

## India-Czech Republic Bilateral Relations

### Political Relations

India-Czech Republic historic relations have acquired a new dimension, over the past 18 months period, with the culmination of 5 VVIP/VIP visits and regular business exchanges, leading to a substantial up-gradation in the bilateral relationship. This includes:

- (i) Rashtrapatiji's State visit to Prague in September, 2018, after a gap of 22 years. 8 new agreements/MoUs were signed in the fields of Trade, Defence, S&T, Culture, Education and Visa Waiver for Diplomatic Passport holders. A Joint Statement was issued encompassing various elements of our multifaceted & growing relationship.
- (ii) Czech Prime Minister Mr. Andrej Babis' official visit to India for the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January 2019, after a gap of 12 years, where Czech Republic was the partner country.
- (iii) Czech Foreign Minister Mr. Tomas Petricek's visit to India for the Raisina Dialogue in January, 2020 and meetings with four Union Ministers (including EAM), has succeeded in deepening the mutual relationship and in identifying further potential.
- (iv) Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Shri C.R. Chaudhary's visit to Prague for 11<sup>th</sup> Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation in October, 2018 resulted in the signing of 104 para protocol.
- (v) Czech Defence Minister Mr. Lubomir Metnar's official visit to India for the Aero India in February, 2019 at Bengaluru; 6<sup>th</sup> India-Czech JDC meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2020 in New Delhi and Czech participation in Defexpo 2020 led to close interactions on bilateral defence cooperation.
- (vi) All the above visits had substantive business components. In addition, other business mission and technology missions, inter-alia, included Ministry of Defence delegation at the International Defence and Security Technologies Fair; ASSOCHAM led 48 young Indian electronics companies to AMPER 2019 fair in Brno; Czech Republic as a partner country at West Bengal Global Summit; a major MSME delegation visited for the Czech Industrial Cluster in Bengaluru; an Energy Mission from Czech Republic visited India; MSME delegation from India in Sep, 2019; India's participation at the MSV International Engineering Fair in Brno and India Investment Meet in October, 2019; Czech Chamber of Commerce led a delegation to the India-Europe 29 business forum; an Agro and Food Processing Industry delegation in April, 2019; WAPCOS delegation; Kerala and Goa held Tourism road shows; and Incredible India's participation in Holiday World Fair, 2019.

**Background:** Our relations with former Czechoslovakia, and with the Czech Republic, have always been warm, friendly and have a long history. In the medieval ages the Kingdom of Bohemia (now a part of Czech Republic) traded with India in precious goods and Indian spices. The Czech Bata Works was established in Batanagar, Calcutta in 1930s. Skoda Auto established itself in India in 2001. The Czechoslovak Consulate opened in Bombay in 1920 and later in Calcutta. Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore visited Czechoslovakia in 1921 and 1926; Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose visited between 1933 and 1938; and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru accompanied by his daughter Indira Gandhi visited Prague in 1938.

Diplomatic relations were established with former Czechoslovakia on November 18, 1947 and have been maintained with high level visits and interactions since then. Former Indian Presidents Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Giani Zail Singh and R. Venkataraman visited Czechoslovakia in 1965, 1983 and 1988 respectively. PM Jawaharlal Nehru paid a visit in 1955; PM Smt. Indira Gandhi in August 1972; and PM Rajiv Gandhi in August 1986.

High level visits were maintained after the Czech Republic came into existence subsequent to the peaceful bifurcation of Czechoslovakia on 1 January 1993 into Czech Republic and Slovakia after a political transition in 1989. Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier made the first high level contact after the Velvet Revolution in November 1990. The VVIP Visits since then include:

*From Indian Side:* President Shri Shankar Dayal Sharma in October 1996 ; Vice President Shri M. Hamid Ansari in June 2010; and President Shri Ram Nath Kovind in September, 2018.

*From Czech side:* President Mr. Vaclav Havel in February 1994; PM Mr. Milos Zeman in March 2001; President Mr. Vaclav Klaus in November 2005; PM Mr. Jiri Paroubek in January 2006; and PM Mr. Andrej Babis in January, 2019.

EAM level visits: Shri S.M. Krishna in June, 2009; Czech Foreign Minister Mr. Lubomir Zaoralek visited India in December, 2016; Czech Foreign Minister Mr. Tomas Petricek visited India in January, 2020

International Cooperation: We cooperate internationally including in Export Control regimes like Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar, Hague Code of Conduct and the Australia Group. We have agreed towards cooperation in fight against terrorism and in strengthening global non-proliferation efforts. Czech Republic supports India's full membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and permanent membership of India in the UN Security Council (UNSC).

Bilateral Dialogue Mechanisms : 11<sup>th</sup> session of Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation held in Prague in October, 2018; (ii) Joint Working Group on Heavy Engineering held in Brno in October, 2019; (iii) Joint Defence Committee (JDC), met in February, 2020; (iv) Consular Consultations held in Prague in April, 2018; and (v) Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) held in May, 2013 in Prague.

Agreements : Existing agreements include Agreement/MoUs in the fields of Civil aviation, Defence, Economic cooperation, Social security, Science and Technology, Culture and Education, Consular, Civil Nuclear cooperation etc. 8 Agreement/MoUs were signed during the visit of President Ram Nath Kovind in September, 2018 which included : (i) Visa waiver for Diplomatic Passports; (ii) MoU between CSIR and Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS); (iii) Work plan between DST and M/o Youth, Education and Sports for Joint Projects for 2019-2022 with a Joint call for proposals made; (iv) MoU between TIFR & ELI Beamlines for research in laser technology; (v) MoU between BEML and TATRA Trucks on strategic cooperation; (vi) MoU between PHDCC and Association of Medium and Small Enterprises (AMSP) on promotion of SMEs; (vii) MoU between CCS Haryana Agricultural University Hisar and Czech University of Life Sciences; and (viii) MoU between University of Economics Prague and IIM, Bangalore on exchange of students; all these agreements are under implementation.

## **Commercial Relations**

Since 2012, bilateral trade has amounted to more than one billion U.S. dollars. Our trade and economic relations are on an upswing. The bilateral trade has reached US\$ 1567 million in 2019 (with India's exports US\$ 918 million and imports 649 million) and was US\$ 1574 million in 2018 (with India's exports of USD 866 mi and imports worth USD 708 mi). (*as per Czech statistics*).

India' principal items of export to the Czech Republic are Garment and textile, Pharmaceutical products, Iron and Steel products, electronic instruments, auto components, chemicals, power equipment, footwear etc. India's principal items of Import from the Czech Republic are auto components, textile and leather machines, machines for rubber and plastic industry, machine-tools, food production equipment, ICT equipment, furniture, pumps, electronic items etc..

Major Indian companies such as Infosys, Tata Tea, Alok Industries/Mileta Horice a.s., Glenmark Pharmaceuticals and Lloyd Electric and Engineering Ltd. have invested in the Czech Republic. Around 30 Czech companies have invested in India including Skoda Auto, Skoda Power, Bonatrans, Home Credit etc. in transportation, power, automotive and financing sectors. In 2018, Skoda Auto has committed a US\$ 1 billion investment into its project India 2.0 and is launching its new low cost SUV in the Indian market in 2020, made wholly in India.

Among the forthcoming business missions and India's participation in prominent fairs in the Czech Republic include :

- ❖ A multi-product business delegation to the Czech Republic of select Indian companies from key sectors in April, 2020 (in cooperation with FIEO).
- ❖ The first meeting of the CE-India Forum is to be held in Prague in June, 2020
- ❖ 55th Edition of Style Fashion Fair (International Fashion Fair Footwear and Leather Ware Fair), in cooperation with FIEO in August, 2020.
- ❖ AMPER-2021 participation with ASSOCHAM in March 2021.
- ❖ Buyer Seller Meet to be organised by EPCH in August 2020.
- ❖ Indian Pavilion at STYL-International Fashion Fair in August 2020.

## **Cultural Relations**

Regular cultural and educational exchanges are held, including (i) Festival of India in 3 cities: Prague, Brno and Ostrava in June 2019; (ii) Bapu@150 : Notably commemorative postage stamp by Czech Post; World Environment Day dedicated to Bapu with planting of 150 trees by Czech PM Andrej Babis; (iii) Yoga is popular with celebrations of the International Day of Yoga and mushrooming of Yoga studios across the country.

## **Indian Community**

Czech Republic is increasingly becoming a hub for Indian professionals, students, researchers, tourists & businessmen. The number of Indians in Czech Republic has increased to 5000 including over 1500 students, temporary professionals and old residents. Over 1 lakh Indian tourists visit Czech Republic annually and about 10-12 thousand Czech nationals visit India annually. India's e-visa scheme is presently being utilized by 85% of Czech visitors.

## **Useful resources**

Website of Embassy of India, Prague : [www.eoiprague.gov.in](http://www.eoiprague.gov.in)

Facebook page : [www.facebook.com/IndiaInCzechRepublic/](https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInCzechRepublic/)

Twitter : [www.twitter.com/IndiaCzech](https://www.twitter.com/IndiaCzech)

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