

Embassy of India
Stockholm

INDIA LATVIA RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

India and Latvia (one of the three Baltic nations) have warm and friendly relations that are expanding steadily. Latvia became an independent nation in 1991 and was a part of the Soviet Union until 1991. It is a member of the EU, Eurozone, Schengen visa regime, and NATO.

Latvia has a population of around 2 million, a GDP of around Euro 35 billion, and total trade of Euro 37 billion (exports nearly half). With Baltic Sea on its western coast, Latvia's neighbours include Estonia, Lithuania, Russia and Belarus. With an area of around 65,000 sq km, Latvia is larger than some other EU members (including Belgium, Denmark and Netherlands). Latvia participates in the cooperation formats of Baltic Council of Ministers (3B) and Nordic-Baltic 8 (NB 8).

LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

India recognized Latvia as a sovereign and independent State in 1991. Diplomatic relations were established shortly thereafter on 20 December 1991. Latvia opened an Embassy in New Delhi in 2014. The Indian Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden is concurrently accredited to Latvia. There have been a series of high-level visits and interactions between India and Latvia over the last three decades.

Most recently, Prime Ministers Modi and Arturs Krišjānis Kariņš interacted at the India EU Summit in a virtual format on 8 May 2021.

Latvia's President Guntis Ulmanis visited India in October 1997 at the invitation of President RKNarayanan. Vice President Hamid Ansari had met President Vjonisin Mongolia on the sidelines of the 11th ASEM Summit in July 2016. Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis visited India in November 2017 when he met Prime Minister Modi. He attended 'World Food India 2017' event. President Raimonds Vjonisin and President Kovind had a brief interaction during President Kovind's visit to Zagreb in Croatia in March 2019. Vice President Venkaiah Naidu visited Latvia in August 2019. He met President Egils Levits and Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš. The then Lok Sabha Speaker Smt Sumitra Mahajan visited Latvia in 2018.

EAM Jaishankar and Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs had a telephone conversation in February 2021. FM Rinkēvičs participated in the 1st India Nordic Baltic Conclave (virtual format) in November 2020. Earlier during the year he participated at the 5th Raisina Dialogue and had met EAM on that occasion, besides a group interaction with PM Modi (January 2020). FM Rinkēvičs and EAM Jaishankar also met in New York during the sidelines of UNGA in Sep 2019. Then EAM Sushma Swaraj and FM Rinkēvičs met in New York on the sidelines of the UNGA in 2017. The then MOS (EA) MJ Akbar visited Latvia in 2017. Earlier FM Rinkēvičs met MoS(EA) Gen (Dr) V K Singh in Luxembourg in November 2015 on the sidelines of ASEM Foreign Ministers' meeting. Foreign Minister Artis Pabriks visited India in 2006 and Foreign Minister Rinkēvičs visited twice in 2013.

Some other high level visits include : From Latvia - Speaker of Saeima Ingrīda ūdre (2003), Solvita Āboltiņa, Speaker of Saeima (2012), Deputy PM (2003), Minister of Culture (2007 and 2016), Minister

of eGovernance (2007), Economics Minister (2010); and from India – Minister of Electronics & IT and Law & Justice (2016), MoS Health and Ayush (2016).



INVESTMENT, TECHNOLOGY AND TRADE LINKAGES

Latvia has made a rapid transition by privatising its industry. While Latvia was traditionally an agricultural economy with seafaring, fishing and forestry as other economic sectors, today its major economic sectors include chemicals (pharmaceuticals, recycling, eco-friendly chemicals & bio-cosmetics), transport & logistics and woodworking besides agriculture. Food processing & beverage, machinery manufacture, metal working, green technologies, life sciences and textiles. Manufacturing sector has now shifted from basic metals to electronics, machinery and equipment for medical, precision and optic instruments. High-tech electronics, IT and design are the other areas of success stories. 40% of energy requirement of Latvia is sourced from renewable energy (mainly biomass from woodworking sector and hydropower). Electricity generation is mostly from hydroelectric power. Latvia hosts the regional headquarters of several major multinationals including Maersk, Unilever, Michelin, Siemens and Nokia.

Latvia's location affords access to ice-free deep-water ports and good rail and road links act as a gateway for trade between east and west. Latvia's membership of the EU and Eurozone, good connectivity, highly educated workforce, low tax rates and SEZs are of interest for investors. Most adults know Russian, English and German in addition to Latvian. Potential areas of investment include pharmaceuticals and healthcare, telecommunications, IT and software development, heavy engineering and biotechnology.

India Latvia trade was worth around Euro 233 million in 2021-22 reflecting a 76% increase over the previous year. Indian exports were around Euro 116 million. Major Indian exports to Latvia included Plastics and articles thereof; rubber and articles thereof; Base metals and articles of base metals; Textiles and textile articles; Products of the chemical and allied industries; and Vegetable products etc. Major Indian imports from Latvia include Base metals and articles of base metals; Machinery and mechanical appliances; electrical equipment; Wood and articles of wood; Products of the chemical and allied industries; and Optical instruments and apparatus (inc. medical); clocks and watches; musical instruments etc.

Latvia participated in the India Europe 29 Business Forum in November 2019. Latvian companies including Latvia Mobile Telecom (LMT), SAF Tehnika (digital Microwave Data transmission equipment) and the Latvian Space Industry Association participated at the India Nordic Baltic Conclave (November 2020). ASSOCHAM and CII had concluded MOUs with counterpart Latvian Chamber of Commerce during the visit of Vice President to Latvia in 2019.

ICT, cyber security, agritech, food processing, pharmaceuticals, fisheries, waste management, hygiene are potential areas of collaboration.

BILATERAL INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION MECHANISMS

There are regular Foreign Office Consultations between India and Latvia. The 7th round was held in Riga in March 2019. The next round of Foreign Office Consultation is due in November 2022.

A new mechanism is the India-Nordic-Baltic Conclave, which held its first meeting in a virtual format in November 2020 under the theme 'An Innovation-driven Partnership for Growth in a New World'.

A number of agreements on cooperation in various fields have been signed. These include : Economic & Technical Cooperation (1995), Culture, Arts, Education, Science, Mass Media and Sports (1995), Air Services (1997), Commission on Trade, Economic, S&T & Culture (2001), Cultural Exchange Programme (2006), Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (2010), Health (2012), Avoidance of Double Taxation and Tax Evasion (2013), Cultural Exchange (2019), and between Chambers of Commerce (2019).

ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL TIES

There is resonance for Yoga and Ayurveda in Latvia. University of Latvia established a 'Centre for Indian Studies and Culture' in 2013. The Centre organises Yoga and Hindi classes. The University, in collaboration with the Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, Coimbatore has been conducting a 3-month Diploma course in Introduction to Ayurveda since 2015. An Ayurveda Chair was established at the University of Latvia in Riga in 2018.

An MoU on research collaboration on Ayurvedic management of Type 2 diabetes was signed between the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) Ministry of Ayush and University of Latvia and Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, Baltics SIA Latvia in December 2020.

A Centre for Baltic Studies opened at the Dev Sanskriti Vishwa Vidyalaya in Haridwar in 2016. The University has signed co-operation Agreements with several universities in Latvia, including the Riga Technical University, University of Latvia and Turība University. The University hosted an e-Global conference on 'India-Latvia : A Personal bonds' in November 2020.

Around 35 Latvians have availed of ITEC training slots in the last 12 years, mostly for the Audit and Parliamentary studies courses.

The Indian origin population in Latvia is estimated to be around 3,000. Many of them are in business and IT sectors. This includes nearly 2,000 Indian students studying mainly medicine and engineering in Latvia.

A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled at the National Library during the visit of Vice President to Latvia in 2019. The two sides also signed Cultural Exchange Programme during the visit.

In March 2021, Latvian shooting team participated at the World Shooting Championship held in New Delhi. In April 2021, Indian women tennis team competed against Latvia in the Billie Jean King play offs in Jūrmala.

November 2022