

India-Czech Republic Bilateral relations

Historic Linkages

1. India's relations with former Czechoslovakia and with present Czech Republic, have always been warm, friendly and have a long history. In the medieval ages, Kingdom of Bohemia (now a part of Czech Republic) traded with India in precious goods and Indian spices. During the Czech National Revival- a cultural movement which took place during the 18th and 19th centuries with the purpose of reviving the Czech language, culture and national identity, prominent Czech scholars got inspired by ancient Indian culture. They found similarity between Czech and mother of all languages, Sanskrit.

2. Notable historical events in bilateral relations:

- Opening of Czechoslovak Consulate in Bombay in October 1920 and later in Calcutta in December 1929.
- Visit of Nobel laureate Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to Czechoslovakia in 1921 and 1926. (In 2004, a bust of Tagore was installed in Prague, with street named as Thakurova)
- Establishment of Czech Bata Works in Batanagar, Calcutta in 1930s.
- Visit of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in 1933 and 1938.
- Visit of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru accompanied by his daughter Indira Gandhi in 1938.

3. Diplomatic relations were established with Czechoslovakia on 18 November, 1947. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993, India immediately recognized the Czech Republic.

Recent High-level Visits :

4. (i) State visit of President of India, H.E. Ram Nath Kovind to Czech Republic in September, 2018. During the visit 8 Agreements/MoUs in the fields of Trade, Defence, S&T, Culture, Education and Visa Waiver for Diplomatic Passport holders were signed.

(ii) Visit of the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Mr C.R. Chaudhary to Prague in October 2018 for 11th session of Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation .

(iii) Visit of Czech PM Mr. Andrej Babis to India for the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit (VGSS) in January 2019 ,accompanied by Czech Minister of Trade and Industry Ms. Marta Novakova. The Czech Republic was partner country at the Vibrant Gujrat Summit.

(iv) Visit of Czech Defence Minister Mr. Lubomir Metnar to India in February 2019 for Aero-India, Bangalore

(v) Visit of Czech Foreign Minister Petricek to India in January 2020 to participate at the 6th edition of Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.

(vi) Visit of Chief of Defense Staff of India, General V. Rawat to the Czech Republic in November 2021.

(vii) Visit of Hon'ble EAM of India to the Czech Republic in June 2022.

(viii) Visit of Czech Foreign Minister Jan Lipavsky to India in February 2023.

(ix.) Visit of Hon'ble Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Shri. Nitin Gadkari to the Czech Republic in October 2023.

Economic and Commercial Relations

5. The bilateral economic relations gained momentum after the Czech Republic gained entry into the European Union in 2004. New mechanisms and diversified interaction thereafter resulted in revival of bilateral trade to more than US \$ 3.16 billion in 2022, from just US \$ 86 million in 1993 as per Czech statistics.

Defence Cooperation

6. The bilateral Defence Cooperation gained momentum with the signing of MoU on Bilateral Defence Cooperation in October 2003. Accordingly Joint Defence Committee has been setup. So far six such meetings of JDC have taken place with the last meeting taking place in New Delhi on 3 February 2020. The Czech defence companies have been regularly supplying military equipment to Indian armed forces.

Science and Technology Cooperation

7. In 2019 under the joint collaboration in Science and Technology, 20 high ranking projects were selected out of 187 joint proposals. India and Czech Republic are working in niche technologies given the latter's strength as the incubator of Technologies in strategic sectors such as defence, nuclear energy, cyber security, AI, Big Data, nanotechnology, laser etc. In June 2017, ISRO launched Czech nanosatellite -VZLUSAT-1 (size 20 cm x 10 cm x 10 cm and weight 2 kg), the first Czech technological satellite. Its mission is to verify new products and technologies on Earth's orbit. The satellite was developed by the Czech Aerospace Research and Test Centre (VZLU) in cooperation with Czech companies and universities.

Multilateral Cooperation

8. Czech Republic strongly supported India's full membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group(NSG) through its constructive role in NSG and in EU deliberations. During the visit of the President of India in September 2018 both countries agreed to commit towards strengthening global non-proliferation efforts including peaceful use of nuclear energy.

9. Czech Republic supported India in recently held elections for non-permanent membership of UNSC for 2021-22 and also supports comprehensive reform of UN and India's credentials for permanent membership of UNSC. Both sides provide mutual support for their candidature in various UN bodies/organizations and other multilateral agencies.

Educational Cooperation

10. Indology has a very old tradition in Prague, starting with establishment of a Chair in Sanskrit in the prestigious Charles University in 1850s. Indian languages like Hindi, Bengali, Tamil are currently taught in this University.

11. Czech educational institutions – particularly technical universities and medical colleges, are working with their Indian counterparts through exchange programs. There are about 1500 Indian students studying medicine, engineering, life sciences and physical sciences in various Czech universities.

12. In January 2020 Czech Foreign Minister, announced an expansion in quota for fast track visas for highly skilled/professionals from India. In addition, the Czech Government has agreed to strengthen the preferential regime through Project Student as a special arrangement to facilitate movement of Indian students and researchers.

Cultural & Tourism Cooperation

13. The iconic AKAM week was celebrated in January 2022 with the theme: 'Tagore- century of connecting Ganga and Vltava through music and culture' with the donation of a bust of Rabindranath Tagore which was set up besides the bust of Tagore scholar, Vincenc Lesny, at the latter's birthplace in Komarovice In August 2022. A special Orchestra symphony concert in Karlovy Vary played instrumental version of Rabindranath Tagore's composition as a tribute.

14. Czech Government actively supported and participated at the highest level in the ongoing celebrations of India@75 and also of Bapu@150 in 2019. Video messages/tweet from Czech PM, Foreign Minister and Environment Minister were issued on the occasion of Bapu@150.

15. The Culture wing of the Embassy actively collaborates with the local Czech community as well as the Indian community to promote and propagate Indian culture through various activities including screening of Indian movies, talks, performing art and community events by local talent and artistes from India from time to time. In 2022, Classical Indian music performances in Sarod and Dhrupad Vocal by artistes from India were organised. Books on Indian epics, mythology and folklore are also gifted to Municipal Libraries and Schools.

16. Yoga has become a way of life for many Czech people. They have been actively practicing Yoga year around and are also participating in the International Day of Yoga Celebrations on 21 June. Yoga studios have become popular throughout the country. A weekly Yoga Class is hosted at the Embassy premises. The Indian system of medicine, Ayurveda have generated active interest in Czech Republic and talks discussing benefits of Ayurveda take place.

17. Czech Republic is a popular destination for the Indian tourists. Pre Covid times around 50,000 Indian tourists visited the Czech Republic annually. Around 10-12 000 Czech nationals also visit India annually. India's e-visa scheme is presently being utilized by 85% of Czech visitors.

Indian Community

18. Approximately 9000 Indian nationals- mostly IT professionals, business personnel and students are residing in Czech Republic. In addition to registered Indian associations, there are several informal associations of Indians/people of Indian origin, who organize community events in association with the Embassy.

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