

India - Albania Relations

India and Albania established diplomatic relations in 1956. India had a Honorary Consul in Tirana since 2004. 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 along with Missions in some other Asian countries for economic reasons. Albania has two Honorary Consuls, one in Mumbai (Mr. Vikram Munshi) and the other in Delhi (Mr. Devinder Pal Singh).

Present-day India-Albania relations are positive and friendly and forward-looking on most counts. Albania has taken note of India's rapid growth in the past few years, and its manifest achievements in high-tech and services industries. The propensity of Indian industry and business majors to invest abroad has not escaped Albanian attention. There seems to be a consensus in the present and immediately previous Albanian administrations on expansion of relations with India.

Bilateral Exchanges

Two 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. The then Minister of State for External Affairs Shri Salman Khurshid visited Albania in 1994. 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, MOS(PK) 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. Hon'ble Minister of Railways, Shri. Suresh Prabhu paid a visit to Albania (23-26 October 2016).

External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar met the Albanian Acting Foreign Minister Mr. Gent Cakaj on the sidelines of 74th Session of UNGA in New York in September 2019.

Agreements

Following protocol/agreement have been signed or are under discussion:

- (i) FOC: A Protocol on India-Albania Foreign Office Consultations was signed in February 2003 in Tirana.*
- (ii) DTAA: Negotiations on Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement have been completed and 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.*

Cooperation in Multilateral Fora

India and Albania cooperate on an issue-based approach in multilateral fora. Albania supported India unequivocally on the international aspects of the agreement on civil nuclear power co-operation and also at ICJ elections.

Mother Teresa

In post-communist Albania, Mother Teresa is a symbol of self-identification. Tirana international airport has been named after her. In her centenary year 2010, a symbolic pathway of peace has been inaugurated in Tirana where flagstones have been contributed by a large number of heads of state and government.

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. Albania was allotted 03 slots under the ITEC programme for the year 2019-20, out of which 02 slots have been utilized. Albanian diplomats have also attended various courses conducted by the Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi, for Foreign Diplomats.

Trade and Investment

Commerce with India was practically absent till the early 1990s. Since early 90s there has been modest growth in bilateral trade. India-Albania trade statistics for the last four years are given below:

<i>Trade data</i>	<i>2015-2016</i>	<i>2016-2017</i>	<i>2017-2018</i>	<i>2018-2019</i>
<i>Export from India</i>	<i>24.04</i>	<i>26.45</i>	<i>29.34</i>	<i>37.08</i>
<i>Imports by India</i>	<i>17.20</i>	<i>6.5</i>	<i>38.86</i>	<i>22.62</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>41.24</i>	<i>32.95</i>	<i>68.20</i>	<i>59.70</i>

(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, coffee, tea, mate and spices, electrical machinery and equipment, organic chemicals, raw hides and skins, nuclear reactors, boilers, 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.

In November 2018, a consortium led by India Power Corporation Limited won a tender for construction of 100 MW of Solar Park worth Euro 70 million (US\$ 79.3 million) in Albania.

Culture

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. In 2019, the 5th International Day of Yoga was celebrated at Selman Stermasi Stadium, Tirana on 17th June, 2019.

Indian Community

There is a miniscule Indian community in Albania of less than 100. Most of them are professionals in management positions in foreign-owned companies.

Useful Resources

Website: www.eoibucharest.gov.in

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiainRomania/>

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