

India - Panama Relations

India-Panama relations are the oldest in the Central American region, dating back to the middle of the 19th Century when groups of Indians came to Panama to work on the construction of Panama Railways and later the Panama Canal in the early 20th Century. Panama also has a Resident Mission in New Delhi. India enjoys warm and cordial political relations with Panama. The diplomatic relations between India and Panama were established in 1962 and Panama was the first country in Central America to establish diplomatic relations with India.

Bilateral Visits:

From India

- 1. Shri Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce and Industry visited Panama from Oct. 31 – Nov. 2, 2017:** Shri Suresh Prabhu led a FIEO business delegation to Panama and held a meeting with the President of Panama, Mr. Juan Carlos Varela, who indicated his interest in visiting India in early 2017. CIM also held meetings with Mr. Augusto Arosemena, Minister of Commerce & Industries and Mr. Ramon Arosemena, Minister of Public Works. CIM held joint meeting with President of Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture (CCIAP), President of National Council of Private Chamber (CONEP), and the representatives of the sectors of the economy. The discussions focussed on enhancing the level commercial relations between the two countries and the need to step up the exchange of high-level bilateral visits. From the Indian point of view, CIM called Panama as a link to Latin America and Central America. The FIEO delegation represented pharmaceuticals, minerals, chemicals, textiles, agriculture, food products and packaging sector of the economy, and held B2B meetings with their Panamanian counterparts to identify business opportunities. An MoU was signed between the FIEO and the CCIAP. CIM also met with the Indian Diaspora.
- 2. Joint Secretary(LAC), Shri Ashok Das, visited Panama on 30 Nov. - 1 Dec, 2016, and held meetings with Vice Minister of External Relations, Mr. Luis Miguel Hincapie, Director General of Foreign Policy, Ms. Nicole Wong, and also with National Director for Investments, Ms. Essie Mastellari, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Deputy Administrator, Panama Canal Authority, Mr. Manuel Benitez. Discussions covered several bilateral, regional and global issues.**
- 3. A delegation led by Dr. D. Purandeswari, the then Minister of State (Commerce & Industry) visited Panama on April 15-18, 2013 and inaugurated the “Made-in-India” Exhibition on April 17, 2013 at Panama’s biggest international trade show “ExpoComer”. Over 120 Indian companies participated in the India Show. MOS met President of the Republic, Foreign Minister and other senior functionaries of the Government.**
- 4. Earlier, Shri Milind Deora, the then Minister of State (Shipping, Comm, & IT), Shri Vayalar Ravi, the then Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, and Shri**

Sachin Pilot, the then Minister of State (Comm & IT), had visited Panama in January 2013, July 2012 and April 2012, respectively.

From Panama

- 1 First Lady of Panama, Mrs. Lorena Castillo de Varela, visited India to participate in the Laureates and Leaders for Children Summit 2016, at the invitation of Kailash Satyarthi Children Foundation. The Summit was held from December 10-11, 2016. Mrs Varela is the UNAIDS Special Ambassador for AIDS in Latin America.
- 2 Ms. Maria Luisa Navarro, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and Multilateral Cooperation, led the Panamanian delegation to participate in the Women's Economic Forum, 2016, held in New Delhi. During the visit, Ms. Navarro met MOS(VKS) and held discussions on various aspects of our bilateral relations. The visit, although meant mainly for participation in the World Women's Forum, lent an impetus to the enhancement of bilateral engagement.
- 3 Mr. Jorge Barakat Pitty, Minister for Maritime Affairs, of Panama Maritime Authority visited India from March 14-19, 2015. He held meetings with Secretary (Shipping) and MoS for Shipping.
- 4 Mr. Ricardo Quijano, then Minister of Commerce & Industry (Cabinet rank) of Government of Panama led a high level delegation of 14 members to CII's 5th India-LAC Conclave held in New Delhi on December 9-10, 2013.

Bilateral Agreements

1. MoU on Foreign Office Consultations 2001
2. MoU on Cultural and Educational Co-operation 2001
3. Mutual Cooperation between the Foreign Service Institute of MEA and the Diplomatic Academy (of the Ministry of External Relations) of Panama, 2001
4. Mutual Cooperation between Ministry of Agriculture of India and the Ministry of Agricultural Development of Panama in the Field of Agricultural Research and Education, 2001

Trade and Economic Relations

India-Panama trade in US Dollar million (including with Colon Free Trade Zone of Panama :

	2013-14 (Apr-Mar)	2014-15 (Apr-Mar)	2015-16 (Apr-Mar)	2016-17 (Apr-Mar)
Exports to Panama	211.76	302.47	201.16	222.03
Imports from Panama	63.05	30.46	72.49	202.28

Total	274.81	377.18	273.65	424.31
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Source : Department of Commerce (India)

India's exports to Panama registered a hike of 10.37 % and India's imports from Panama surged markedly in 2016-17. The main items of India's exports to Panama consist of : automobiles and accessories; textiles; pharmaceuticals; articles of iron and steel; plastic products; tobacco products; rubber products; furniture items; electrical and electronic equipments, etc. The main items imported from Panama include ships, boats and floating structures; teak and other wood; mineral fuels; oils and waxes; metal scrap and raw cashew.

The economic resurgence of Panama during the last decade has opened up business and investment opportunities for foreign entrepreneurs, including those from India. Sectors, such as port development, port-related services, infrastructure-building and modernization, mega-engineering projects, energy projects, and IT & ITES, in which Indian companies have earned international reputation, have enormous potential in Panama. The Panama Diamond Exchange, the first such bourse for diamond trading was marked by the presence of some leading Indian diamond companies at the time of its establishment in 2015. It has, however, scaled down its activities substantially.

Expocomer, one of the largest expositions in Central America, organized by the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture (CCIAP) in March annually, has witnessed India's substantial participation in the last few years. In April 2013, over 120 Indian companies took part in the first-ever "Made-in-India" Show at Expocomer. The India Show was inaugurated by the visiting MoS for Commerce & Industry, Dr. D. Purandeswari. While 66 Indian companies participated in Expocomer 2014 and 120 in Expocomer 2015, 50 companies participated in Expocomer 2017. Panama's stringent visa rules for participation in the Expocomer 2017 and a careful scrutiny of the participants' business profile led to a reduction in the number of Indian companies, who took part in the international fair, but it was a highly result-oriented and targeted participation. The Synthetic & Rayon Textiles Export Promotion Council of India (SRTEPC) led a delegation of textile companies for participation while the Plastics Export Promotion Council of India (PLEXCONCIL) organized the participation of about 13 companies. The participation by Indian companies at the fair showcased India's textile and plastic sectors.

The visit of a large Pharmexcil delegation from August 28-30, 2016 was highly productive, during which a BSM organized by the Indian Embassy in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture of Panama (CCIAP) was held, which lent a marked boost to bilateral engagement in the pharmaceutical sector. The Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Trade Director of of PROINVEX, National Director of Pharmacy and Drugs as well as leading pharma companies of not only Panama, but also Costa Rica and Nicaragua, also participated. In addition to clinching business deals, the Indian companies fully utilized their pre-arranged meetings with the General Manager of Colon Free Trade Zone and the CEO of the largest Panamanian private pharmaceutical logistics company in Central America.

The Embassy organized a 'Make-in-India' event at the Presidential Hall of the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce on October 8, 2014, which was attended

by an impressive gathering of Panamanian industrialists, businessmen including Indians, and local dignitaries.

Culture

Sri Sri Ravi Shankar (SSRS)'s visit to Panama: The founder of the Art of Living Foundation, SSRS, visited Panama last year, after a gap of 12 years. He was received by Rafael Pino Pinto, Governor of Panama Province, who presented him a parchment as “distinguished guest of the Province of Panama” for his quality as humanitarian leader and peace ambassador. SSRS, accompanied by Ambassador, held a meeting with the Vice President and Foreign Minister of Panama, Ms. Isabel Saint Malo. During his meeting, he emphasized the importance of re-establishing inner peace to build peaceful societies. SSRS also visited Costa Rica and Nicaragua. In Costa Rica, he held a detailed meeting with President of Costa Rica, Mr. Luis Guillermo Solis.

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shri Kailash Satyarthi's visit to Panama: Shri Kailash Satyarthi visited Panama in Feb., 2017, at the invitation of the First Lady of Panama, who had visited India in December 2016 for participation in the "Laureates and Leaders for Children: Summit 2016". President Varela and the First Lady hosted a dinner in his honour. Shri Satyarthi also interacted with the Vice President and Foreign Minister, the Minister of Labour and Labour Development, and several NGOs during his visit.

The International Day of Yoga celebrations: The Embassy organized the celebration of the First, Second and Third International Days of Yoga, at the prestigious venue of Parque Omar, in 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively, in cooperation with local Yoga institutes and Yoga practitioners. The event was supported by the Offices of the First Lady, the Mayor of Panama, and the National Cultural Institute of Panama (INAC). Commending India's gift of Yoga to the world, Dr. Irvin A. Halman, Administrator General of the National Authority for Government Innovation, and Dr. Jorge Motta, National Secretary for Science & Technology (SENACYT) – the highest ranking presidential advisors for strategic policy on S&T and Education – thanked the Embassy for uniting India with Panama through Yoga. Dr. Motta expressed his keen interest in initiating Yoga classes for scientists at the SENACYT. Representatives from the Office of the Mayor, Panamanian Ministry of External Relations, and prominent members of the Indian community attended the events. The celebrations garnered prominent media coverage and TV interviews with the Ambassador.

An ICCR sponsored Rajasthani Dance Troupe of 8 members, led by Bundu Khan Langa, presented a highly appreciated programme of Rajasthani Folk Dances and Songs on July 23rd and 24th, 2015 at the Teatro Anita Villalaz, in Casco Viejo, Panama City. An interactive workshop for the troupe was also held on 24th July, at the premises of the National Cultural Institute of Panama (INAC). ICCR sponsored cultural troupes have visited Panama on a regular basis in the past.

The Embassy brought out a Special Supplement “India – Land of Dreams & Fantasy” during the past three years, to mark the Independence Day on 15th August, highlighting India's economic achievements and its vibrant culture.

India Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)

Under India-SICA cooperation, an India-Panama IT Education Centre of Excellence, sponsored by the Government of India was established in the City of

Knowledge in August 2006, by Tata Consultancy Service. The Centre was run by TCS personnel for two years and handed over to the National Institute for Professional Formation and Training of Human Development (INADEH), Panama in 2008. In January 2013, INADEH had submitted a proposal for the up-gradation of the Centre which was approved by Ministry of External Affairs of India in March, 2015. The upgradation was carried out by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), and M/s APTECH limited. The upgraded Centre was inaugurated in October, 2015 by Ambassador and Professor M. Tunon, Director General, INADEH. Four Indian APTECH Experts trained 25 Panamanian trainers under a three month programme, which culminated on 17th February, 2016.

Dr. Carlos Ríos Martínez, a Panamanian scientist at INDICASAT (AIP) was awarded the NAM S&T Centre Research Training Fellowship for Developing Country Scientists (RTF-DCS) for 2015-16. He worked at the the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Hyderabad from March – September, 2016.

The Government of India has offered 10 ITEC training slots to Panama in 2017-18.

Indian Community

There are around 15,000 PIOs and NRIs (mostly Gujaratis and Sindhis) in Panama, which is the largest Indian Diaspora in South America, south of Texas, USA, excluding the Indian Diaspora in Caribbean countries. The Indian community is mostly engaged in wholesale / retail trade and micro-credit business. The community is financially well-settled and has contributed to the Panamanian society. There are several places of Indian worship in Panama – a Hindu Temple, a Gurudwara, and two Mosques in Panama City, and another Hindu Temple in Colon.

Useful Resources:

A) Website of Embassy of India , Panama
<http://www.indianembassyinpanama.com/>

B) Twitter Accounts:
[@IndiainPanama](#)

C) Facebook Account:
Embassy of India in Panama :
<https://www.facebook.com/embassyofindiainpanama>

D) You Tube Account :
Embassy of India Panama,
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdnZ2n6EpfrFx12-GgRWRhA>

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