

**MESSAGE FROM INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO CROATIA,
H.E. MR. SANDEEP KUMAR
68th REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA (26 JANUARY 2017)**

Today, as India and Croatia mark 25 years of establishment of diplomatic relations, there is much for our two nations to celebrate and reflect upon. Celebration of our modest but promising business, academic and research partnership. And reflection upon the unfinished agenda, the opportunities and challenges ahead which we need to seize with creativity and ‘out of the box’ solutions. There may be limitations of the size of our two economies, geography and culture, but more importantly, there are complementarities of public-private partnerships in sectors of innovation and start-ups, pharmaceuticals, renewal energy, shipbuilding and infrastructure. Additionally, there is converging interest of tourism, Yoga and Ayurveda, that connects our two people. During the last year itself, ACG-Lucaps announced expansion plans for Euro 35 million euros in Ludbreg; the IT global giant Infosys opened an engineering research office in Karlovac; renowned Croatian companies like HS Products, Sheston Busch, Energospektar, Podravka, Infobip and Belepo scouted the 1.2 billion Indian market for partnerships in joint production, know-how and technology transfer.

At the personal level, it has been a rather fulfilling year. My biggest resource base in understanding this beautiful country has been the extraordinary people of Croatia. I learnt from each one of you. I saw. I grew. I admired. You taught me to say “Dobar covjek” or “Kakva zena” to almost everyone that I met. You taught me to grapple with the intricacies of the hair-splitting Croatian grammar. You taught me to appreciate the texture and aroma of my favorite “Dingac” wine. And funnily enough, you taught me something else - to eat chillies. You would come to my residence and demand sternly that the spice quotient be upped in the food being served, for which I had developed some very non-Indian allergy since childhood. But, that has changed now!

On the occasion of the 68th Republic Day of India, I offer salutations to the Indian community in Croatia, to the people of Croatia, and to all the stakeholders in our various programmes. This is also the time to re-emphasize our connectivity with all the provinces of Croatia as part of our outreach programme.

At the same time, as we raise a toast to 25 years of bilateral relationship, I say with full commitment, sincerity and humility that I will be doing my best to advance our relationship to its highest potential. However, have one ardent plea for Croatia: Please celebrate more your remarkable achievements that you have attained in the short period since your independence, which tend to get overlooked in the passionate rhetoric of the past. Establishment of sustainable political institutions, resurgence of the economy, maintenance of law and order in the wake of unprecedented terrorism crisis in rest of Europe, record numbers of tourist arrivals, your start-ups success stories, and 10 medals in the last Olympics are no mean feats. In all your ventures, India is very willing to partner with you as an equal and trusted ally.

“Indija I Hravatska Naprijed Zajedno!”