India-Austria Relations

Why in News?

Recently, the Indian Prime Minister made a historic visit to Austria, the first by an Indian leader in 41 years since Indira Gandhi.

What are the key highlights of the PM's visit to Austria?

- **Commitment to peace and democracy-** Both vowed to strengthen cooperation on bilateral, regional, and international levels for a more stable and prosperous world.
- **Enhanced partnership**- *Joint projects* in green and digital technologies, infrastructure, renewable energy, and many more.
- India invited Austria to join the ***International Solar Alliance***.
- The *Start-Up Bridge initiative* and the exchange of start-ups between India and Austria were highlighted.
- **Skill development and worker mobility**- They welcomed the bilateral *Migration and Mobility Agreement* to facilitate exchanges and combat irregular migration.
- **Respect for international laws** – Both leaders affirmed their commitment to a *free and open Indo-Pacific*, respecting international maritime laws.
- They discussed recent developments in Europe and West Asia, emphasizing peace and adherence to international law.
- **Support for UN seats** – *India supported Austria's UNSC candidature for 2027-28*, and Austria supported India's candidature for 2028-29.
- **Condemnation of terrorism** – They mutually condemned terrorism in all forms, urging decisive action against terrorists, including through UN sanctions.
- **Cultural exchanges and tourism**- They appreciated the rich tradition of cultural exchanges and the growing interest in *yoga and Ayurveda in Austria*.
- Efforts to promote bilateral cultural ties and tourism, including expanding *direct flight connectivity*, were encouraged.
- The *India-Middle East-Europe Corridor* initiative and Austria's interest in it were also discussed.

What are the pillars of India-Austria Relationship?



- **Political relations**- Diplomatic relations were formally ***established in 1949*.**
- India intervened in favour of Austria during its negotiations with the erstwhile USSR that resulted in the *independence of Austria in 1955*.
- ***2024 marks the 75th year*** of establishment of bilateral relations.
- In *1955, Jawahar Lal Nehru* became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Austria and the previous last was by Indira Gandhi in 1983, her second visit there as Prime Minister, the first being in 1971.
- In 2021, a *Parliamentary delegation from India* led by the Speaker Lok Sabha including Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha visited Vienna for the Fifth World Conference of the Speakers of Parliament.
- **Institutional mechanisms**- It is through the *Foreign Office Consultations (FOC)* and the *Joint Economic Commission* (JEC).
    - While the 16th India & Austria Joint Economic Commission (JEC) held in Vienna, the 7th round of Foreign Office Consultations were held in New Delhi in 2023.
- It includes discussions like trade, consular, skilling, migration, culture and people to people contacts.
- Both sides also discussed regional and multilateral issues including *UNSC reforms, Ukraine issue and India's G20 presidency*.
- **Economic cooperation**- The *bilateral trade is balanced*.
- According to the Statistik Austria, for 2021, Indian exports to Austria were USD 1.29 billion and imports were USD1.18 billion.
- The total bilateral trade for this period was USD 2.47 billion.
    - **Indian key exports to Austria** – Electronic Goods, Apparels, Textile, Footwear, Rubber articles, Vehicles & Railways parts, Electrical machinery and Mechanical appliances.
    - **India's key imports from Austria** – Machinery, Mechanical appliances, Railway parts, Iron and Steel.
- **Technological cooperation**- Jesuit Father Josef Tieffenthaler who is known as the "***Father of Modern Indian Geography***," was a notable figure.
- He created the *first exact cartographic records* of the middle Ganges River and was an internationally renowned Sanskrit scholar, teaching at the Jesuit College in Agra from 1740 to 1770.
- **Space sector** – *Austria's first two satellites* TUGSAT-1/BRITE and UniBRITE were

launched *by India's PSLV–C20* from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota in 2013.

- **Crime and Security** – In 2022 in New Delhi, *India handed over the INTERPOL flag to Austria* that organized the 91st ITERPOL General Assembly in Vienna in 2023.
- **Cultural relations**- It dates back to *16th century* when Balthasar Springer traveled in 1505 to India along with the Portuguese fleet.
- Between 1825-1920, the *Austrian tradition of Indology* emerged.
- In 1845, the teaching of *Sanskrit was started at Vienna University* and in 1880 an independent chair for Indology was founded.
- *Ayurveda*, the Indian traditional system of medicine has been widely acknowledged and practiced in Austria.
- There are many *Yoga schools* in Vienna and other Austrian cities.

India's philosopher-poet Rabindranath Tagore visited twice to Vienna in 1921 and 1926.

- **People to people connect-** There are an estimated over *31,000 Indians* (majority from Kerala and Punjab) living in Austria.
- There are *over 500 Indian students* pursuing their higher education in Austria and the number is set to rise.

What is the significance of Austria for India?

- **Access to European markets** – Austria is a key partner in Europe's central region, providing India with access to European markets and fostering stronger diplomatic ties within the EU.
- **Boosts economy** – Bilateral agreements on migration and mobility facilitate the exchange of skilled workers, benefiting both economies and enhancing human capital development.
- **Supports India's growth** - Austria's advanced technology and expertise in sectors like renewable energy, infrastructure, and manufacturing complement India's growth needs.
- **Drives innovation** – Joint ventures and projects in green and digital technologies enhance India's technological capabilities, driving innovation and sustainable development.
- **Promotes India's global status** – Austria's support for India's candidature in international organizations like the UNSC and collaboration in multilateral platforms boost India's global influence and diplomatic reach.

References

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