

**Embassy of India
Budapest**

India – Bosnia & Herzegovina Bilateral Relations

Overview : Bosnia & Herzegovina is an independent state which is partially under international oversight under the terms of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords which ended the 1992-95 Bosnian war after the break-up of Yugoslavia. Its three main communities are Bosniak Muslims, Croats and Serbs. The country comprises two autonomous entities - the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska - and the Brcko District, which is governed by its own local government. These come under a federal government and rotating presidency. Country with a population of around 3.4 million has witnessed one of the most serious ethnic strife in recent history. Bosnia and Herzegovina is bordered by Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro, and has a narrow stretch of land along the Adriatic Sea.

Relations between India and Bosnia & Herzegovina (BiH) are warm and friendly. BiH sees India as a multi- cultural and multi-religious democracy. BiH attaches importance to good relations with India and the need to further develop and strengthen all round cooperation including economic and cultural. Diplomatic relations with BiH were established in 1995. While BiH opened its resident Mission in Delhi in 1997, India is yet to open a resident Mission in Sarajevo. Indian Ambassador in Hungary is concurrently accredited to BiH.

High level visits

From BiH

In February 2024 Mr. Elmedin Konakovic, Foreign Minister visited India to participate in the Raisina Dialogue.

Dr. Ahmet Santic and Dr. Suad Arnautovic, members of Central Election Commission, visited India in January 2017. An MoU between Election Commission of India and Central Election Commission of BiH was signed during the visit. As a follow up to the MoU, a five-member delegation of the Election Commission of India visited Sarajevo in March 2018 to impart training to the members and employees of the BiH CEC. Mr. Ismir Jusko, Minister of Communications and Transport, visited India in November 2017.

Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Mr. Mato Franjicevic, led a delegation to India in December 2016 and held a meeting in the Department of Commerce in India.

Dr. Zlatko Lagumdžija, Foreign Minister, accompanied by a business delegation, visited India in March 2013 and met with EAM.

BiH Minister for Justice as well as Minister for IT and Transport visited India to sign Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty and Air Services Agreement in 2009 and 2010 respectively. Mr. Edin Dilberovic, Assistant Minister of BiH, visited India for 2nd Foreign Office Consultations in April 2011.

The first ever visit by a Bosnian Foreign Minister took place in May 2003. FM Mladen Ivanic visited India and had meetings with PM, EAM, Commerce Minister as also Minister for Tourism & Culture. An interactive session with CII was also held.

From India

Smt. Preneet Kaur, the then Minister of State for External Affairs, accompanied by a high-level CII business delegation, visited BiH in July 2012 on a first-ever Ministerial visit.

The first ever visit at the Cabinet Minister level took place in July 2016 when Shri Suresh P. Prabhu, Minister of Railways, visited BiH. He had meetings with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Mr. Mirko Sarovic, with Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Amer Kapetanovic, and as also with the Prime Minister of Federation of BiH, Mr. Fadil Novalic.

Institutional Cooperation Modalities

Foreign Office Consultations – Foreign office consultations have been held in the past. The 1st FOC was held on December 19, 2002 in Sarajevo and the second round of FOCs was held in New Delhi on April 5, 2011. The Third FOCs were held in Sarajevo on 21-22 April 2014. Secretary (West) led the Indian delegation.

Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Co-operation - A Joint Committee on Trade and Economic Co-operation at Joint Secretary level has been set up to oversee trade and investment. The 2nd Joint Committee Meeting took place in Delhi in September 2006 when status of trade & economic cooperation was reviewed. The 3rd Meeting of the Joint Committee on Trade took place in Sarajevo after a gap of six years on 25 September 2012. A representative of FICCI also accompanied the delegation. FICCI and CII both have expressed their desire for a regular exchange of trade delegations between the two countries. Mr. Mato Franjicevic, Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of BiH, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee from the BiH side, led a delegation to India in December 2016 and held a meeting with the Co-Chair from the Department of Commerce in India. The next meeting is proposed to be held in Sarajevo, for which dates will be decided through mutual consultations.

India provided humanitarian assistance of US \$ 100,000 to BiH in May 2014, when unprecedented floods struck the country and more than 60 lives were lost and about 100,000 houses and other properties were destroyed. BiH is also grateful for the presence of Indian police observers numbering around one hundred officers, that were part of United Nations Mission in BiH (UNMIBH), which has since been wound up.

Important Bilateral Treaties and Agreements:

1. Agreement on Trade Cooperation signed in 2002;

2. Agreement on Establishment of Joint Business Council signed between the Foreign Trade Chamber of BiH & FICCI in 2003;
3. Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection Agreement signed in 2006; (a new BiT has been proposed)
4. Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty signed in 2009;
5. Air Services Agreement signed in 2010;
6. Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons in December, 2012. [The Instruments of Ratification have been exchanged in May 2017].
7. Memorandum of Understanding between Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Foreign Trade Chamber of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FTC BiH) in 2013.
8. MoU on Cooperation between the Central Election Commission of BiH and Election Commission of India, signed in January 2017.

Commercial and Economic Relations:

The bilateral trade figures, USD million, are given below:

Year (Jan-Dec)	Indian Exports to BiH	Indian Imports from BiH	Total Trade
2023	225.5	11.8	237.3
2022	447.8	3.3	451.1
2021	139.4	2.4	141.8
2020	68.8	3.9	72.7
2019	75.7	10.0	85.7
2018	78.2	8.1	86.3
2017	71.8	6.5	78.3

[Source: Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, BiH Trademap.org]

Some of the items of BiH exports to India are mineral fuels, articles of paper, aluminium structures, articles of wood, inorganic chemicals, toys, sports equipment, wool, animal products, and glass and glassware. From the Indian side, some of the articles of export are Coffee, Tobacco, Stone products, Aluminium, Textile articles, Footwear, Articles of Iron and steel, Glassware, Organic chemicals, Carpets and other textile floor coverings, Motor Vehicle accessories etc. Business opportunities exist in areas of automobile components, metal processing, hydro-energy, wood processing, mining, food-processing, tourism, traditional medicine, higher education (IT and Medicine), pharmaceutical and construction industries. Since BiH is expected to join the EU during the next few years, a manufacturing base in BiH could be useful for interested Indian companies.

India participated in the 39th Sarajevo Tourism Festival in October 2017, as a Partner Country. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Prime Minister and other Ministers of Federation of BiH. In 2018, India Tourism Frankfurt represented India. Embassy also participated at the 8th and 9th

Scholarship Fairs organized at the University of Sarajevo in 2017 and 2018. The Embassy of India participated in the 22nd International Economic Fair in Mostar (9-13 April 2019). Embassy had also participated in 2016 and 2018 editions of the event.

Indian Investments

There have been investments by companies owned by Indian nationals / Persons of Indian origin, to the extent of about \$ 250 million. These investments are perceived to be from India. The Ispat Group (Global Steel Holdings Limited) made a 51% equity investment in November, 2003 in the only coke and fertilizer plant in the BiH-Global Ispat Koksana Industrija doo Lukavac (GIKIL) with an investment of approximately US\$ 10 million. However, the Ispat Group has faced difficulties relating to their investments with the arrest of President of the Supervisory Board, Mr. Pramod Mittal and two other colleagues on the charge of illegal withdrawal and money laundering. They left Bosnia on a bail and payment of penalty over US \$ 11 million. The Company was subsequently taken over by Tuzla Canton authorities and a new local management board was elected without Indian influence.

Cultural relations:

There are two associations, 'BiH – India Friendship Society' based in Sarajevo and 'BiH-Indian Association' based in Mostar, which organize various cultural events regularly. India was the Focus Country in the 7-week long prestigious Sarajevo Winter Festival from 12 – 16 March 2015. During the course of India's participation an array of activities, viz., Yoga & Ayurveda presentations and workshops, Santoor concerts by well-known artists Pt. Bhajan Sopori and his troupe (sponsored by ICCR), a photo exhibition themed 'Vibrant India', and a documentary film festival were organized. India inaugurated the Sarajevo Winter Festival in February 2017, with performance on the theme 'The Dance of Weaves – Silk in India', by the troupe of Ms. Pratibha Prahlad, world renowned Bharatnatyam dancer. The theme of the Festival was 'Sarajevo Substance – Silk Road Art', which focused mainly on Silk Road countries. In February 2018, Embassy of India participated in the Opening Ceremony of the Sarajevo Winter Festival titled "The Other Face of the World". and showcased Indian fusion music. In February 2019 the Embassy again participated in the Sarajevo Winter Festival titled "Noise & Fury" with a stand-alone Indian cultural programme consisting of a fusion of three art forms: Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Odissi.

International Day of Yoga (IDY): The First International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated in Sarajevo on 21 June 2015. Every year, Embassy is celebrating IDY in various important cities of BiH namely Sarajevo, Mostar and Banja Luka, Foca and Zenica , at Pyramids of Bosnia in Visoko with the cooperation of local organizations.

Virtual Yoga Course: From January 2021, Embassy of India started a virtual yoga course for people of BiH, where local Yoga teacher would be conducting the classes on common yoga protocol. For special sessions and workshops on ancient Indian philosophy, Indian culture and scriptures, Indian yoga teachers would also be conducting sessions on behalf of the Mission.

6th Indian Film Festival: Keeping in mind the restrictions during covid times, this year's Indian Film Festival has been organised in collaboration with leading TV Channels. In Sarajevo, the

Channel Partner has been OBN Television. Besides showcasing 'incredible India' promotional videos, OBN Channel showcased five award winning Indian films in January 2021 as announced on December 7th where Channel Head Davorin Simunic was present. The films are Indu Sarkar, Saaho, Thinking of Him, Jhalki and The Silence.

The Embassy also organised AYUSH Days in Mostar and Sarajevo on January 31 and February 1, 2018 respectively. The Embassy also promoted Ayurveda and States of India on the sidelines of the Republic Day on January 30-31st, 2019 in Sarajevo.

150th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi: Mrs. Selma Muhedinovic -Silajdzic, prominent singer of Bosnia and Herzegovina sang "Vaishnav Jan Toh" bhajan in her voice to a global chorus and paid tribute to Gandhiji. EAM sent a letter of appreciation to Mrs. Selma Muhedinovic-Silajdzic for rendition of the hymn "Vaishnav Jan Toh".

Scholarships:

India has provided slots to BiH nationals for training under the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. There is growing interest from people in BiH to take advantage of this training. The Government of India bears all expenses including return international passage, visa, accommodation etc under this programme. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of BiH also sends its diplomats to attend the courses organised by the Foreign Service Institute of Ministry of External Affairs of India. 12 candidates from BiH availed the ITEC programme between 2015-2023.

Indian Community:

Only a few Indians, mainly working for Ispat Coking plant in Tuzla and Arcerlor Mittal mines and plant in Prijedor comprise the Indian community in Bosnia & Herzegovina.

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