

INDIA - CROATIA REALTIONS

NEWS: Recently, the Indian Prime Minister paid a maiden visit to Croatia as part of the last leg of his three-nation tour, which included Cyprus and Canada.

- PM Modi expressed gratitude for Croatia's support following the Pahalgam terror attack, highlighting shared democratic values and commitment to combatting terrorism.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Defence and Security Cooperation

- Building upon the **2023 MoU on Defence Cooperation**, India and Croatia agreed to **expand military ties** through:
 - **Joint military training programs** aimed at capacity building and operational coordination.
 - **Personnel exchanges** to enhance interoperability and mutual understanding among armed forces.
 - **Industry-level partnerships** to facilitate collaboration between Indian and Croatian defence manufacturers.
 - **Cybersecurity cooperation**, particularly in areas of threat detection, cyber defence, and secure communication systems.
 - Promotion of **joint ventures in defence production**, aligning with India's 'Make in India' initiative.

Agreements and MoUs Signed

- Multiple **Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)** were signed in the areas of:
 - **Agriculture:** promoting joint R&D and trade in agri-products.
 - **Cultural exchange:** to boost artistic, educational, and heritage collaboration.
 - **Science and Technology:** enabling joint innovation and technological research.
- The **ICCR Chair of Hindi** at the **University of Zagreb** was extended until 2030, reaffirming India's commitment to language and cultural diplomacy.
- Launch of **joint academic research programs** and a **five-year cultural exchange initiative** to foster deeper people-to-people ties.

Investment and Economic Cooperation

- Both countries committed to **deepening investments** in priority sectors, including:
 - **Pharmaceuticals**, where India is already a major supplier to Europe.
 - **Agriculture and agri-tech**, with potential for knowledge-sharing and trade expansion.
 - **Information and Digital Technologies**, including IT services and cybersecurity.

- **Clean technology and semiconductors**, leveraging India's expanding capacity in chip manufacturing and renewable energy.
- Croatia was **invited to participate in India's Sagarmala Project**, aimed at enhancing port-led development by utilising Croatia's maritime and logistics expertise.

Academic and Cultural Exchanges

- Expansion of **joint research projects** between Indian and Croatian academic institutions.
- Implementation of a **five-year cultural exchange program** to promote mutual understanding through arts, education, and heritage.
- Croatia's legacy in **Indology and Sanskrit studies** continues to be a strong bridge between the two cultures, with sustained scholarly interest and educational programs.

Space and Technology Collaboration

- India offered to **share its expertise in space technologies** with Croatia.
- Potential cooperation includes **satellite system development, space applications, and remote sensing**, enhancing Croatia's scientific capabilities and India's space diplomacy.

Enhanced Mobility and Diplomatic Mechanisms

- A **Mobility Agreement** is in the pipeline to **facilitate travel, education, tourism, and business** between the two nations.
- A framework for **regular high-level diplomatic consultations** was established, institutionalising momentum and improving coordination in bilateral and multilateral platforms.

Economic Facets of India–Croatia Relations

- **Bilateral trade** has been steadily growing, increasing from **\$199.45 million in 2017 to \$337.68 million in 2023**.
- **India's key exports**: pharmaceuticals, machinery, chemicals, apparel, and consumer goods.
- **Croatia's main exports** to India: precision instruments, chemicals, timber, rubber, and vegetable oils.
- Agreements such as the **Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (2001)** and **India–Croatia Economic Cooperation Agreement (2017)** provide a legal foundation for economic ties.
- The **India–Croatia Startup Bridge (2021)** fosters cooperation in cutting-edge fields like **AI, robotics, and green technology**.

Cultural Relations

- Croatia has a **long tradition of Indology**, with Sanskrit studies dating back to the 18th century.

- Croatian scholar **Ivan Filip Vezdin** published the **first printed Sanskrit grammar** in Europe in 1790.
- The **Indology Department at the University of Zagreb** is a vital institution promoting Indian culture, language, and philosophy.
- **Yoga and Ayurveda** have gained significant popularity, enhancing India's cultural soft power in Croatia.
- Historical ties include **Croatian contributions to Indo-Portuguese architecture**, notably the **Church of São Brás in Goa**.

Diplomatic Engagement

- India recognized **Croatia's independence in May 1992**, and diplomatic ties were formalized in **July 1992**.
- Embassies were established in **Zagreb (1995)** and **New Delhi (1996)**; **ambassadorial-level relations began in 1998**.
- Croatia consistently supports India on global issues, including **India's bid for permanent membership in the UN Security Council**.
- Diplomatic relations have remained cordial, based on shared values of democracy, sovereignty, and non-intervention.

Strategic Significance of Croatia for India

- **Geostrategic Gateway to Europe:**
 - Located on the **Eastern Adriatic coast**, Croatia provides maritime access to the **European Union**.
 - Ports such as **Rijeka, Split, and Ploče** are crucial parts of the **EU's TEN-T transport corridor**, enabling entry to Central and Eastern European markets.
 - As a potential node in the **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**, Croatia offers a route to bypass logistical challenges in the Suez Canal and Red Sea.
 - Reduces India's **overdependence on Western European trade entry points** like Germany or France.
- **Strategic Alternative to Chinese Influence:**
 - Croatia has shown **limited engagement with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.
 - Its cautious stance on Chinese infrastructure investments makes it a **favourable partner for India** in the Balkans.
 - Enhancing India–Croatia cooperation contributes to **offering a democratic, rules-based alternative** in the region.

- **EU and NATO Connectivity:**

- Croatia's membership in both the **European Union and NATO** enhances its value as a **diplomatic and strategic partner** for India.
- Offers India indirect access to **EU decision-making processes and regulatory frameworks**.
- Serves as an ally within **European consensus-building platforms**, especially relevant for **India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** negotiations.

- **Multilateral Alignment and Reliability:**

- Croatia consistently supports India's positions in international forums.
- Its **non-interventionist posture on issues like Jammu & Kashmir** aligns with India's diplomatic sensitivities.
- Acts as a **stable and predictable partner**, contrasting with more fluctuating stances of larger EU powers.

Croatia



- **Location:** Situated in Southeastern Europe on the Balkan Peninsula.
- **Bordering Nations:** Hungary, Slovenia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Geographical Features:**
 - **Topography:** Around half of Croatia is characterized by karst (limestone) terrain, especially prominent in the Dinaric Alps.
 - **Major Mountain Range:** Dinaric Alps (Dinara – Highest point)
 - The country experiences both Mediterranean and continental climates.

Rivers

- **Black Sea Basin:** Danube, Sava, Drava, Mura, and Kupa
- **Adriatic Sea Basin:** Neretva, Cetina, Krka, and Zrmanja

Source: <https://www.livemint.com/news/trends/bharat-bahut-sundar-desh-hai-croatian-students-speak-hindi-to-welcome-pm-modi-11750254409684.html>