

INDIA AND SERBIA HAVE HISTORIC AND SPECIAL RELATIONS AS CO-FOUNDERS OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT: VICE PRESIDENT

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Vice President's Secretariat

India and Serbia have historic and special relations as co-founders of the Non-Aligned Movement: Vice President

India and Serbia celebrate 70 years of establishment of diplomatic relations;

Releases commemorative stamp on Swami Vivekananda and Nikola Tesla;

Witnesses signing of MoUs on cooperation in the fields of Plant Health and Plant Quarantine and a revised Air Services;

Makes joint Press Statement; Witnesses Exhibition on Belgrade/New Delhi - 70 years of Diplomatic Relations;

India is one of the fastest growing major economies in the world;

Terrorism is the most serious global threat in today's world;

Holds bilateral discussions with the President of Serbia

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that India and Serbia have historic and special relations as co-founders of the Non-Aligned Movement and our relationship is based on mutual trust, mutual understanding and support to each other on issues of core interest. He was making a press statement after holding delegation level talks with the President of Serbia,

Mr. Aleksandar Vucic at Serbia Place, in Belgrade, Serbia today. The Minister of State for Finance, Shri Shiv Pratap Shukla, the Ambassador of India to Serbia, Shri Subrata Bhattacharjee and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said that India and Serbia have historic and special relations as co-founders of the Non-Aligned Movement and our relationship is based on mutual trust, mutual understanding and support to each other on issues of core interest. He further said that we agreed to expand the bilateral cooperation especially in the areas of economic and cultural relations. India and Serbia are on the path of economic reforms to realize the goal of socio-economic development of our peoples, he added.

The Vice President along with the Serbian President has witnessed the signing of MoUs between India and Serbia on cooperation in the fields of Plant Health and Plant Quarantine and a revised Air Services. Addressing on this occasion, the Vice President said that these agreements will contribute to further enhancing bilateral economic ties between India and Serbia.

Both leaders have jointly released the Commemorative Stamps on two great personalities, Swami Vivekananda, the great Philosopher from India and Nikola Tesla, the great scientist from Serbia to commemorate 70 years of diplomatic relations between India and Serbia. The Vice President along with the Serbian President also visited the Exhibition on 'Belgrade/New Delhi – 70 years of Diplomatic Relations'.

The Vice President and the Serbian President have gave a joint Press Statement. Later, both the leaders have addressed the India-Serbia Business Forum Meeting.

The Vice President thanked the President of Serbia for extending invitation to visit Serbia and for hosting in his beautiful country. We appreciate your inspiring leadership of Serbia and your constructive role in the region, he added.

The Vice President congratulated the President of Serbia for the success of economic reforms undertaken by the Serbian Government which have resulted in significant improvement in the economic situation and business environment of Serbia.

The Vice President said that today India is one of the fastest growing major economies in the world and Serbian companies can take advantage of the favourable trade and investment environment as well as major policy initiatives like Make in India, Smart cities, Digital India, Start-up India, etc. by participating in these programmes in Business to Business mode including Joint Ventures. He further said that there is huge scope to promote collaboration in sectors like agriculture and food processing, science & technology, IT & Electronics, pharmaceuticals, education and tourism. Agriculture holds enormous significance for the development and food security of both our countries, he added.

The Vice President said that India is one of the largest global manufacturers of generic medicines and with the new Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy, India has the potential to become the largest drug manufacturer and exporter in the world, including in the East European region. Both sides can collaborate for enhancing export of Indian generic drugs to Serbia and this enhance availability of quality medicines to the people at affordable prices, he added.

The Vice President noted with great appreciation the growing interest and increasing popularity of Indian culture, especially in Yoga, Ayurveda and Homeopathy in Serbia. Signing of agreement

on cooperation in the fields of culture, sports, youth and mass media signed between the two countries earlier this year was an important step to further promote cultural interaction between the two countries, he added.

The Vice President said that Terrorism is the most serious global threat in today's world. He further said that this can only be defeated by coordinated international action. There is an urgent need to expedite the finalization of the draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, mooted by India in 1996, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's Press Statement:

"It is my first visit to this beautiful country. The country is not only beautiful but the people also seem to be dutiful because in short time under the able leadership they could develop the country as one of the important countries in this part of Europe. I am delighted to visit Serbia on the very first leg of my first trip to Europe in my current capacity.

Earlier I was a minister and political functionary but now after assuming office as the Vice President of India this is my first trip to Europe and that I am starting from Serbia. I thank Hon'ble President Aleksandar Vucic and the people of Serbia for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to me and my fellow delegation members. We were happy to receive President Vucic in India during his visit in January last year in his capacity as the Prime Minister of Serbia.

India and Serbia have historic and special relations as co-founders of the NAM i.e. Non-Aligned Movement. Our relationship is based on mutual trust, mutual understanding and support to each other on issues of core interest.

My visit to Serbia assumes special significance as both our countries are celebrating the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations this year that is very significant. I am happy that today, Serbia Post and Indian Post have jointly released commemorative stamps on the renowned Serbian scientist and inventor, Nikola Tesla and the great spiritual leader of India, Swami Vivekananda, to celebrate this occasion.

I had extensive discussion with His Excellency President Vucic this morning on all important aspects of our bilateral relationship as well as global and regional issues of common interest to both of our countries. We expressed our commitment to further build on long-standing friendly ties between our two countries.

We agreed to expand the bilateral cooperation especially in the areas of economic and cultural relations. In the area of economic cooperation, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in the areas of priority such as agriculture, food processing, defence manufacturing, science and technology, information technology, infrastructure, tourism and pharmaceuticals. We expressed satisfaction at the investments made by Indian companies in Serbia especially in sectors of farm equipment like tractors, food processing, and pharmaceuticals.

India and Serbia are on the path of economic reforms to realize the goal of socio-economic development of our people. India as one of the fastest growing major economies in the world, presents opportunities for win-win partnership between Serbian and Indian entrepreneurs in multiple sectors to realize the vast potential of our bilateral relationship.

Your Excellency, I welcome the signing of two agreements during this visit. The Agreement on cooperation in Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine would contribute to increasing bilateral trade in agricultural products. The Air Services Agreement would boost trade and tourism by

launch of direct air connectivity between India to Serbia in future.

We conveyed our mutual satisfaction at the growing cultural cooperation and people-to-people relations between both the two countries. I thanked President Vucic for Serbia's unilateral decision to waive visa for short visits by Indians travelling to Serbia. India has also extended e-Visa facility to Serbian nationals. Our initiatives would further promote tourism and greater people- to-people contact.

In our discussions today, we also exchanged views on multilateral issues and agreed to intensify cooperation in the areas of mutual interest. India and Serbia have had close cooperation at the United Nations and other multilateral fora. We agreed that United Nations need to be reformed to reflect the realities of today and address current global challenges, it is long overdue.

We resolved to fight the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and agreed to strengthen cooperation in fight against terrorism at various international fora. It is a global challenge and requires a global response. Terror has no religion. Terrorism is enemy of humanity. We must all come together. I am happy that both of us agreed to move in the direction of creating the needed public opinion.

I will also meet the Hon'ble Speaker of Serbian National Assembly, H.E. Ms. Gojkovic and Prime Minister, H.E. Ms. Brnabic. I would have the honour to address the Special session of the National Assembly of Serbia. President Vucic and I will together attend the India- Serbia Business Forum and have opportunity to meet the business representatives of both the countries just after this event.

I would once again like to thank Hon'ble President Vucic for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality. I also extend warm greetings for the progress and prosperity of the people of Serbia. India looks forward for further closer cooperation with Serbia to further strengthen our traditional bonds of friendship with Serbia and its people.

I have already assured the President that India stands for the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Serbia. There is no question of any dilution and deviation of our stand. I am also equally happy that the Hon'ble President has unequivocally publically declared their support to India's cause in the United Nations and also in the other international forums.

I am thankful to the Hon'ble President and his team and also to the people of Serbia for all the warmth and affection they are showing towards us during our stay. I hope that my two day visit to this part of Europe will be a gateway for further cooperation and deeper understanding between India and European countries starting with Serbia.

Excellency, you have just said that Serbia is a small country. No, may be size wise small but it is tall and has a tall leader also. So I am sure in the coming days Serbia will further grow in height and also join the process of development that is happening everywhere.

The aspirations of the people, I am sure, are being met and then you will take further steps to bring reforms wherever they are needed as our Indian Prime Minister is implementing the reforms. He has the three line advice to everybody i.e. Reform, Perform and Transform, transforming the nation.

I am happy that both our Prime Minister and your good-self Excellency are moving in the direction of transforming the respective nations. Together will be able to transform the conditions for the humanity.

Thank you very much.

Namaskar.

Jai Hind."

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