

India-Belize Bilateral Brief

India and Belize have traditionally enjoyed friendly and cordial relations, based on shared values, mutual regard and broad understanding on diverse issues, including in the international fora. Both countries are strong democracies and members of the Global South, NAM and the Commonwealth and share commonalities such as an English-speaking population and love for cricket.

2. India and Belize established diplomatic relations on 28 March, 1983. The Indian Embassy in Mexico is concurrently accredited to Belize. India has an Honorary Consul in Belize while Belize has an Honorary Consul in Delhi.

History and Background

3. The two countries share an active, diversified and expanding bilateral relationship. Belize considers India as a major development partner, as well as a partner in multilateral approaches on major global issues. The two countries actively consult and cooperate in international fora, including the UN. Belize has acknowledged the leading role played by India in the South-South cooperation.

Recent political interactions

4. India's political interaction with Belize has been by and large through meetings at the level of Foreign Ministers at or on the sidelines of multilateral forums such as the Commonwealth, or particularly regional groups of Central American Integration System (SICA) and Caribbean countries (CARICOM). Presently no other dialogue mechanism exists with Belize. No VVIP visits have taken place between the two countries till date.

- Belize was represented by Mr. Francis Fonseca, Hon'ble Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Education, Culture, Science and Technology, at the 2nd India-CARICOM Summit in Georgetown, Guyana, on 20 November 2024.
- Belize participated in the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit, held on 17 August 2024, in virtual format in New Delhi. Ms. Dian Maheia, CEO, Ministry of Education, participated in the Education Ministers' Session.
- 2nd VOGS Summit on 17 November 2023: Minister of Health of Belize, H.E. Mr. Kevin Bernard participated in the virtual meeting hosted by India in New Delhi.
- Fourth India- CARICOM Foreign Ministers' Ministerial Meeting, Georgetown, 21 April, 2023: Belize was represented by Ambassador Amalia Mai, CEO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration.
- SICA- India Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation, Panama City, 25 April, 2023: EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar met with Foreign Minister of Belize Mr. Eamon Courtenay along with the Foreign

Ministers of other SICA member countries and adopted a joint communique. It was the fourth time, EAM met Belizean Foreign Minister Courtenay.

- 1st VOGS Summit, 12-13 January 2023: Mr. Christopher Coye, MoS for Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, participated in the virtual Finance Ministers' Session of VOGSS, organized in virtual mode on 13 January, 2023.
- EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar met with Foreign Minister Mr. Eamon Courtenay on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Head of Governments' Meeting (CHOGM) 2022.
- PM Narendra Modi held a meeting with PM of Belize, John Briceno on the sidelines of COP-26 in Glasgow on 1 November, 2021.
- 1st India-CARICOM Summit: Prime Minister Modi met with the leaders of the CARICOM group of countries which included Prime Minister Briceno, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in September, 2019.

Economic & Commercial

5. Bilateral trade is around US\$ 18 million. During the last 24 years, India's imports from Belize increased at an annual rate of 30.5%, from US\$ 0.07 million in 1997 to US \$0.602 million in 2023. India's imports from Belize in 2023 were primarily chemical products, animal food, light rubberized knitted fabric, and scrap aluminum. Belize did not export any services to India in 2023. Certain sectors of the Belize's economy such as pharmaceuticals, tourism, fishery and food processing offer good potential for Indian investors.

6. During the last 30 years, Indian exports to Belize have increased from US\$ 0.304 million in 1995 to US \$16.90 million in 2023. In 2023, India primarily exported cigarettes and tobacco, engineering goods, flat -rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel; dialysis fluid and other medicaments; Textiles (women's or girls dresses (unknitted), organic chemicals, pharmaceuticals and auto parts. Most of the Indians living in Belize are merchants engaged in small scale textiles manufacturing and trade.

Development Partnership

7. Development partnership is an important element in India Belize relations. India has been extending assistance to Belize for disaster relief and for meeting its developmental needs, including donation of medicines, computers, fire-trucks etc. Scholarships for capacity-building are being availed by Belize under India's ITEC and other schemes for many decades.

- Solar mamas trained under ITEC are playing critical role in electrifying villages with solar panels and Belize has requested for training of more solar mamas. GOI provided assistance in setting up an 'India-Belize Centre of Engineering' at University of Belize implemented by HMT (India). Indian experts from HMT (I) provided on-the-job training to Belize nationals at this institute from July - September 2023.

- A Mahatma Gandhi Internet Resource Centre established with Indian aid was inaugurated in February 2019.
- In February 2013 and March 2017, India granted computers to the St. John's College Belize for upgrading the IT infrastructure at the Orange Walk Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training.
- India on previous occasions had supplied water hand-pumps to Belize.
- Government of India also donated 25,000 doses of Covishield vaccines to Belize in March 2021 and a shipment of medical supplies in June 2020 to fight Covid19. Further 10,000 doses of Covishield vaccines were donated in July 2022. A shipment of 10,000 doses of Covovax vaccine was received by Belize in April 2023.
- Belize has utilized the US \$1 million grant provided by India to CARICOM countries in 2019 for procuring Covid related medical equipment in a project implemented by PAHO and the India-UN Development Partnership Fund.
- A proposal by Belize requesting a funding of US\$ 1 Million for a project on “Strengthening of the maternal and child health services in CARICOM Member States to support the attainment, maintenance and sustainability of the elimination of Mother-to Child (EMTCT) plus of HIV, Syphilis and Hepatitis B diseases” is under implementation.
- Belizean Diplomats regularly attend courses organized by the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS), India.

Cultural

8. A statue of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled by Prime Minister of Belize, Mr. John Briceno on 10 January 2025 at the Belmopan campus of the University of Belize. Prime Minister Briceno also planted a sapling of a Peepal Tree under the campaign Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam near the statue. Inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, the University lawn around the statue was named as Peace Park. The statue was commissioned by ICCR.

9. ICCR's cultural troupes, though quite few, are popular among both Indian and other communities in Belize. An 11-member Kathak Dance troupe led by Hemanta Kalita visited Belize City and Corozal in August 2017. The celebration in Belize City was graced by the presence of Governor General of Belize. The Directorate of Film Festival participated in the 10th edition of Belize International Film Festival held in July 2015 with entry of a short feature film.

Indian Diaspora

10. Belize has a 600 strong Indian business community, mainly Sindhis, who migrated from India since 1964, and are a valuable link between Belize and India. Together with dependents, the community is about 1200 individuals. There are two community organizations, viz., the Belize Indian Merchants Association (BIMA) based in the Corozal Free Trade Zone and the Belize Indian Community (BIC)

based in Belize City. Both have their own temples which act as community centers for the larger cultural needs of the community. There are three Indian restaurants in Belize City and one in Corozal.

11. There is also an “East Indian” community, about 7,000-8,000, that arrived in Belize in 1838 as indentured laborers, and who are now totally assimilated with the local society, but have evinced interest to rediscover their lost Indian roots, through various Indian cultural programs and activities. ‘The Corozal Organization of East Indian Cultural Heritage’ & ‘The East Indian Council of Belize’ organized the ‘First Indian Diaspora Conference’ in Belize in August 2014 with support from the National Institute of Culture and History, Government of Belize. The event had huge participation including from other countries in the whole Caribbean region.

Visas and Consular Matters

12. The Honorary Consul of India in Belize City provides assistance to the Indian community in obtaining consular services from the Embassy of India in Mexico City. The Government of India has extended the facility of online e-Visa facility to the nationals of Belize. This has considerably eased the visa process for Belizeans, including those of Indian origin, for undertaking family/business visits to India at a short notice. Belize has allowed visa free entry of Indian nationals holding valid US Visa or US Residence Permit for single visits for non-employment purposes. This has addressed the long-standing grievance of the Indian community in Belize about difficulties in getting visas for their family members. This measure will also facilitate visits of other Indian nationals, trade delegations and officials from GOI, to Belize. In 2017, Belize and India signed an Agreement on exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic and official/service passports for a period of 90 days.

Multilateral

13. Belize has ratified the framework agreement on establishment of International Solar Alliance (ISA). Belize is a member of ISA since 2017.

S. No	MoU/Agreement/Treaties between India and Belize
1.	Agreement between the Government of Belize and the Government of the Republic of India for the exchange of Information with respect to Taxes (Belmopan, 18 September 2013)
2.	Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of Belize on Exemption of Visa Requirements for holders of Diplomatic and Official/Service Passports (Belize City, 18 September 2017)
3.	MoU between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of Belize for the establishment of the India-Belize Centre of Engineering (Belize City, 20 December 2017)
