**India-Lithuania Relations**

**Political Relations:**

It is widely acknowledged that there is a close similarity between the Lithuanian and Sanskrit languages, Lithuanian being the Indo-European language grammatically closest to Sanskrit, signifying possible close ancient links. Until conversion to Christianity in 13th century, the people in Lithuania worshipped nature and had a trinity of gods - Perkunas, Patrimpas, and Pikuolis. In more recent times, the first direct knowledge about India reached Lithuania through Lithuanian Christian missionaries who started serving in India since the 16th century. One of the prominent Lithuanian philosophers and ideologists of the 19th century national movement, Vydunas (real name Vilhelmas Storost, 1868-1953; also known as the Mahatma Gandhi of Lithuania) was extremely interested in Indian philosophy and he even created his own philosophical system closely based on the Vedanta. He practised Ayurveda. He argued that before the introduction of Christianity, Lithuanian spiritual culture had a lot of similarities with Hinduism, including the concept of Trinity.

**Diplomatic Relations:**

India recognized Lithuania (along with the other Baltic States of Latvia and Estonia) on 7th September 1991 after acceptance of their independence by the erstwhile USSR. Diplomatic relations were established with Lithuania on 25th February 1992. Lithuania opened its Embassy in New Delhi on July 1, 2008 and has Honorary Consuls in Mumbai and in Bengaluru. An Honorary Consul of India in Vilnius has been in operational since October 2014.

**Bilateral Visits:**

**From India**: MOS for External Affairs Mrs Preneet Kaur visited Vilnius from March 26-29, 2011. MOS Mrs Preneet Kaur again visited Vilnius on 30 June-02 July 2011 to attend the Ministerial meeting of Community of Democracies.

Earlier visits from India include the following: Shri Salman Khurshid, MOS (External Affairs) in August 1995; Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MOS (External Affairs) in October , 2005 and Shri Anand Sharma, MOS (External Affairs) in March, 2007. Shri

Rao Inderjit Singh, MOS, met with Foreign Minister Antanas Valionis and Deputy Speaker Gintaras Steponavicius. Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of State for External

Affairs of India paid an official visit to Lithuania from March 25-26, 2007.

**From Lithuania:** the major bilateral visits include: (i) Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius’s visit to New Delhi in September 1995. (ii) President Valdas Adamkus’s

state visit to India from 19-23 February 2001, accompanied by his wife. (iii) Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Mr. Vygaudas Ušackas’s visit to India from 2-4 December 2009.

There have been three visits from the Lithuanian Parliament - the first in 1993

and the next in January 2003 when the Vice Chairman (Deputy Speaker) of the Seimas (Parliament) Mr. Gintaras Steponavicius and the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian Parliament Mr. Gediminas Kirkilas visited India to attend the Inter-Parliamentary Conference to mark the Golden Jubilee of the Indian Parliament. Most recently, a Lithuanian Parliamentary delegation led by Deputy Speaker Mr. Algis Kaseta visited India from 13-16 November, 2010.

Foreign Minister of Lithuania Mr. Linas Linkevicius visited India to attend the

11th ASEM Foreign Ministers’ meeting held in New Delhi from 11-12 November 2013. Mr. Linkevicius met EAM on the sidelines of ASEM FMM11 on 10 November 2013. The two Ministers signed the Agreement on the exemption from visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic Passports.

 Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Mr. Mantvydas Bakesius, visited India in November 2014.

Lithuania’s Vice-Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Saulius Cironka, visited India in November 2014.

Lithuanian Vice Minister of Education and Science, Mr. Rimantas Vaikus, visited India from 28 November – 1 December 2014.

**Bilateral Agreements:**

The following Agreements have been signed between India and Lithuania:-

* Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation signed in July 1993.
* Protocol on Bilateral Consultations between the two Foreign Offices signed on 31 August 1995.
* Memorandum of Understanding on Air Services signed between Government of India and Government of Lithuania on 10th November 1999 in New Delhi.
* Agreement on Air Services signed on 20th February 2001 in New Delhi.
* Agreement on Cooperation in Spheres of Culture, Science and Education

signed on 20th February 2001 in New Delhi.

* Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation signed on 20th October

2001in Delhi.

* Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA): signed during MOS (PK)’s visit to Lithuania in March, 2011.
* Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation (DTAA) was signed in New Delhi on July 26, 2011.
* Agreement on the exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic

passports was signed in New Delhi on 10 November 2013.

Other agreements under consideration include an extradition treaty, CEP, and

cooperation in science and technology.

**Commercial Relations:**

According to Lithuanian statistics, bilateral trade was Euro 162 mn in 2011, Euro 49.2 mn in 2012 and Euro 55.53 in 2013. An Indo-Baltic Chamber of Commerce (IBCC) was formed in Vilnius in 2009 while an India-Lithuanian Forum was inaugurated in September 2010.

Major items of import from India include pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, textiles

and consumer goods. Major items of export to India include machinery and mechanical appliances, high tech optical instruments, base metals and articles of base metal, chemicals, sulphur, lime and cement.

**Cultural and Education:**

Study of Indian languages (mainly Hindi and Sanskrit) has been carried out at

the Vilnius University for several decades. A separate centre of Indian studies, under

the Department of Oriental Studies, was set up in the Vilnius University in 1996.

Lithuanians have great interest in Indian cultural traditions, including Yoga. More than 70% Lithuanians visiting India have spiritual and yogic interests. There is special interest in Ayurveda. The Kaunas Ayurveda Centre arranges lectures on Ayurveda. The ISKON Movement has a very active temple in Kaunas.

In December 2014, an MoU was signed by ICCR with the Vilnius University on the establishment of the ICCR Chair of Indian Studies. The Chair will be operational from the commencement of next academic session – 1 September 2015.

**ITEC:**

Under the Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation Programme (ITEC), since 1993, over 240 Lithuanian nomineeshave attended various courses in diplomacy, English, banking, mass communications, financial management, urban development management, IT, auditing etc. All 65 slots allotted for Lithuania during 2013-14 have been utilised. The Lithuanian leadership at the highest level has expressed appreciation for the ITEC programme.

**Indian Community:**

The Indian community is around 300, including students. Over the last few years, some Indian IT experts have been coming to Lithuania to work on IT projects for varying periods. Several Indians work in the Klaipeda-based USD 200 million PET plant of the Indorama Group.

The Embassy of India in Warsaw issues over 20,000 visas annually.

**Useful Resources:**

For more information and latest updates please visit

Embassy of India, Warsaw website: http://www.indembwarsaw.pl/

Embassy of India, Warsaw Facebook page:

https://www.facebook.com/embassyofindiawarsaw

Embassy of India, Warsaw, Twitter page: twitter.com/@IndiaPoland

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