

## **India - Albania Relations**

India and Albania established diplomatic relations in 1956. Albania had a Mission in New Delhi since early 2008 and the first Albanian Ambassador to India presented his credentials to the President in October 2010. The Mission was, however, closed down in 2014.

Present-day India-Albania relations are positive and friendly and forward-looking on most counts. Both countries also cooperate in multilateral forums.

### **Bilateral Exchanges**

Three rounds of Foreign Office consultations have been held - the first was held in February 2003 in Tirana where the delegation was led by Shri Shashank, Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs; the second FOC was in New Delhi in January 2006. Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Salman Khurshid visited Albania in 1994 and third was held in March 2023 in New Delhi and was led by Mr. Sanjay Verma, Secretary in Ministry of External Affairs. In 1997 the President of the Albanian National Assembly, Pjeter Arbnori visited New Delhi for an Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting. Albanian President Rexhep Meidani went to Kolkata in 1997 to attend the funeral of Mother Teresa. Paskal Milo, a former Foreign Minister of Albania, visited India in the capacity of Head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. The first visit by an Albanian Foreign Minister took place in December 2008 when Mr. Lulzim Basha visited India. The President of Albanian National Assembly, Mrs. Josefina Topalli visited India in December 2010. Mrs. Topalli again visited India to attend the Conference of Women Speakers in September 2012. The First Lady of Albania Mrs. Odeta Nishani visited India in December 2015.

Mrs. Preneet Kaur, former MoS (External Affairs) visited Albania in July 2012, accompanied by a CII delegation. During her visit an MOU for Cooperation was signed between CII and the Albanian National Chamber of Commerce. Minister of Railways, Shri. Suresh Prabhu, paid a visit to Albania from 23-26 October 2016.

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met the Albanian Acting Foreign Minister Mr. Gent Cakaj on sidelines of 74th Session of UNGA in New York in September 2019. The Foreign Minister of Albania Ms. Olta Xhacka met Permanent Representative of India to the UN on 8 June 2021 in New York. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met the Albanian Foreign Minister Ms. Olta Xhacka on the sidelines of UNGA on September 2022 in New York.

Three officials from Government of Moldova and one Member of Parliament visited India to attend 11<sup>th</sup> Batch of GenNext Democracy Network Programme from 17-26 August, 2023. Dr. Ornela Cuci, former Vice Minister of Environment and Tourism of Albania visited India under ICCR's important Visitor's Programme from 1 – 8 October, 2023.

## **Agreements**

Following protocol/agreement have been signed between India and Albania:

- i) FOC: A Protocol on India-Albania Foreign Office Consultations was signed in February 2003 in Tirana.
- ii) DTAA: The Agreement was signed in July 2013.
- iii) Visa Waiver Agreement for Diplomatic and Official Passport was signed in Tirana on 27 November 2015. The Agreement has come into force w.e.f. 20 January 2018.
- iv) MoU for Cooperation in the Field of Elections Commission of India and the Central Election Commission of Albania was signed in September 2020.
- v) MoU on mutual recognition of Covid-19 vaccination certificates was signed in February 2022.

## **Mother Teresa**

Post-communist Albania has been searching for symbols of self-identification including those which enable it to identify with its foreign interlocutors. With India, Mother Teresa is one such symbol. Her international fame, Albanian ethnicity (though she was born in North Macedonia) and Indian citizenship are all factors in the Albanian interest in her life. In a Muslim majority state, Mother Teresa is an important symbol of plurality. Tirana international airport has been named after her. The Albanian government had requested to move the remains of Mother Teresa from India to Albania. The request was made at high levels by the Albanian leadership, including the former Foreign Minister Lulzim Basha, Prime Minister Sali Berisha and President Bamir Topi. Government of India did not agree to this proposal. In her centenary year 2010, a symbolic pathway of peace was inaugurated in Tirana.

## **Trade and Investment**

India-Albania trade statistics for the last five years are as follows:

Trade data	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Export from India	29.34	37.08	44.12	46.75	55.16	250.96
Imports by India	38.86	22.62	47.51	8.30	30.71	10.57
Total	68.20	59.70	91.63	55.05	85.87	261.53

(Department of Commerce, Govt. of India statistics US\$ million)

The main export items are ceramic products, articles of stone, plaster, cement, aluminum and articles thereof, pharmaceuticals, coffee, tea, spices, electrical machinery and equipment, organic chemicals, raw hides and skins, machinery and mechanical appliances, fish and crustaceans, mollusks, plastics and articles thereof.

The main import items are iron and steel, salt, sulfur earths and stone, raw hides and skins (other than fur skins) and leather, aluminum and articles thereof, oil seeds and olea, footwear, electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof, essential oils and resinoids, plastic and articles thereof, nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances.

### **GOI Assistance to Albania**

India has extended humanitarian assistance of 5,00,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccine (Covishield) to the Republic of Albania to fight the pandemic on 18 April 2021.

### **ITEC and Other Exchanges**

Albania has been availing of the ITEC slots offered to it by the Government of India under its ITEC Scholarship programme. In 2022-23, three slots were allotted to Albania out of which two slots have already been availed of by the Albanian participants. Albanian diplomats have also attended various courses conducted by SSIFS, New Delhi, for Foreign Diplomats.

### **Culture**

The prevalence in Albania of mass-based cultural activities common to socialist regimes, made the people receptive to popular music and cultures from other countries, though these are increasingly overtaken by US and European-origin mass entertainment. Indian films are shown on Albanian television which is state-run and a few Indian films have been shot on location. An ICCR sponsored Manipuri Dance troupe visited Albania in November 2012 and performed during the centenary celebrations of Albania's independence. Their performance was very much appreciated by local parliamentarians and other dignitaries. An ICCR sponsored classical Indian dance troupe (Mohiniattam form), led by Dr. Neena Prasad, and accompanied by 3 musicians, visited Tirana, Albania, and performed on 6 June 2019 to an appreciative audience.

The International Day of Yoga has been celebrated in Tirana, Albania every year since 2015. The 9<sup>th</sup> International Day of Yoga 2023 was celebrated in Tirana and more than 100 yoga enthusiasts participated in the event.

### **Indian Community**

There is a small Indian community in Albania of approx. 400. Most of them are temporary workers.

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