



FOCUS



A POETRY LOVING MECHANICAL ENGINEER

» Ambassador Kumar Tuhin joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1991 and his career has taken him across continents, having served in the Indian Mission in Hong Kong, the Indian Embassy in Beijing, at India's Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, the Indian Embassy in Hanoi, the Consulate General of India in San Francisco and as India's High Commissioner to Namibia. He also worked in the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi. Ambassador Tuhin was born in the state of Bihar, which he proudly notes is the state where Lord Buddha attained his enlightenment and where one of the most ancient and largest Indian universities was founded, attracting students from China and all over the world to study Buddhism and philosophy. His mother, a professor of economics, was the anchor of the household for a very long time. "All the important decisions in my early life, such as my education, were taken by her. This is a memory that I still cherish together with my brother and my sister, and we still consult her when an important decision needs to be made." The presence of strong female personalities has been a constant feature of the Ambassador's life. "In addition to my wife, I have two beautiful daughters, so I continue to receive much appreciated input from ladies." A mechanical engineer by training, Ambassador Tuhin believes his studies have been instrumental in his current line of work by helping him look at the large picture and have a wider perspective. "Having studied engineering, I learnt a certain way of processing information, of handling things in an analytical way, and it also sharpened my problem-solving skills," the Ambassador says. An avid reader, Kumar Tuhin loves the works of Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, whose poetry he believes will remain relevant for generations to come. Although his poems address the socio-economic landscape of India in a radical manner, having earned him the moniker of "rebel poet," they also give hope and direction to the people. The works of Indian writer Munshi Premchand also take up a prominent place on his bookshelf. "I admire the sheer volume of literature he has produced and the simplicity of his storytelling, the way he picks ordinary characters from India and turns them into models that readers can easily identify with."

BIG POTENTIAL FOR ENHANCING INDIA-HUNGARY ECONOMIC COOPERATION

INTERVIEW WITH **KUMAR TUHIN**, INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO HUNGARY

BY EDITH BALÁZS

» The balance of bilateral economic relations has not always been so tilted in the favor of India. Prior to the fall of the Communist regime in Hungary, some 25 Indo-Hungarian joint ventures were operating in India, mostly in the area of pharmaceuticals and vacuum technology. With the economic liberalization in the wake of the 1989 political changes and the

While the inflow of Indian foreign direct investment to Hungary has picked up pace in recent years, the presence of Hungarian companies in the world's 5th largest economy must be enhanced to realise its true potential, Ambassador Kumar Tuhin says in an interview. The Ambassador considers facilitating the access of Hungarian businesses to the Indian market and helping forge joint partnerships among the key goals of his posting in Budapest.

revamp of the economic models in both countries since 1991, most of these joint ventures have either been terminated or have been indigenised, leaving only a handful of Hungarian companies present in the Indian market. "Hungarian investments in India are far below their potential," Ambassador Tuhin tells *Diplomacy & Trade* in an in-depth interview. "India is now the 5th largest economy in terms of nominal GDP in the world and given the current growth rate of close to 7%,

our economy is slated to rise to an even higher ranking. It is self-evident that Hungary should be present on the Indian market to a bigger extent for its own economic benefit. The Indian consumer market is the third largest in the world and some of the related figures are very high. For long-term economic advantages, it's very important that Hungarian companies go to India and forge partnerships," the Ambassador, who has been serving in Budapest since November 2018, says.

Areas of convergence

The areas of potential co-operation have already been identified by the two countries, the most prominent being water management, which ties in neatly with the priorities of the Indian government. This is a critical sector for India given the size of the country's population and Hungary has renowned strength in this area. The two states signed a Memorandum of Understanding in the area of water resource management a few years ago and the Embassy is working to organize a visit by a team of Hungarian officials to India in the last quarter of the year, according to the Ambassador. An Indian delegation is also likely to attend the Budapest Water Summit to be organized on 15-17 October. Another sector where Hungarian companies could make a meaningful impact in India is that of agricultural products and the processing of agricultural products, the Ambassador says. "Speaking on the 2019-2020 budget, Prime Minister Modi recently said that the government's focus is to strengthen the industries and agriculture sector to achieve the vision of a \$5 trillion economy and mentioned our priority areas including water resources, renewable energy, electric mobility. There is thus a broad area of convergence where Hungarian companies can work to establish mutually beneficial cooperation with their Indian partners." The two largest Hungarian businesses with a presence in the Asian country are the pharmaceutical company Gedeon Richter and the oil and gas company Mol.

Eastern Opening

The Hungarian government's Eastern Opening initiative, which focuses on closer trade and economic relations with countries in the East, has had a positive impact on boosting trade and



investment relations with India, Ambassador Tuhin notes. The flow of investments into Hungary from India has been consistently growing in recent years and currently totals close to USD 2 billion, while Indian companies, such as Tata Consultancy Services and Apollo Tyres, employ approximately 10,000 people in Hungary. Trade between the two countries is also on the rise and the overall volume has now moved close to USD 700 million. The continuing trend of foreign investment in Hungary implies that the policies put in place by the government of Hungary are working well. "Issues I see are of the rising wages and a labor shortage that is also the result of the very low unemployment rate. As long as the government continues to address these issues there will be scope for Indian companies to keep coming," according to the Ambassador, who adds that an Indian company in the IT sector is looking at expanding its presence in the country while another firm from the automotive sector is considering a brownfield investment in Hungary. "I would be a very happy man if I could see two or three very strong partnerships between Hungarian and Indian companies by the time I leave Hungary."

Other Examples


The Ambassador stresses that while Hungary's Eastern Opening was a very timely initiative, "much more can be done with respect to economic relations with India, the current volume gives us no reason to feel relaxed and content." Kumar Tuhin mentions the example of Poland where the volume of bilateral trade and the investment of Polish companies in India was also much lower a few years ago. "But under the 'Go India' initiative of the Polish government a significant rise in both trade volume and Polish investments in India has taken place within a few years," the Ambassador notes. The central and eastern European region is of outstanding importance for India as these countries are important gateways to the European Union, the Ambassador says, adding that there is some competition among these countries for foreign investments.

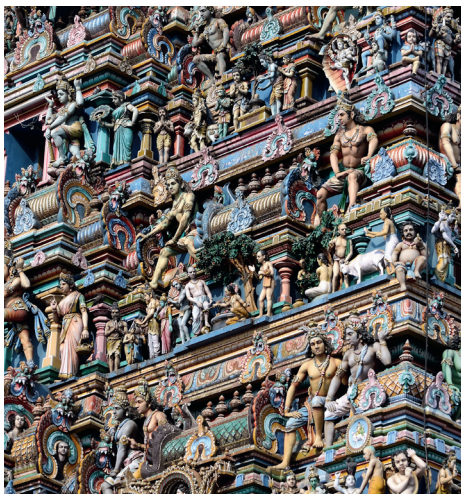
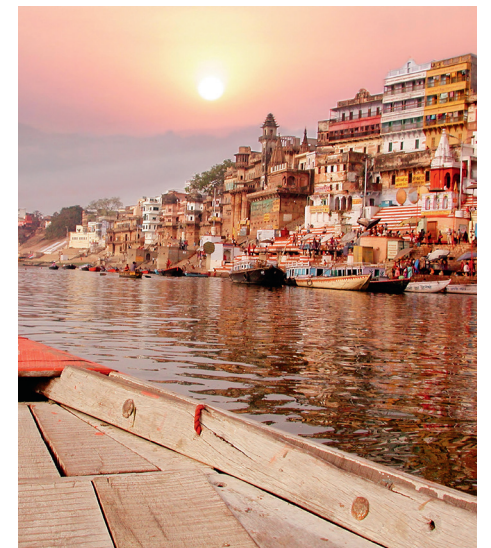
Increasing Hungary's visibility

India and Hungary, which this year mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, have always enjoyed close and friendly relations, the Ambassador says. "Bilateral ties have been free of any contentious issues and this has further helped the steady growth in our interaction in diverse areas, especially economic, cultural, and people to people contacts." The Embassy is organizing several events to celebrate the anniversary, which will also add more visibility to bilateral cooperation, Ambassador Tuhin notes, adding that events to celebrate the International Day of Yoga are being held in several Hungarian cities. In addition to Yoga, the events provide an opportunity for the Hungarian public to encounter the music, dance, food and other elements of Indian culture. Other events in the pipeline include an Indian fashion and textiles show and an Indian film festival. With respect to co-operation in the field of education, the number of Indian students coming to Hungary is increasing consistently. Hungary provides 200 scholarships to India per year and the Asian country is very close to fully utilizing this limit. "We need to do more to increase the visibility of Hungary in India, there is scope for more action. In terms of tourism, close to 16,000 Indians

visited Hungary last year. And this is only the number of people who came directly to Hungary, but there are probably many more who came to Hungary after visiting other European countries. The number of visas issued by the Indian Embassy to Hungarians traveling to India is also going up. I would like to see this number reach a certain threshold, which then would be motivation for direct flight connectivity between India and Hungary," Ambassador Tuhin notes.

Gandhi's legacy

This year the world celebrates the 150th birthday of the iconic Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi, who influenced and inspired individuals and world leaders in the fight against inequality and oppression. Ambassador Tuhin believes that the strength of Gandhi's character is best illustrated by the fact that he believed in certain ideals and was able to make people believe in these same ideals without resorting to violence. "In the early decades of the last century India was under the yoke of colonialism, famines decimated the population, so a lot of people had hard feelings against their colonial masters and oppressors. Resorting to violence would have been easy and sometimes even justified, but even under those conditions somebody with a strong character decided not to go down that road. We need many more Gandhis in today's world to restore hope for humanity," the Ambassador concludes. 



FACTS COMPARED	HUNGARY	INDIA
AREA	93,028 sq km	3,287,263 sq km
country comparison to the world	111	8
POPULATION	9,825,704 (July 2018 est.)	1,296,834,042 (July 2018 est.)
country comparison to the world	92	2
POPULATION GROWTH RATE	-0.26% (2018 est.)	1.14% (2018 est.)
country comparison to the world	214	94
BIRTH RATE	8.9 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)	18.7 births/1,000 population (2018 est.)
country comparison to the world	206	88
LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH	76.3 years (2018 est.)	69.1 years
country comparison to the world	88	163
NET MIGRATION RATE	1.3 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2017 est.)	0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2018 est.)
country comparison to the world	54	86
GDP - PER CAPITA (PPP)	USD 29,600 (2017 est.)	USD 7,200 (2017 est.)
country comparison to the world	68	156
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	4.2% (2017 est.)	8.5% (2017 est.)
country comparison to the world	54	122
TELEPHONES - MOBILE/CELLULAR	12,030,940 (2017 est.)	1,168,902,277 (2017 est.)
country comparison to the world	75	2
AIRPORTS	41 (2013)	346 (2013)
country comparison to the world	103	21