

India – North Macedonia Relations

Bilateral Political Relations

India was one of the 40 co-sponsors of the Resolution in the UNGA for the admission of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia [FYROM]. India established Diplomatic and Consular relations with FYROM on February 9, 1995. At the request of the Macedonian leadership that Government of India use their Constitutional name (Republic of Macedonia) instead of the provisional name of FYROM, Government of India decided in August 2001 that the constitutional name would be used in bilateral communications whereas FYROM would continue to be used in multilateral *fora*. The country is now renamed as Republic of North Macedonia after it changed its name w.e.f. 14 February 2019 following resolution of name dispute with Greece. Hence all the references to the country's name before 14 February 2019 are as Macedonia or Republic of Macedonia while those thereafter are as North Macedonia.

The Indian Embassy in Bulgaria is concurrently accredited to North Macedonia. In 2006, the Government of Macedonia appointed an Indian businessman in New Delhi as its Honorary Consul before proceeding to open a full-fledged Embassy in New Delhi on October 7, 2008. The Government of India had appointed an Honorary Consul to Macedonia in 2008. Currently, there is no Honorary Consul of India to the Republic of North Macedonia. The government of Macedonia appointed an Honorary Consul in Kolkata in 2009 as a follow-up of the its FM's visit. North Macedonia has subsequently appointed Honorary Consuls in Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore.

PM Gruevski accompanied by the Dy. PM and Finance Minister and the Minister of Foreign Investments visited India during 11-17 January 2015 for the Vibrant Gujarat and CII-Partnership Summits. Earlier, the same delegation visited India from March 5-8, 2012 to showcase the investment and business opportunities in the country to Indian investors.

In continuation of their PM's 2012 visit, Dy. PM and Finance Minister Zoran Stavreski, accompanied by the Ministers of Information Society & Administration and Foreign Investments and Director of Technological Industrial Development Zones, visited India in October 2012 on a visit and gave a presentation on benefits Macedonia offered to investors in six Indian cities.

President of the National Assembly of Macedonia Trajko Veljanoski led a Parliamentary delegation on an official visit to India from 5-8 March 2013. Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki visited New Delhi and Agra on 16 & 17 December 2013 and met the External Affairs Minister. The two Ministers agreed that the bilateral political relations set solid foundation for strengthening the economic cooperation. A Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and an MoU on Cooperation between the Diplomatic Academy of the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Service Institute of Ministry of External Affairs were signed.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Smt. Preneet Kaur, accompanied by a business delegation of the CII, visited Macedonia on 10-11 July 2012 and met FM Nikola

Poposki, Dy. PM and Finance Minister Zoran Stavrevski and Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Policy and former FM, Antonio Milososki. The talks focussed on potential for improving the bilateral cooperation between the two countries including economy, culture and education & science.

Mr. Damjan Manchevski, Minister of Information, Society and Administration of Macedonia attended the International IT Forum, "IT HUB CONNECT", organized by the Embassy of India Sofia on 26-27 March 2018 in partnership with the Indian-Bulgarian Business Chamber (IBBC) and the American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria (AmCham Bulgaria), under the auspices of the Bulgarian EU Presidency.

H.E. Ms. Renata Deskoska, Minister of Justice visited India from 6-12 November 2019 and participated in the 20th International Conference of Chief Justices of the World held in Lucknow.

Honourable Minister of State for Textiles Shri Ajay Tamta visited Macedonia on 6-8 May 2018. During the visit, he held discussions with Minister of Economy of Macedonia Mr. Kreshnik Bekteshi besides meeting members of Balkan India Business Association (BIBA), the Textiles cluster in Macedonia and members of the Indian community. A visit to the Textiles facility (Okite-Tex Macedonia) and food processing facility (Bonum Macedonia) was also arranged. During the meetings, both sides agreed on the enormous potential to expand Macedonia-India economic relations. In the Textiles sector, setting up cultivation and fiber and fabric production facilities in Macedonia by Indian companies and cooperation in skill development and waste disposal were identified as areas with special potential. Apart from Textiles, Information Technology, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, tourism, film making and creative industries were identified as possible sectors for cooperation where Indian and Macedonian companies find exciting opportunities to invest and partner in each other's countries.

Important Bilateral Treaties and Agreements

(a) Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement was signed on 17 March 2008.

(b) Agreement on the Mutual exemption of visa requirements for holders of Diplomatic passports was signed during the visit of Macedonian FM to India in January, 2009. The Agreement came into force on 15 May, 2010.

(c) Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation was signed on 17.12.2013.

(d) MoU on Cooperation between the Diplomatic Academy of the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Service Institute of Ministry of External Affairs was signed on 17 December 2013.

Commercial and Economic Relations

The trade volume has been fluctuating and the value is far below its untapped potential. The following table shows the bilateral trade of India and North Macedonia during the last few years:

Year	India's Exports to Macedonia (in US\$ millions)	India's Imports from Macedonia (in US\$ millions)	Total Bilateral Trade (in US\$ million)
2013-2014	10.79	19.92	30.71
2014-2015	14.51	9.05	23.56
2015-2016	12.87	7.08	19.95
2016-2017	14.88	24.13	39.01
2017-2018	17.38	46.61	63.99
2018-2019	19.54	24.08	43.63
2019-2020 (upto January 2020)	18.38	14.46	32.84

(Source: Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GOI)

Main items of Indian exports to North Macedonia are: gas oils of petroleum or bituminous minerals; agricultural & forestry tractors; partly or wholly stemmed pre-stripped flue-cured tobacco, coffee; sesamum seeds; single cotton yarn of combed fibres; medicaments; plates, sheets, film, foil & strip of non-cellular polymers of propylene; pneumatic elevators & conveyors etc.

Main items of North Macedonia's exports to India are: ferro-alloys, marble and travertine, electrical machinery & equipment and plastics.

Investments

Indian investment in North Macedonia is negligible. In 2004, Arcelor Mittal took over Balkan Steel and later also bought the state-owned shares, amounting to 90% of the ownership. Bang & Scott DOO (Macedonia), a 100% step down subsidiary of Bang Overseas Limited, Mumbai was incorporated in September 2011. The company is into trading of fabrics and manufacturing of garments. On 12 January 2016, an agreement between Macedonia's Government and Indian metal products manufacturer BRG Group on the latter's investment of EUR 31 million in restarting of former 'Porcelanka' factory was signed. The project with a potential for creating 1,000 jobs would manufacture steel kitchenware for export. Some other investments proposals are under discussion. A state of the art Indus Medika medical laboratory was inaugurated in Skopje, on 14 November 2018 with an investment of Euro 3 million. Established by Mumbai based Dr Sanjay Mehta and Mr Bakul Jain, this is the first high-tech laboratory of its kind in North Macedonia and the neighbouring region.

Telecommunications Consultants India Limited established a branch office in Republic of North Macedonia in February 2019 to undertake consultancy and

turnkey works, from concepts to completion in all fields of telecommunications and information technology, offering full range of services embracing feasibility study, business process re-engineering, functional specifications documents, design, engineering, development of solution, installation, testing & commissioning of system and network.

Business Forum

An India – Macedonia business forum was organized by the Embassy and the Macedonian Chamber of Commerce in Skopje on 24 November 2017. A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed between Balkan-India Business Association and the Macedonian Chambers of Commerce to further enhance trade and commerce between the two countries.

Cooperation under ITEC and PCFD Programmes

Government of India offers 2 scholarships under ITEC programme to North Macedonia. Diplomats of North Macedonia participate in the Professional Course for foreign diplomats organized by the Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi from time to time.

Cultural Relations and people to people contacts

Citizens of North Macedonia evince keen interest in Indian culture. Shankar's International Painting Competition is very famous in North Macedonia and their children participate regularly in this competition. Four Indian films, namely, *Dharavi*, *Stree*, *Naseem*, and *Doghi* were shown in a film festival *Cine Days* in Macedonia in November 2015. India was featured as a focus country in the festival. Tourism is an area which holds prospects for both the countries. North Macedonia, with its beautiful landscapes may become an attractive destination for Indian film Industry. Some Indian films were shot at different locations in North Macedonia in the past. The biggest blockbuster Tamil movie 'Mersal' was shot in the country.

The first International Yoga Day was celebrated on 21 June 2015 in Gradski Park, Skopje with the help of Art of Living, Macedonia. The second International Day of Yoga was celebrated in Skopje at the City Hall on 19 June, 2016, in cooperation with Art of Living and other important Yoga centres. The third International Day of Yoga was celebrated in Skopje on 24 June 2017 in cooperation with ISKON, Art of Living and various important Yoga centres in Macedonia, hosting lectures on Ayurveda, Bhagavad Gita, Indian cuisine and organising performances of classical Indian dances. The 4th International Yoga Day (IYD) was celebrated on 21 June 2018 at the Memorial House of Mother Teresa, Skopje, in partnership with Art of Living, Macedonia. The 5th International Yoga Day (IYD) was celebrated on 22 June 2019 in Skopje, in partnership with Art of Living (North Macedonia Chapter), ISCKON and numerous yoga schools. Celebrations commenced with a yoga flash session at the iconic Macedonia Square in front of the statue of the Great Warrior and on the bridge

on River Vardar, followed by a full day event at the City Hall. The inauguration of the IDY celebrations at City Hall was graced by the Minister of Health of North Macedonia, Dr. Venko Filipce as the Chief Guest. Hon. Prime Minister Modi's video message on the occasion of 5th IDY was screened. The day-long event included yoga and meditation sessions, lectures & demonstration on yoga, an ICCR-sponsored Kathakali Dance Drama Performance led by Mr. Rajashekharan Madhava Kurup and troupe, lecture by Swami Indradyumna from ISCKON on Mantra Yoga, singing of "Vaishnav Jan To" song by noted North Macedonian singer Ms. Lina Gjorcheva, stylized yoga session by celebrity guest Ms. Suzana Turundjieva as well as stalls displaying Indian handicrafts, souvenirs, henna application, ayurvedic products, jewellery, Indian cuisine, music, etc. The event was very well attended.

As part of 150th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi, the President of North Macedonia Dr. Gjorge Ivanov contributed an article to the Gandhi anthology in March 2019.

Indian Community

The Indian community in North Macedonia is very small. There are about 10 Indian nationals - some are engaged in the IT sector and a few are working as executives in multinational companies.

April 2020