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Cooperation in the establishment of good governance

Our mutual objective is to promote prudent use of taxpayer money

The relationship between India and Hungary can look back on a rich tradition and long history, for the first steps of cooperation reach back to the 15th and 16th centuries. In this path that spans centuries, cooperation in the areas of science, culture and economy has developed and gained importance gradually. Great travellers pioneered in establishing relations, reciprocally raising public interest by their reports. As a result of their information dissemination quest, a number of Indian philosophers, religious leaders, and poets had made direct impressions in the Hungarian intellectual sphere, but the works of Hungarian explorers and scientists in India were also received with similar recognition.

In addition to a mutual interest and attraction in culture, further expansion of relations is subject to economic realities. In this light it is no exaggeration to say that even though they are worlds apart geographically, India and Hungary are really close in many aspects. No other example shall be brought up to describe the similarity in the mindset of both nations than the fact that our national flags differ in a single colour.

Herein we are trying to describe briefly a small slice in our mutually lucrative relation

with the aim of shedding light on the multifaceted nature of our relationship and express our gratitude towards all supporters of the cooperation between our nations.

The Indian government established the bilateral aid program Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) in 1964, which, subsequently supplemented with the SCAAP program (Special Commonwealth Assistance for Africa Programme), invites the representatives of 156 countries to share the experiences and development results with. The primary goal of the assistance program is to maintain the partnership and cooperation carried out for the purpose of mutual benefits.

India spends USD 11 million annually to finance the activities in the ITEC program, and has provided technical assistance for developing countries worth over USD 2 billion by supporting various projects in addition to sharing know-how within this program. Year after year, 40 per cent of the budget of the ITEC program is spent on financing international training programs. Consequently, 3,000 to 4,000 students from abroad participate each year in roughly 200 training programs held in 40 to 50 educational institutions in India. Hence, the ITEC training program is

considered one of the most successful international cooperation programs.

Hungary was first involved in the ITEC program in 1992. The Indian government grants participation for two individuals each year by assuming payment for all arising expenses (travel, accommodation, training etc.). The program is managed by India's Foreign Office on behalf of the Indian government. The former arranges travel preparation and travellers' comfort by assuming the burdens of administrative tasks.

As the international training centre of India's state audit office (International Centre for Information System & Audit; iCISA) has participated among the institutions advertising various international training courses within the ITEC program for years, it is just natural for Hungary's Állami Számvevőszék (State Audit Office) to try and utilise the opportunities offered by the program in line with its strategy. Year after year, the iCISA international training program comprises an increasing number of four-week courses that aim to disseminate audit know-how, providing excellent opportunities to share international audit practices in addition to expand the know-how in methodology.

Since April 2002, iCISA has operated in a training centre in Noida, near New-Delhi. The centre is designed and equipped to provide all the conditions of intensive training at high standard and cater for the comfort of students participating in the program. The state audit office of India launched its comprehensive international training program in 1979 and has made a unique achievement in this scope as 2,657 individuals from 118 countries have participated in the program to date. No wonder the cabinet decided to build a training facility of international standards. Since the ITEC program was made available to Hungary, a total of 13 auditors have participated in various high-quality training courses organised by iCISA.

International experience gained by auditors and international cooperation between audit institutions contribute to increase the efficiency of national-level audit work by sharing the results of joint scrutiny as well as by mutual dissemination of methodologies and experiences. Recognising this fact, India and Hungary both play an active role in international cooperation in the scope of audit, as well. As a recognition of a job well done, the chairmen of both audit offices are members in the Governing Board of INTOSAI (International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions).

It is a joint goal for both the Indian and Hungarian audit offices to contribute to elevate the standards of audit work and further the practical implementation of good governance by providing audit work. Both institutions hope the scrutiny they carry out help public funds be spent prudently. International know-how and experience, like those obtained by Hungarian auditors in their training in India, provide eminent support to these goals and hopes come true.

Apart from expanding the professional horizon of participants, the training courses provide an excellent chance to get to know the culture, history and cuisine of India, which are collectively referred to as 'incredible India'. Relationships formed during the courses help participants understand each other better and increase their tolerance toward other peoples. Several of the Hungarian students sent letters of praise upon their return, via the Indian embassy in Hungary and iCISA, thanking for the excellent training and accommodation and unparalleled hospitality they experienced during the course.

Auditors returning from the training have obtained an experience that lasts throughout their lives. Their mission is to utilise the know-how they acquired in the work and to disseminate them in as a wide a scope as possible. And they do achieve this goal, for they transfer the

know-how and knowledge they acquired and share the experience they obtained in the training course in India. This is done via education programs apart from their road reports, sharing the experience with their co-workers and other parties interested in the subject matter.

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