cross-Border Trade', India's ranking improved by 66 places, from 146th in 2017 to 80th in 2018.

The most important features of India's performance this year are:

Improvement has taken place due to the commitment of the Government of India to carry out comprehensive and complex reforms, supported by the bureaucracy that has shifted its mindset from that of a regulator to a facilitator. The Government has undertaken an extensive exercise of stakeholder consultations in order to better understand the challenges confronting industry, re-engineering government processes in order to provide simplified and streamlined processes to create an environment in the country that's more conducive to doing business. As a result of continued efforts, India's ranking has improved as follows:

Year	2014	2016	2017	2018
Overall rank	142	130	100	77
DTF	53.97	56.05	60.76	67.23

The eight indicators in which India has improved its rank over last four years are:



India's performance over the last four years

Indicator	2014	2016	Current Rank	Improvement in last 2 years	Improvement in last 4 years
Construction Permits	184	185	52	133	132
Getting Electricity	137	26	24	2	113
Trading Across Borders	126	143	80	63	46
Paying Taxes	156	172	121	51	35
Resolving Insolvency	137	136	108	28	29
Enforcing Contracts	186	172	163	9	23
Starting a Business	158	155	137	18	21
Getting Credit	36	44	22	22	14

