

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. 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. 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.

4. 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.

5. Institutional bilateral interactions consist of meetings of the Joint Consultative Mechanism (JCM) and Foreign Office Consultations (FOC). The 5th JCM meeting was held in New Delhi on 14 January 2019, while the 4th round of FOC was held in Buenos Aires in April 2014. Two meetings of the India-Argentina Joint Trade Committee have been held to date.

Economic and Commercial Relations

Bilateral Trade

6. India's exports to Argentina were valued at USD 563 million, while Argentina's exports to India were valued at USD 1.96 billion during 2018-19. Major items of India's exports to Argentina include two wheelers, iron and steel, agro chemicals,

manmade yarn-fabrics-madeups, organic chemicals, bulk drugs and drug intermediates and motor vehicles. Major items of India's imports from Argentina include vegetable oils (soya bean and sunflower), finished leather, cereals, residual chemicals and allied products and pulses.

Investments and Joint Ventures

7. Several Indian companies have established operations in Argentina with a total investment of over USD 1 billion. These include *TCS*, *CRISIL*, *Bajaj*, *United Phosphorus Ltd*, *Glenmark*, *Tech Mahindra*, *Hero Motorcorp* and *Godrej*. *TVS Motors* launched three of its products in the Argentine market in November 2018 after forming a joint venture with a local auto-manufacturer to assemble these.

8. Argentina's investment in India stands at approximately USD 120 million. Argentine companies with presence in India include *Globant* in IT services, *Bagó* in the pharmaceutical sector and *TECHINT* in the manufacturing sector.

9. 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. A Centre of Excellence in Agriculture by Argentina is proposed to be established in New Delhi.

10. Indian Embassy, jointly with the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship of Argentina, organized an 'India-Argentina Business Forum' in Buenos Aires on 1 October 2019, which saw participation by around 250 businesspersons from India and Argentina. The Embassy also organized separate events on India – Argentina Business Opportunities on 20 November and 17 December 2019 in Cordoba and Mendoza Provinces of Argentina respectively in collaboration with provincial governments, major local industry chambers and companies.

Cultural Relations

11. 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.

12. Gandhi@150 celebrations throughout the year in Argentina culminated with a special event on 2 October 2019 in the Embassy where Vice President of Argentina Ms. Gabriela Michetti was the Chief Guest. A joint publication of the Embassy of India and Argentina's leading think-tank *Consejo Argentino de las Relaciones Internacionales* (CARI) titled 'Gandhi: Perspectivas Latinoamericanas' [Gandhi: Latin American Perspectives] was launched on the occasion.

13. Indian Embassy in Buenos Aires 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. In 2019, 'India Evening' to promote tourism to India was organized on 9 October jointly by the Embassy and India Tourism Office, New York. Several local and Indian tourism operators participated in the event. The Embassy has collaborated with the Government of Buenos Aires to organize two editions of "Buenos Aires Celebra India", a festival showcasing cultural aspects of India such as cuisine, dance, music, yoga and crafts. The event was attended by more than 10,000 people in each of its 2018 and 2019 editions.

14. All five 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. An event titled 'Yoga for Peace' organized by *Art of Living*, Argentina on 29 November 2018 that was attended by the Prime Minister of India saw participation by over 6000 people, with 600 people performing Yoga collectively.

15. 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.

16. A bust of Mahatama Gandhi is installed at one of the main avenues of Buenos Aires. 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.

17. 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.

Technical and Development Co-operation

18. India extends Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scholarships to working professionals from Argentina every year. For the 2019-20 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 with a special program for 5 diplomats offered in April 2020. Implementation details are being finalized regarding the establishment of an India-Argentina Center of Excellence in IT, in Buenos Aires.

Indian Community

19. There are around 2500 Indians and Persons of Indian Origin living in Argentina. Majority of these live in the capital city of Buenos Aires with new immigrants 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.

Useful links

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

Facebook: www.facebook.com/IndiaInArgentina

Twitter: www.twitter.com/Indembarg

Instagram: www.instagram.com/indembarg

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