

India-Guatemala Bilateral Brief

Political:

India and Guatemala enjoy cordial and friendly relations. The diplomatic relations were established on 16 May 1972. Last year marked the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Guatemala. Although, the Mission to Guatemala City was opened to 2010, during the recent years the political relations between Guatemala and India are in the path of upward higher trajectory. The visits of Hon'ble Vice President in May 2018; MOS for External Affairs, Shri V. Muraleedharan in July 2021; and MOS for External Affairs and Culture, Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi in January 2023 to Guatemala gave boost in our bilateral relations. These high-level exchanges from India to Guatemala have positively contributed to bilateral ties and cooperation, which has strengthened ties across a range of political, economic, commercial and cultural areas. Guatemala opened its Embassy in New Delhi in April 2013.

To Mark the 50th Anniversary in 2022, the Mission organized more than fifty major cultural and commercial programmes across the length and breadth of Guatemala. The celebrations culminated on 18 November 2022, with the commemorative event, jointly organized by the Mission and Guatemalan Foreign Ministry, at the premises of the Foreign Office in the presence of Foreign Minister Mr. Mario Bucaro and Vice Foreign Ministers.

The 2nd Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Guatemala were held virtually on 05 May 2021. During the FOC, both sides reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations, which included cooperation in political, economic, and cultural fields. The two sides also explored the possibilities of collaboration in the areas of science and technology, space, energy, education, health and traditional medicine, agriculture, security and defence, and tourism.

During the visit of MOS Shri V. Muraleedharan in July 2021 to Guatemala, the Hon'ble Minister called on the President of Guatemala, H.E. Dr Alejandro Giammattei, and met with then Foreign Minister Amb. Pedro Brolo Vila, and discussed various bilateral, regional and international issues. MOS participated in a business event along with the Minister of Economy of Guatemala, Mr. Tony Malouf, and Vice Foreign Minister Amb. Shirley Aguilar addressed business leaders and Heads of Chambers of Commerce & Industry of Guatemala.

MOS for External Affairs and Culture, Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi visited Guatemala from 15-17 January 2023. During the visit, MOS met the Acting President of Guatemala, H.E. Mr. Guillermo Castillo Reyes; Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Mario Bucaro; Minister of Culture, H.E. Mr. Felipe Aguilar; Minister of Health, H.E. Dr. Francisco José Coma Martín; and Minister of Energy & Mines, H.E. Mr. Alberto Pimentel Mata. On 15 January, during the meeting with Hon'ble Foreign Minister, MOS handed over a symbolic key to the Foreign Minister as the donation of ten pickup trucks by the Government of India to the Government of Guatemala. Both Ministers inaugurated the bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the premises of the Foreign Ministry. On 15 January 2023, MOS inaugurated the warehouse of Indian companies in Technopark, Escuintla which would help in reducing the delivery times resulting in increase in Indian exports to Central America, in the presence of Vice Minister of Economy. On 16 January, MOS participated in a business dinner hosted by the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF) in the presence of top Guatemalan business leaders.

Guatemala has been consistently supporting India at the multilateral stage over the years.

Bilateral agreements:

- Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation, signed in 1981.
- Cooperation Agreement for Cardamom Export, signed in 1983.
- Memorandum of Understanding on Consultation between the Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India and the Ministry of External Relations of the Republic of Guatemala in May 2005.
- Agreement for visa exemption for diplomatic and official passport holders signed in May 2015.
- MoU between the Foreign Service Institute, MEA, India and the Diplomatic Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guatemala, signed in May 2018.

Trade and Economic:

The trade relations between India and Guatemala are on the upswing. Guatemala emerged as India's biggest trading partner in the Central American Region in 2021-22 with bilateral trade of US\$ 573.21 million. Pharmaceuticals, textiles (especially cotton yarn and fibres), engineering products, automobiles- two and three wheelers, motor vehicles/cars, auto components and parts, iron and steel, industrial machinery and parts, electrical machinery and equipment are the top products exported to Guatemala while India mainly imports Wood, wood charcoal, Coffee, aluminium scrap from Guatemala. To promote bilateral trade, Embassy in collaboration with Export Promotion Councils is organizing Hybrid Buyer-Seller Meets, and so far, organized 07 such meets this year.

India-Guatemala Trade (in million US \$)

Year (April - March)	Imports from Guatemala	Exports to Guatemala	Total trade
2018-2019	16.27	305.37	321.64
2019-2020	22.95	291.32	314.27
2020-2021	20.75	331.35	352.12
2021-2022	21.08	552.13	573.21
2022-2023	20.70	465.35	486.05
2023-2024 (Apr-June)	10.64	177.02	187.66

Commercial Engagements:

There are around 15 Indian companies being represented in Guatemala from pharmaceuticals, textiles, automobiles and IT sectors. Hero motorcycles, Mahindra vehicles, TVS, Bajaj 2 and 3 wheelers are popular in Guatemala. Pharmaceutical companies including Caplin Point, CIPLA, Himalaya Drugs, Seven Pharma, Aurobindo, and MSN Labs are marketing their products in Guatemala through local agents or representative offices. Since Guatemala is strategically placed with the same time zone as the USA; these countries have become good destinations for investment in near shoring and IT and ITES. We have several Indian IT/BPO companies including HCL, 24*7, and TCS. All these companies employ more than 10,000 Guatemalans.

Grand "MADE IN INDIA" Trade Show: To keep the momentum in our trade and to respond to the call of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, to look for new export opportunities, the Embassy, in collaboration with Ministry of Textiles,

Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts and 'Beti and Shiksha Foundation' organized immaculate 3-day "MADE IN INDIA" grand trade exhibition in Cayala from 22-24 September and on 21 September, organized an unique Weaves of India Thematic Fashion Show at the Guatemalan National Palace showcasing India's rich textile tradition.

Development Cooperation:

India's development cooperation has been robust with Guatemala. India has always extended the helping hand to Guatemala in its trying times especially when Guatemala was facing COVID-19 crisis, Government of India donated 200,000 doses of Made in India anti COVID vaccine to Guatemala in March 2021 and provided essential medicines and PPEs to Guatemala. Similarly, India has been a partner of Guatemala during challenging time and whenever required had supported the Government of Guatemala with monetary and material support like during Hurricane Stan in October 2005, in November 2009 for draught related recovery, for Disaster Relief in the aftermath of the earthquake that struck Guatemala in November 2012, for Drought relief in December 2014, in July 2018 towards disaster relief assistance for damages caused due to eruption of volcano Fuego.

Government of India, in an effort to contribute to capacity building in Guatemala, set up an IT Training Center in San Carlos University in August 2006. Tata Communications Services (TCS) ran this IT Center till July 2008, training about 1,500 Guatemalans, before it was handed over to the Guatemalans.

ITEC: Guatemala is an ITEC partner country since 1997- 98. The Government of India has offered 40 ITEC slots to Guatemala every year. Since 2010-11, around 272 Guatemalans have undertaken training in India under ITEC scholarships.

Cultural Relations:

As India celebrated Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the Mission undertook a special campaign and organized more than 80 major events across Guatemala to mark this important milestone. To mention a few, on 16 May 2022, Embassy in association with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture of Guatemala organized a grand cultural ceremony at the Miguel Ángel Asturias National Theatre, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Guatemala. The cultural event saw the mesmerizing performance by the ICCR sponsored Kathak troupe led by Ms Soniya Parchure. The event was attended by more than 1500 Guatemalans. In the same week, the Kathak dance troupe performed in different locations across Guatemala including in Escuela Politecnica on 15 May, on 17 May, in 128 year old Quetzaltenango Municipality Theater, Guatemalan university UNIS on 19 May, and on the same day afternoon, at the Marisael Zavala Military Station.

Similarly, to mark the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and National Unity Day (Rashtriya Ekta Diwas), the Mission organized Unity Concerts by ICCR sponsored Indian Music band Purple Fusion in the Guatemalan cities of Quetzaltenango, Antigua and Patzún in the first week of November 2022.

Recently, ICCR sponsored Odissi Dance Group "Sankalp" led by Ms. Kasturi Pattnaik toured Guatemala in June-July 2023. During their tour in Guatemala, they performed in Departments of Patzún, Xela and Guatemala City.

The Largest Ever Yoga Festival in Central America: On 18 June 2023, the Mission organized one of its kind, largest Yoga Festival in Central America, perhaps in LAC region, with the participation of more than 2500 people, at Mariscal Zavala Military Brigade, in association with CONJUVE, Municipality of Guatemala, and Ministry of Education. As part of a series of yoga events to celebrate IDY2023, the Embassy also organized yoga event at Antigua, Guatemala on 21 June 2023. In June 2022, the Mission had organized the International Day of Yoga at the world heritage city of Antigua, which was live broadcast on DD India as a part of Yoga Guardian ring as well as the largest yoga event in October 2022, wherein more than 1500 people had participated.

Indian Film Festival: The Embassy has been organizing many Indian Film Festivals across length and breadth of Guatemala. On 5-6 February 2022, in collaboration with Ministry of Culture, Mission organized the film festival in the Miguel Angel Asturias National theatre in Guatemala City. Embassy in collaboration with vivelo.com organized Indian Film Festival showcasing seven Indian movies on the online platform.

Air Links/Travel:

There are no direct flights between Guatemala and India. Convenient connections are available via United States, Mexico and Europe.

Indian community:

The Indian communities in Guatemala is small and consist of about 100 individuals in all, working in the Indian Call Centers, in export trade, in auto parts business, or in pharmaceutical industries. Most of them came to Guatemala during the last two decades. With Indian Community, Mission is celebrating Indian festivals like Holi and Diwali, and this year on 30 October, mission organized grand Diwali Festival with more than 150 people.

Besides, there are around 350 people of India origin who came to this region as indentured laborers during the 19th and early 20 centuries and settled in the coastal Guatemala on Atlantic and a small township of Livingstone. They live in villages, own land, and are involved in fishing, agriculture and tourism sectors. They are mostly 4th-5th generation Indians, and by now well integrated into the local community. The Embassy of India constantly engages the Indian community in Livingston and invites them for National Day events and cultural programmes. Most recently, Embassy organized Holi Celebration in Livingstone with the community. In January 2022, for the first time ever, Embassy organized flag hoisting ceremony in Livingston on the occasion of the Republic Day and Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

Useful Resources:

For more information and latest updates, please visit Embassy of India in Guatemala website: <https://indemguatemala.gov.in>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInGuatemala>
Twitter: <https://twitter.com/indiainguate>

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