

BRINGING THE TWO PEOPLES TOGETHER

CULTURAL FESTIVAL DEDICATED TO 70 YEARS OF INDIA-HUNGARY DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in December 2014 to make June 21 the International Day of Yoga. Indian embassies all over the world have been organizing events during the last four years, in partnership with the local authorities and Yoga enthusiasts, to celebrate this important day.

➤ As the Indian Ambassador to Hungary, Kumar Tuhin explains to Diplomacy&Trade, "in order to make it convenient for everyone to attend, the Embassy of India in Hungary is organizing this year's events on June 22, which is a Saturday. A series of events will be organized throughout the country: in Budapest as well as in Debrecen, Alsóörs, Békéscsaba, Pécs, Szeged, Mosonmagyaróvár, Eger, Esztergom, Győr, Kecskemét, Somogyvámos, Nyíregyháza, Sopron, Szentendre, Veszprém and Zalaegerszeg – on this occasion to not only showcase Yoga but also the cultural diversity and radiance of India. The Embassy is in touch with the mayor's offices and prominent Yoga schools in these cities and preparations are in full swing."

Facets of Indian culture

For the fourth year now, the Indian Embassy will be holding cultural events in Hungary – in conjunction with the International Day of Yoga. As the Ambassador puts it, "Yoga is a treasure of all humanity but it has a home, India. Therefore, the Indian Embassy in Hungary has been holding Indian cultural events in conjunction with the International Day of Yoga so as to showcase to the Hungarian people some other facets of Indian culture, which is well renowned for its richness and diversity. This year's Yoga and cultural event is dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Hungary and a celebration of this partnership. There will be both Indian classical dance forms and instrumental music, combined with Yoga, which we hope will increase awareness about India and will bring the two peoples closer." He adds that "on June 22 and 23, we will be organizing events in Budapest and other cities



where both Yoga and Indian culture will be showcased to the audience in a combined event, eminent artists will perform classical traditional dances like bharatanatyam, kuchipudi and kathak and play traditional Indian musical instruments of sitar, tabla, etc."

Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Center

Any activity of this scale, where a large number of events are to be organized across a number of cities, will require significant effort and coordination. The Ambassador explains that as the office in charge for these events, the Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Center is naturally fully involved in planning, coordination and execution. "This includes arrangements, both logistical

and related to content, publicity, liaison with local institutions and offices as well as with prominent Yoga schools, etc.

It must be remembered here that the regular and routine activities of the Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Center, such as dance and Tabla classes, Hindi lessons, film shows, workshops and seminars, etc., are all continuing in parallel. Therefore, the Amrita Sher-Gil Cultural Center is very busy in making the necessary preparations to ensure a pleasant experience for the audience." The Cultural Center has been making significant contributions in promoting cultural cooperation between India and Hungary. Apart from conducting classes at its premises and organizing cultural programs, it also administers scholarships for Hungarian students in India in the cultural sphere. Several Hungarian students have learnt classical traditional dance in India and are now successfully running their own schools in Hungary. "Our cultural center has dedicated instructors including Ms Ankita Sood, who is a Yoga and Indian Culture instructor, Ms. Sonali Roy, a Kathak Dance instructor and Mr. Chirayu Bhole, a Tabla instructor. The center is headed by Ms. Tanuja Shankar, who is a very talented and dedicated person and is ably leading the team. All the staff members of the Cultural Center have had previous work experience in India and are drawing upon their experience to expand the reach of the Center to more and more people here," he points out.

A reservoir of goodwill

For Ambassador Tuhin, who took up his post at the end of last year, this will be his first International Yoga Day and cultural day event in Hungary. He says he is "indeed delighted that during my very first year in Hungary, we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of India-Hungary diplomatic relations. This year's cultural event is therefore dedicated to the celebration of this important partnership. My task is made easier because there is a large reservoir of goodwill for India in Hungary, and for Indian things. There are also several Hungarian artists who have studied in India and are now taking the Indian dance and art forms to new heights in Hungary. That helps us put together an event like this. Therefore, for this year's event, we are showcasing a number of Hungarian artists who will be performing Indian dance forms. I consider myself especially fortunate that in all my previous postings, too, I was directly or indirectly involved in organization of events of this nature and scale. Therefore, I will hopefully be able to draw upon my experience."

Spreading the message of Yoga

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that "Yoga is an invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. It embodies unity of mind and body." In reaction to that, Ambassador Tuhin says he feels that Hungarian people are already very receptive to Yoga, and its underlying concept of unity of mind and body, unity of man and nature, and of being at peace with oneself and with everyone around us." But the popularity of Yoga has given rise to a temptation by some people to commercialize it. There are some Yoga schools and studios run by instructors who have barely done a few weeks' course in Yoga and even that in an inauthentic school. Some are also trying to create new and strange forms of Yoga. My request to the Hungarian people is to find a proper Yoga school, which can impart correct training. Once you realize that Yoga is not merely body bending and learning a few postures but a complete life system with elements including body postures, food, meditation, breathing exercises, lifestyle, etc., you can commence your journey in understanding its principles and philosophy. The Embassy of India is partnering with prominent Yoga schools in major cities of Hungary to spread this message." In summary, the Ambassador highlights that "India and Hungary enjoy close and friendly relations. Our cooperation in diverse areas is continually strengthening. The Embassy is working hard to expand our outreach among the Hungarian people. It is always satisfying if the efforts invested in organizing an event get rewarded with good participation. I therefore request the readers of Diplomacy&Trade to join us on the International Day of Yoga and our cultural event." 

