

## **INDIA-AUSTRIA BILATERAL RELATIONS**

### **Political relations**

Diplomatic relations between India and Austria were established in 1949. Traditionally India-Austria relations have been warm and friendly. There has been a regular exchange of high level visits between the two countries:

### **High Level Bilateral Visits**

- 1955 Prime Minister Pandit Nehru
- 1971 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi
- 1980 Chancellor Bruno Kreisky
- 1983 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi
- 1984 Chancellor Fred Sinowatz
- 1995 EAM Pranab Mukherjee
- 1999 President K. R. Narayanan
- 2005 President Heinz Fischer
- 2007 Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik
- 2009 Speaker of Lok Sabha Meira Kumar
- 2010 Vice Chancellor Josef Pröll
- 2011 President of National Council of Austrian Parliament Barbara Prammer
- 2011 President Pratibha Devisingh Patil
- 2012 President of National Council of Austrian Parliament Barbara Prammer
- 2016 Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz
- 2019 Foreign Minister Dr. Karin Kneissl

President of India, Pratibha Devi Singh Patil visited Austria from from 4-7 October 2011. The talks covered entire gamut of bilateral relations and international issues of mutual concern. Special emphasis was put on strengthening economic and commercial cooperation, scientific cooperation and people to people exchanges. President Fischer strongly supported India's place in a reformed UN Security Council. He said that 'We recognize that the world is changing fast and that the current composition in the Security Council does not reflect the realities of the new world order currently emerging. Your country deserves to play a bigger role in the Security Council'.

Austrian Federal President Dr. Heinz Fischer visited India in February 2005. The Joint Statement issued during the visit highlighted the need to keep up the momentum of exchanging high level visits, expanding and deepening cooperation in power, environment, health infrastructure, biotechnology, information technology, engineering and transport, intensifying cooperation between universities and research institutions, expanding direct air-links between the two countries, condemning terrorism and a dialogue on UN related issues.

The Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Smt. Meira Kumar led an Indian Parliamentary Delegation to Austria from 14-17 September 2009. Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Josef Pröll accompanied by Federal Minister of Economy, Family & Youth, Mr. Reinhold Mitterlehner, and a 50-member business delegation, visited India from 17-19 February 2010. The President of National Council of Austrian Parliament, Mag. Barbara Prammer visited India from 5-11 February 2011 on an invitation extended by Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mrs. Meira Kumar.

Prof. Saugata Roy, Minister of State for Urban Development visit Austria from 17-19 June 2012 under ADB Technical Assistance to understand best practices in Urban Transport in Austria and to develop similar transport solution in India. The delegation met Mr. Wolfgang Hesoum, General Manager, Siemens AG and Mr. Guenter Steinbauer, Managing Director & Chairman of the Executive Board of Wiener Linien, Vienna.

Austrian Federal Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology, Ms. Doris Bures visited India from 1-4 October 2012. During her visit, she met our Minister for Roads and Surface Transport, Shri C.P. Joshi, Minister for Urban Development, Shri Kamal Nath, and Minister for Shipping, Shri G.K. Vasan.

President of the Austrian National Council, Barbara Prammer visited India to attend the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament organized by the Indian Parliament and by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in New Delhi from 3-4 October 2012 on the topic of "Gender-Aware Parliaments".

Austrian Federal Minister for Environment, Forestry, Agriculture and Water Management, Nikolaus Berlakovich visited India from 16-19 October 2012 to attend a meeting of Conference of State Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Hyderabad.

Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs, H.E. Vayalar Ravi, visited Austria from 3-4 February 2013 along with a 2-member delegation at an invitation from Austrian Minister for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, H.E. Mr. Rudolf Hundstorfer. A Social Security Agreement was signed between India and Austria on 4 February 2013.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Smt. Preneet Kaur led the Indian delegation at the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Forum of United Nations Summit of Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) held in Vienna on 27- 28 February. The theme of the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Forum of the UNAOC was 'promoting responsible leadership in diversity and dialogue'. MOS (PK) met the President of the UN General Assembly Vuk Jeremic on the sidelines of the Forum. She also met Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger during her visit.

Indian Minister of Culture Chandresh Kumari visited Austria from 5-8 April 2013. During her visit, the Minister met the Austrian Federal Minister of Education, Arts and Culture Claudia Schmied and visited the Conservation Centre at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna as well as the exhibition "India of the Maharajas" currently on display at Schloss Schallaburg.

Dr. Reinhold Lopatka, State Secretary in the Austrian Foreign Ministry led the delegation to India on 11-12 November 2013 to attend the 11th Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM-FMM) in New Delhi. Dr. Lopatka called on Minister of State for External Affairs, Smt. Praneet Kaur during his visit to India.

Gen (retd.) V.K. Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs made a transit visit to Austria in September 2014. While MOS did not have any bilateral interactions, he interacted with the Indian community in Vienna during his visit.

MOS (VKS) visited Vienna again in November 2014 to attend the UN conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDC). He did not have any bilateral meeting since it was a multilateral event.

Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendhra Pradhan visited Vienna in June 2015 to attend the 6th OPEC seminar. During his visit, MOS (PNG) met with officials

from the Austrian Ministry of Economy and also visited a bio fuel and a biogas plant near Vienna.

Austrian Foreign Minister, Mr. Sebastian Kurz visited India from 15-19 February, 2016. Foreign Minister Kurz was accompanied by Second Speaker of Parliament Karlheinz Kopf and the President of the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKOe), Dr. Christoph Leitl and a business delegation comprising of more than 50 representatives from Austrian companies.

Minister of State (I/C) for Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines, Shri. Piyush Goyal, visited Vienna in May 2017 to participate in the Vienna Energy Forum. Shri Goyal also addressed the India Austria Business Forum, organized by the Embassy of India in Vienna, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) and FICCI. He interacted with leading Austrian energy related companies, especially in the renewable energy sector.

Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendhra Pradhan visited Vienna in May 2017 for the second India-OPEC dialogue. During his visit, Shri Pradhan also interacted with leading companies in the Austrian energy sector in a breakfast meeting organised by the Austrian Association of Industries. Shri Pradhan also visited an oil field of Austrian company RAG in Zistersdorf.

Sh. Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship paid an official visit to Vienna on 19-20 June 2018 with a 12-member delegation to participate in the 7th OPEC International Seminar. After the Seminar, Minister Pradhan also met his counterpart Ministers from UAE, Saudi Arabia and Iran and also had interviews with ANI, CNBC, Bloomberg and Austrian media agency.

Austrian Federal Minister for Europe, Integration & Foreign Affairs Dr. Karin Kneissl visited India on her first official visit on February 25-26, 2019. The visit took place in the context of the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Austria. EAM and FM Kneissl held delegation level talks on 25 February 2019 and set priorities for further enhancement of bilateral relations, particularly in the areas of trade and investment, education, migration, culture, tourism and enhancement of people-to-people ties. They shared assessments on urgent and common international challenges – climate change, need to preserve Mother Earth, UN reforms and international terrorism. FM Kneissl also had detailed interaction with various think tanks in New Delhi and delivered a talk at the Observer Research Foundation on the “Future of Global Energy – Between oil, gas and renewables”.

### **Bilateral Agreements**

Bilateral agreements/MoUs in force include:

- (i) Air Services Agreement (1989), MoU on Air Services (June 1997);
- (ii) Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (1999);
- (iii) Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (1999) – (expires in May 2017);
- (iv) Agreement on Bilateral Economic Relations and Economic, Industrial, Technical and Technological Cooperation (1999);
- (v) MoU on Infrastructure Cooperation in the field of Railways (May 2002);
- (vi) Agreement on Cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology (Nov 2007);
- (vii) MoU for Infrastructure Cooperation in the Health Sector (February 2005);
- (viii) MoU between FICCI and Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) (October 2003) and CII and WKO (Nov 1996).
- (ix) MoU for cooperation in the field of Agriculture (September 2010)
- (x) MoU on scientific cooperation signed between Department of Science and Technology, Government of India and Austrian Science Fund (October 2011)

- (xi) MoU on cooperation in the field of Railways signed between Ministry of Railways of India and the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria (October 2011).
- (xii) MoU on technology cooperation in the fields of Shipping and Ports (October 2012)
- (xiii) Social Security Agreement (February 2013)
- (xiv) MoU on cooperation in the fields of Culture and the Arts. (February 2016)
- (xv) Protocol amending the India-Austria Convention for Avoidance of Double Taxation (February 2017)

### **Institutional Mechanisms**

The main institutional mechanism at governmental level between India and Austria are the Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) and the Joint Economic Commission (JEC). The 15th round of JEC was held in New Delhi in July 2017; the 5th FOC were held in Vienna in February 2011.

### **Economic relations**

Austria, a member of the European Union since 1995 is an important link for India in its relationship with Europe, especially with countries of central and Eastern Europe. The Indo-Austrian Joint Economic Commission (JEC) established in 1983 is active and on-going (15<sup>th</sup> session was organized in India in July 2017) between the governmental Ministries and Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the two countries. There have been more than 200 collaborations, including 100 technical collaboration and 60 joint ventures between Indian and Austrian firms especially in the fields of steel, manufacturing technology, railway and transport, equipment and metallurgy.

### **Indo-Austrian Bilateral Trade and Investment**

India's bilateral trade with Austria is continuing a positive trend and has grown at much more speed than Austria's overall foreign trade in both imports and exports. The results for the January-December 2018 mark the fifth consecutive year in which India-Austria trade has grown significantly after having slowed down in the years following the economic crisis until 2014. The trade is quite balanced and keeps fluctuating either way. India's exports to Austria in Jan-Dec 2018 were Euro 945.92 mn (y-o-y growth of 14.55%) and India's imports from Austria during Jan-Dec 2018 amounted to Euro 923.54 mn (y-o-y growth of 22.32%). Total bilateral trade for this period was Euro 1.869 bn (y-o-y growth of 18.35%).

- Indian Export's to Austria:  
Key Export Commodities: Apparels, Textile, Footwear, Rubber articles, Vehicles & Railways parts, Electrical machinery and Mechanical appliances.
- India's Import from Austria:  
Key Import commodities: Machinery, Mechanical appliances, Railway parts, Iron and Steel etc.

According to final data up to 2018 disclosed by the Austrian National Bank, India has received a cumulative direct investment amounting 532 million EUR from Austria. According to the same source, India has a cumulative direct investment amounting 128 million EUR in Austria as of the same period. In 2017, the figures were stood at a cumulative direct investment amounting 444 million Euros from Austria and Indian investment in Austria amounted to 127 million Euro.

**Space:** Austria's first two satellites TUGSAT-1/BRITE and UniBRITE were launched by India's PSLV-C20 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on 25 February 2013. The two satellites are developed in collaboration with the Institute of Communication Networks and Satellite Communications (IKS) at the Technical University of Graz (TUG), Institute for Astronomy of the University of Vienna, and the Space Flight Lab (SFL) at the University of Toronto Institute Of Aerospace Studies (UTIAS).

**Culture:** Given the vibrant cultural traditions of both India and Austria, the cultural exchanges between India and Austria are quite intense. Artistes of both countries have been performing regularly in each other's country. Over the years, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, Zakir Hussain, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, Anushka Shankar etc. have performed in Vienna. Maestro Zubin Mehta continues to be associated with Vienna Philharmonic and has given New Year performances at the famous Music Verein, including the 2015 concert. Of late, Bollywood films have begun to be screened at top cineplexes in Vienna. A number of Bollywood films are being filmed in Austria, given its scenic locales. An MoU on Cultural Exchange was signed in February 2016.

**Chair on South Asia studies:** In 1845, Sanskrit began to be taught at the University of Vienna. A chair for Sanskrit studies was established which was later converted into a chair for Indology. In 1955 it transformed itself into a separate Institute for South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies whose main focus is Indology. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for establishment a Short –Term Chair of Indian Studies at the University of Vienna was signed between the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and University of Vienna in February 2011 and was renewed in 2016.

**Indian community:** There are an estimated over 31,000 Indians (majority from Kerala and Punjab) living in Austria – working primarily in the Health Care business and self-employed sectors.

### **Useful Resources**

1. Embassy website: [www.eoivienna.gov.in](http://www.eoivienna.gov.in)
2. Embassy Facebook: [www.facebook.com/IndiaInAustria](https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInAustria)
3. Embassy Twitter handle: @IndiainAustria
4. Embassy Commercial Newsletter: [www.indianembassy.at/newsletter.php](http://www.indianembassy.at/newsletter.php)
5. Embassy Cultural Newsletter: [www.indianembassy.at/spectrums.php](http://www.indianembassy.at/spectrums.php)

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