

BRIEF ON INDIA-ARGENTINA BILATERAL RELATIONS

Political Relations

India-Argentina relations were elevated to the level of Strategic Partnership during the State Visit to India of President of Argentina in February 2019. Multi-faceted relations between the two countries have strengthened over the years and encompass political, economic, cultural and scientific & technological cooperation. India opened a Trade Commission in Buenos Aires in 1943, which was later converted into one of the first Embassies of India in South America in 1949. Argentina had established a Consulate in Calcutta in the 1920s, which was transferred to Delhi as an Embassy in 1950. Argentina opened a Consulate General in Mumbai in April 2009.

Bilateral Exchanges

2. There have been exchanges at the highest level between the two countries. The last State Visit from Argentina to India was by President Mr. Mauricio Macri in February 2019. Earlier, President Ms. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner paid a State Visit in 2009. From India, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Buenos Aires to attend G20 Summit in November 2018. Earlier, President Giani Zail Singh paid a State Visit to Argentina in 1984.

3. External Affairs Minister (EAM), Dr. S. Jaishankar, held a telephonic conversation with Argentine Foreign Minister Mr. Felipe Solá on 5 May 2020, and discussed issues on the bilateral agenda, as well as cooperation during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Minister of State for External Affairs Shri V Muraleedharan paid a bilateral visit and held meetings with the Argentine Foreign Minister and Vice Foreign Minister in Buenos Aires on 29 August 2019.

4. Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar held a video conference (VC) with Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Argentina on 20 November 2020. Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Thawar Chand Gehlot visited Argentina to participate in the Second Global Disability Summit at Buenos Aires and attended bilateral meetings from 6-8 June 2019. A delegation led by Dr. V. K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog, attended engagements from 15-19 October 2019 in Buenos Aires and the Provinces of Salta and Jujuy for exploration of partnerships in the mining sector.

5. From the Argentine side, the Vice President of Argentina Ms. Gabriela Michetti visited India and met with the Vice President of India and Secretary, Social Justice and Empowerment on 12 March 2019. State Secretary of Agroindustry of Argentina visited India for bilateral meetings in July 2019.

6. Various mechanisms of institutional bilateral dialogue have been reinvigorated in the recent past. The fifth round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) was held via VC on 10 September 2020. The third meeting of the India-Argentina Joint Trade Committee (JTC) took place after a gap of 29 years on 20 October 2020 via VC. The second meeting of the ISRO-CONAE (Argentine Space Agency) Joint Committee formed under the Agreement on cooperation on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space between India and Argentina signed in 2009, was convened on 2 December 2020 through VC. The first meeting of the Joint Working

Group on Agricultural Cooperation between India and Argentina was held on 1 July 2020 via VC. The 5th India-Argentina JCM meeting was held in New Delhi on 14 January 2019.

Economic and Commercial Relations

Bilateral Trade

7. In 2019-20, the bilateral trade between India and Argentina reached its historical peak of USD 3.09 billion, marking an increase of 22.74% over the trade in 2018-19. The previous highest bilateral trade value recorded was of USD 3.01 billion in 2016-17. In 2019-20, Indian exports to Argentina were USD 763.23 million and Indian imports from Argentina were USD 2.33 billion. In value terms, while Argentine exports to India increased by around 19% in comparison with 2018-19, Indian exports to Argentina increased by nearly 36%.

8. Despite the lockdowns in place in different parts of the world, and consequent disruptions in global supply chains due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during the first eleven months on 2020, trade between India and Argentina increased 13.26 % compared to the same period of the previous year.

9. Major items of India's exports to Argentina include petroleum oils, agro chemicals, yarn-fabric-madeups, organic chemicals, bulk drugs and two-wheelers. Major items of India's imports from Argentina include vegetable oils (soya bean and sunflower), non-monetary unwrought gold, finished leather, cereals, residual chemicals and allied products and pulses.

Investments and Joint Ventures

10. Several Indian companies have established operations in Argentina with a total investment of over USD 1 billion. These include *TCS, Mahindra Comviva, Infosys, AEGIS-Essar, Crisil, UPL, Bajaj Motorcycles, CEAT, TVS, Royal Enfield, Hero, Glenmark, Godrej and Sri Sri Tattva*. Argentina's investment in India stands at approximately USD 120 million. Argentine companies with presence in India include *Globant* and *OLX* in IT services and *TECHINT* in the manufacturing sector.

11. A new assembly line of Royal Enfield was inaugurated by President Alberto Fernandez on 9 September 2020 at the production facility of SIMPA Group in Buenos Aires Province. This marks the first time in the 119 years' history of Royal Enfield that their bikes would be manufactured outside their own plants.

India-Argentina Business Council

12. A bilateral business chamber, 'India-Argentina Business Council (IABC)' was formally launched on 14 October 2020 by Ambassador Dinesh Bhatia and Argentine Minister of Productive Development Dr. Matías Kulfas. The Council, conceptualized as a non-profit organization comprising leading investors, exporters and importers between the two countries, is currently composed of over 30 companies and is envisaged to grow its membership in due course.

Trade and Investment Promotion Events

13. There have been regular exchange of visits and engagements between the two countries including participation of Government officials and businessmen in events

organized by Governments; focused events by trade and export promotion agencies; delegation level visits in specific sectors; sector specific exhibitions, buyer-seller meets and B2B meetings.

14. Through effective use of technology to overcome geographical distances and travel restrictions imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian Embassy organized, coordinated and participated in several videoconferences aimed at boosting bilateral trade with Argentina in 2020. These included, Confederation of Indian Industries' "India and the World" seminar; BSM among members of Electronics & Software Council of India and CESSI (Argentine Chamber of Software Exports); PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry's seminar titled "India-Argentina Business Promotion, Challenges and Opportunities – Post COVID 19"; webinar organized by FIEO on India-Argentine commercial relations; FICCI's LAC Regional Council session on "The Future of India Argentina Business Relations"; EPCH's virtual apparels and handicraft fair; and webinar organised by UPL Argentina focused on agricultural cooperation between India and Argentina.

Cultural Relations and People-to-People Contact

15. The admiration for and impact of Indian culture, yoga, meditation, philosophy, spiritualism, dance and music in Argentina perhaps transcends that in any other country. Indian organisations such as *Brahmakumari*, *Art of Living*, *Rama Krishna Mission*, *Sivananda Yoga* and *ISKCON* have extraordinary following.

16. Foreign Minister Mr. Felipe Solá participated in the conclusion of the Gandhi@150 celebrations in Buenos Aires on 02 October 2020. Further, President Alberto Fernández addressed a letter to Prime Minister of India on the occasion. The Embassy also celebrated a "Gandhi Week" via social media, which included a virtual discourse "Gandhi Katha: A Story of Mahatma Gandhi", by Dr. Shobhana Radhakrishna. Earlier, on 2 October 2019, the then Vice President of Argentina, Ms Gabriela Michetti, was the Chief Guest at the Gandhi@150 celebrations in Buenos Aires.

17. The Indian Embassy has been organizing cultural programmes, including 'India Weeks' and 'India Days' in prominent cities and provinces of Argentina. India tourism promotion activities are periodically held in the capital city and provinces of Argentina in collaboration with India Tourism Office.

18. All six editions of the International Day of Yoga to date have seen large-scale enthusiastic participation in Buenos Aires, as well as almost all provinces of the country, and have been attended by local dignitaries. In 2020, The International Day of Yoga was organized virtually through Mission's specially created website www.diadelyoga.com.ar under the slogan "Yoga at home". Several top Argentine celebrities shared their experience and the benefits of yoga in times of quarantine in the telecast. The website received almost 40,000 visitors. Earlier, on 29 November 2018, an event titled 'Yoga for Peace' organized by *Art of Living*, Argentina that was attended by the Prime Minister of India saw participation by over 6000 people, with 600 people performing Yoga collectively.

19. The Indian Embassy curated an online event titled 'India and Argentina in the New World Order: Dialogue among Indian and Argentine Think Tanks', co-organized with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and Center for Implementation of Public Policies for Equity and Growth (Spanish acronym: CIPPEC), held on 6 November 2020. EAM, Dr S Jaishankar and Argentine Foreign Minister, Mr Felipe Solá, delivered remarks in the Closing Session of the Dialogue. Spread across five sessions, the

Dialogue witnessed participation by several distinguished members of the think tank community from India and Argentina. The live stream of the event on various platforms simultaneously in English and Spanish languages garnered over 1000 viewers from all over the world. Repeat telecast of the event is available at www.ianwottd.com

20. As part of Ayurveda Day 2020 celebrations, a series of online events were organized by the Embassy in collaboration with various local institutions, such as “Ayurveda Day” with Fundación Ayurveda Prema on 13 November, “First Congress of Ayurvedic Medicine” with the Uruguayan Association of Ayurvedic Medicine on 13 November, “Ayurveda Day” with Sri Sri Tattva on 14 November and “Ayurveda, COVID-19 Pandemic and Public Health: AYUSH Ministry experiences in India and the Americas,” jointly with Ayurveda Prema Foundation and TCIM Americas Network on 14 November.

21. An ICCR provided bust of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was installed in *Parque Rosedal* (Rose Park), Buenos Aires on 7 May 2019. Gurudev Tagore had visited Argentina in 1924 and stayed for two months as the guest of Ms Victoria Ocampo, a well-known literary personality, writer and feminist. A joint production feature film, *Pensando en el* (Thinking of Him) on his visit was the closing film at the International Film Festival of India, Goa in November 2017.

22. Ms. Victoria Ocampo was given an honorary doctorate by the Viswa Bharati University and this was handed over by Prime Minister Smt Indira Gandhi during her visit to Argentina in 1968. Ms Maria Rene Cura, an Argentine writer and close associate of Ms Victoria Ocampo was a renowned Indologist and was awarded the Padma Shri for her Indology work in 1984. Mr Raul Prebisch, the renowned Argentine economist was conferred Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1974.

23. In 2015, at the first World Indologists Conference held in Delhi, 100 year old Indologist Dr. Fernando Tola represented Argentina and was selected for the Presidential Award of Certificate of Honour for the year 2016 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the cause of Sanskrit.

Technical and Development Co-operation

24. India extends Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scholarships to working professionals from Argentina every year. For the 2020-21 period, 40 slots have been offered to Argentina. The Professional Courses for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) conducted by Foreign Service Institute, MEA have witnessed participation of 11 Argentine diplomats so far. In 2020, 17 e-ITEC slots were also utilized by Argentina. A MoU has been signed on setting up of an India-Argentina Center of Excellence in IT in Buenos Aires, and work is underway for its establishment.

Indian Community

25. There are around 2500 Indians and Persons of Indian Origin living in Argentina. Majority of these live in the capital city of Buenos Aires, including professionals working with Indian companies and multinational corporations such as *TCS, Cognizant Technologies, IBM, J.P. Morgan*, etc. A large number of earlier migrants who have been in Argentina for 3-4 generations are in provinces of Salta and Jujuy.

26. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in the absence of Vande Bharat flights from Argentina / LAC to India, the Indian Embassy in Buenos Aires coordinated with different

entities to carry out repatriation exercises employing available commercial flight options. Four such operations were undertaken beginning in May till August to repatriate stranded Indians.

27. Several Indian Diaspora members in Argentina virtually participated in the main Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention on 9 January 2021, as well as pre PBD Conventions in December 2020 and January 2021. Live stream of valedictory session of the main PBD Convention, followed by an interactive session, was also organized at the Embassy with a limited number of participants, taking into account local COVID-19 protocols.

Useful links

Embassy's website: www.indembarg.gov.in

Facebook: www.facebook.com/IndiaInArgentina

Twitter: www.twitter.com/Indembarg

Instagram: www.instagram/indembarg

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