

Embassy of India  
Bogota

Brief on India-Colombia Bilateral Relations

Colombia and India established diplomatic relations on January 19, 1959 and will complete 60 years in 2019. In March 1972, Colombia opened its embassy in New Delhi, India. The following year India established its embassy in Bogota. In these years, the relationship between the two countries has expanded in political, commercial and cultural fields.

**Political relations:**

India and Colombia have had friendly and cordial bilateral relations. Both countries collaborate in various multilateral fora. Foreign Office Consultations Mechanism was established in 1995. The last consultations took place in March 2017 in New Delhi.

President Ivan Duque was sworn in as the new President on 7 August, 2018. President Ram Nath Kovind sent him a message of felicitations. External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj also sent a message of felicitation to Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo, Foreign Minister and later met him on the sidelines of the UNGA in September, 2018.

**Bilateral Visits:**

From India:

The following high level visits have taken place from India to Colombia:

1. Late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi's State visit - 1968
2. Late Prime Minister Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao to attend NAM Summit 1995
3. Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MOS (EA), September 2004
4. Shri Shashi Tharoor, MOS (EA), January 2010
5. Prof. Saugata Roy, MOS for Urban Development, 2010
6. Shri Dinsha Patel, MOS for Mines, May 2011
7. Shri Vivek Katju, Secretary (West) for FOC in July, 2011
8. Dr. Rahul Khullar, Commerce Secretary, August 2011

9. Shri Sachin Pilot, MOS (C&IT), April 2012
10. Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia MOS (C&I), June, 2012
11. Shri Parvez Dewan, Secretary (Tourism), October 2014
12. Shri R. Swaminathan, Special Secretary (AMS&CPV) for FOC, November 2014
13. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, MOS (IC) (P&NG), May 2015
14. Smt. Rita Teaotia, Commerce Secretary, May 2017
15. Gen (Retd) V.K. Singh, MOS(External Affairs), October 2018

From Colombia:

1. Foreign Minister Dr Rodrigo Pardo Garcia-Peña attended NAM Ministerial Meeting, April 1997
2. President Andres Pastrana Arango for the first state visit from Colombia, March 2001
3. Foreign Minister Carolina Barco Isakson, February 2003
4. Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Camilo Reyes, May 2004
5. Defence Minister Juan Manuel Santos, November 2007
6. Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Mr. Luis Guillermo Plata, April 2008
7. Minister of Energy and Mines, Mr Hernan Martinez Torres 2008
8. General Fernando Soler Torre, Deputy Chief of Colombian Air Force attended the Aero India, February 2009
9. Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Clemencia Forero Ucros, April 2009
10. Foreign Minister Jaime Bermudez accompanied by Commerce, Industry and Tourism Minister, November 2009
11. Vice President Francisco Santos, April 2010
12. Vice Foreign Minister Monica Lanzetta, November 2011
13. Vice Foreign Minister Patti Londoño, March 2012
14. Vice Minister of Business Development, Carlos de Hart, February, 2013
15. Minister of Information Technology, Mr. Diego Molano, August 2013
16. Vice Foreign Minister Patti Londoño, March 2017 for FOC
17. Foreign Minister Ms. Maria Angela Holguin, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Ms. Maria Lorena Gutierrez and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Patti Londoño, November 2017

**Bilateral Agreements/MoUs**

- MoU on Cooperation in Tourism Development, October 4, 2018
- MoU on Cooperation in Traditional Systems of Medicine of India, October 4, 2018
- Joint Interpretative Declaration between the Republic of India and the Republic of Colombia regarding the agreement for the promotion and protection of investments between India and Colombia, signed on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2009, October 4, 2018
- MoU between Electronics and Computer Software Export promotion Council (ESC), India and FEDESOFTE, September 2018
- Agreement on Free Exercise of Gainful Occupation of Dependent Family Members of the Diplomatic, Consular and Administrative Personnel of Diplomatic Missions - 2016
- MoU between the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, the Government of the Republic of India and the Administrative Department of Sports, Entertainment, Fitness and Leisure (COLDEPORTES) of the Government of the Republic of Colombia - 2014
- MoU between the Colombian Federation of Software Industry and Related Technologies – FEDESOFTE and NASSCOM - 2013
- MoU between the Ministry of Mines and Energy of Colombia and the Ministry of Mines of India for Cooperation in the field of Geology and Mineral Resources - 2011
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Republic of Colombia for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income - 2011
- MoU on Business Development Cooperation between the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Department of Commerce of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Tourism of the Republic of Colombia - 2010
- Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Health between the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Social Protection of the Republic of Colombia - 2010
- Agreement on Bilateral Promotion and Protection of Investment between India and Colombia - 2009
- MoU between the Colombian Federation of Software Industry and Related Technologies - FEDESOFTE and National Association of Software and Service Companies - NASSCOM - 2009
- MoU between the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Colombia and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of India on Defence Cooperation - 2009

- MoU on Cooperation in Bamboo Applications and Research and Development between the Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Government of the Republic of Colombia - 2009
- MoU between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas Government of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Mines & Energy Government of the Republic of Colombia on Cooperation in Hydrocarbon sector - 2008
- MoU between the Government of India and the Government of Colombia on Cooperation in the field of Urban Public Transport Systems and Urban Transport Planning - 2007
- MoU between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Colombia on Cooperation in Science & Technology - 2005
- MoU between the Ministry of Communications of the Republic of Colombia and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of the Republic of India on Bilateral Cooperation in the field of Information Technology - 2002
- MoU between the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India and the Ministry of Environment Government of Colombia to execute the Project on 'Provision of Solar Energy Equipment for Tayrona National Natural Park' , 2002
- Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Colombia on Visa exemption for Diplomatic and Official Passport holders - 2001
- Agreement between the Foreign Service Institute of India and the San Carlos Diplomatic Academy of the Republic of Colombia for Academic Cooperation, 2001
- MoU on Annual Foreign Office Consultations - 1995
- Cultural Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Colombia - 1974
- Trade Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Republic of Colombia – 1970

### **Economic and Commercial Relations:**

India-Colombia trade has been growing over the years, except during the years 2015 and 2016, due to drop in international oil prices and sharp

decline in coal imports from Colombia, the bilateral trade took a dip. For last three years the bilateral trade is steadily on rise. The Indian exports have been performing well. The imports from Colombia had witnessed a downward slide after fall, mainly, in oil prices, but have started recovering due to higher oil pick up by India. The Trade data for the last three years is as below:

In USD million

Year	2015-16	2016 -17	2017-18	2018-19 (April to October)
India's exports to Colombia	886.89	784.50	939.14	887.66
India's imports from Colombia	807.79	593.96	592.80	838.86
Total Trade	1694.68	1378.46	1531.94	1726.52

Indian exports to Colombia comprise mainly motorcycles in CKD form, vehicles (SUVs, pick-ups, three-wheelers), cotton yarn and woven fabrics of cotton, pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals and iron & steel items.

Indian imports from Colombia include mainly mineral fuel, natural or cultivated pearls, wood & articles of wood, plastic & aluminum, etc.

A number of Indian business delegations led by export promotions councils such as EEPC, EPCH, TEXPROCIL, SRTEPC, CHEMEXIL, PLEXCONCIL, Spice Board of India, Electronic and Software Council, CAPEXIL, AEPC and Chambers of Commerce like CII have visited Colombia over the years. The main commercial activities that took place during the year 2018 are as follows:

(i) The Embassy organized Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Odisha State days at the Manizales International Fair in January, 2018 to promote business, investment and tourism in these States as also the cooperation in livestock and agriculture.

(ii) Thirty-eight Indian companies from the Texprocil participated in Colombiatex, the largest textile fair of Colombia held at Medellin, in January 2018.

(iii) India Tourism Office New York participated in the Annual Tourism Fair (ANATO), held in Bogota in February, 2018, to promote tourism to India. The Embassy also organized a networking session, "Know India", of Indian tour

operators with the Colombian tour operators to disseminate information regarding visa and tourism opportunities in India.

(iv) “Make-in-India” trade and investment promotion events were organized in Bogota and Cali in March, 2018 and in Medellin in April, 2018

(v) A CII delegation of 18 Indian companies visited Colombia for the ‘India Business Forum’ held in Bogota in April, 2018. The purpose of the Forum was to enhance engagement with Colombia especially in the post-FARC peace agreement phase.

(vi) The Embassy in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce of Bucaramanga organized an event to promote the bilateral trade with India in May, 2018.

(vii) The Embassy organized Road shows for SRTEPC at Bogota and Medellin in July, 2018, to promote Second Edition of ‘Source India’ event, held in September, 2018, at Surat in India.

(viii) A business promotion seminar and BSM, was organized by Chemexcil in collaboration with the Embassy and Bogota Chamber of Commerce at Bogota in September, 2018. Twenty Indian companies participated in the event.

(ix) The Embassy organized an event in September, 2018, in collaboration with ANDI (National Association of Businessmen in Colombia) to promote India-Latin American & Caribbean Countries (LAC) conclave, held in Santiago (Chile) in October, 2018.

(x) A Networking Session between Indian IT ITES companies in Colombia and their Colombia counterparts including clients who are members of Fedesoft was organized by the Embassy to expand and diversify existing businesses in September, 2018. Fifty-eight attendees participated in the event. Fedesoft (Federation of Software Companies of Colombia) and the Electronic and Software Export Promotion Council (ESC) also signed an MoU of Cooperation.

(xi) The 40th edition of INDEE (Indian Engineering Exhibition), India’s trademark multiple engineering products exhibition, of Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) was held in Bogota in September, 2018. This was

special INDEE was co-located with the FERIA INTERNACIONAL DE BOGOTA (The Bogota International Trade Fair)-2018 and held after a gap of 8 years. 77 Indian companies participated in the event, which also included a Business Seminar, organized by EEPC in collaboration of with the Embassy and the National Association of Industries (ANDI). More than 27 countries participated in the Trade Fair.

(xii) *Viajes Diva India*, an Indian Travel Company, in collaboration with the India Tourism office in New York and the Embassy of India, Bogota, organized a presentation and interactive session with Colombian tour operators at the Embassy in October, 2018, to promote tourism to India.

The Embassy also actively engaged in many other India Weeks/India Days/Fairs organized by Universities, Private & Government establishments and the Indian community, to promote trade/tourism.

Prominent Indian companies having presence in Colombia:

- IT (TCS, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra Comviva Colombia, Infosys, etc )
- Pharmaceuticals (IPCA, CIPLA, Aurobindo Pharma, Dr. Reddy's, MSN and Setaa Pharma)
- Agro-Chemicals (United Phosphorus, Sharda Chemicals),
- Automobiles and tractors (TVS, Bajaj, Hero, Royal Enfield, Sonalika and Mahindra)
- Plastics and Packing (Essel Propack)
- Lighting Havell's Sylvania

In hydrocarbon sector, ONGC and OVL have interests in exploration and production. OVL with Sinopec of China has a joint venture called Mansarovar Energy they jointly owns producing assets in Colombia that produce around 30,000 barrels per day, the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in Colombia.

Praj industries constructed 5 ethanol plants in Colombia with capacity of around 1.05 million liters per day. Hero Moto Corp inaugurated its motorcycle plant in Cali in 2015 and assembles around 23,000 motorcycles annually. Essel Propack set up its new tube packaging factory in the same in the same location in 2016. It has a capacity to manufacture 180 million tubes a year and the capability for making Essel's new generation laminated tubes targeting the high value Beauty & Cosmetics category along with a Pharma clean room.

## **Space cooperation**

On 29 November, 2018 ISRO successfully launched FACSAT 1 satellite of Colombian Air Force on PSLV-C43/HysIS mission. It was the first ever Colombian Air Force Nano-satellite. This was a historic occasion in India-Colombia relations and received excellent publicity for India and demonstration of India's prowess in space sciences.

## **Technical and Economic Cooperation:**

ITEC day was celebrated in the Embassy in March, 2018 where more than 100 alumni, representatives from Ministry of Education and its agency ICETEX and Ministry of Foreign Affairs participated. Under the ITEC programme, 25 school teachers have been trained in teaching of English language every year since 2015. The first ever ITEC festival to promote awareness of ITEC scholarships was held in the Embassy in May, 2018. It was well received. The number of ITEC slots for Colombia was increased from 60 to 75 from the year 2018-19.

Colombia since 2017, has been offering 8 scholarships for Language Assistants and another 8 scholarships to tourist guides to learn Spanish in Colombia

Assistance under ITEC program in the past includes gifting of a US\$ 200,000 solar lighting system to Tayrona National Park, Santa Marta, Colombia in December 2002 and deputation of two Indian IT experts from May to July 2002 to advise the local government on IT related policy issues. India donated US\$ 1 million to Colombia in the wake of country-wide floods and damage to infrastructure in 2010.

## **Cultural Relations:**

There is growing interest in the Indian culture. The recent IDY events have given a further fillip to the popularity of Indian culture. Indian festivals, dances, music, gastronomy, spirituality are of increasing interest to Colombians. Some of them have gone to India to learn Indian classical and folk dances and on return have turned professionals by offering performances.



Several festivals, performances, exhibitions, and film shows, etc. have been organized by the Embassy during the last few years. Embassy in collaboration with the local talent also has organized dance performances at various universities during the course of the International weeks held by them. Indian Dance and Gastronomy festivals are being conducted almost every year. Notable ICCR performance in the recent past has been: folk music group performance led by Bundu Khan in Bogota (July 2015), Rajesh Pandey group in Bogota in March 2016 and NAAD BRAHMA Jazz group led by Shri Joe Alvares in Bogota, October 2016. An ICCR sponsored musical group, Nahar brothers played in Ibague and at Piloto University, Bogota, in end-January/Feb, 2017. Another ICCR sponsored group Rangniketan Manipuri Dance group performed at Bogota and Bucaramanga in end-March/April, 2017. A Punjab Police Bhangra Dance Group, sponsored by ICCR, performed at Popayan Gastronomy Festival in September, 2017.

The Embassy in collaboration with Indo-Colombian friendship societies and other stakeholders from the cultural field has also hosted many private Indian artists in their cultural tours like Kathak dancer Pandit Tribhuvan Maharaj, Kathak dancer Ms Pragati Sood and Odissi Dancer Meghna Das. Mission organized regular Kathak dance classes in the Embassy premises from 2012 to 2016 using local dancers. Mission also organized a 6 month Bollywood dance course in collaboration with University Piloto in February - September 2016. Local talent in Indian classical and folk dance is also used for various events organized in by universities, private/government establishments and Indian Associations in collaboration with the Embassy.

In Bogota, there are two busts of Mahatma Gandhi installed in Bogota, CINSET Corner, and Municipal Library at El Tunal. A bust of Rabindranath Tagore has been installed at the Caro y Cuervo institute.

Gandhi Jayanti is celebrated in Bogota and Medellin with active participation of the Indian community and friends of India every year. A weeklong event dedicated to non-violence is organized in Medellin by the Gandhi Foundation. An event is also organized every year to mark Tagore Jayanti in Bogota. Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas and Hindi Diwas are also celebrated every year with the participation of local Indian community. The Embassy also has an in-house Yoga Instructor/ Teacher of Indian culture (TIC) deputed by ICCR since 2016. The TIC has conducted diploma course in yoga and Indian philosophy at the Externado & Piloto University. Besides the diploma course, Mission has been organizing regular yoga classes for general

public, yoga workshops and yoga demonstration sessions on different occasions. ICCR sponsored Saree exhibitions were organized in Bogota and Ibague in 2017. “Rays of Wisdom”, an Indian cultural troupe performed in Bogota, Medellin and Cali as part of celebrations to mark India@70. Mission, in collaboration with Municipality of Ibague City, organized Indian Festival in November, 2017. Another cultural troupe, “Divya Parivar”, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, performed in Bogota in December, 2017.

The main cultural events organized during 2018 (including those where the Embassy collaborated or participated) are : (i) Bharat Natyam, Odissi and Punjabi folk dance shows were organized at Manizales International Fair, 2018, in January , “Day of India”, organized by Industrial University of Santander (UIS) at Bucaramanga in May, The Embassy participated in the “International Week of the Culture of Bolivariana” at Duitama, where an Indian dance programme with local talent was arranged in June, in October, “India Week” was organized by the Municipality of Neiva in collaboration with the Embassy. Indian Monuments Photo Exhibition and Indian Saree (Textile) Exhibition were held in Neiva at this occasion. An Indian film festival was organized at Fusagasuga in collaboration with the Municipality in November, the India-Day events were organized at Post Graduate College, National Police, under the theme of “Incredible India – The Land of Gandhi” on 16 November, 2018.

Prof. Ravindra Kumar, a Gandhian expert, sponsored by ICCR, visited Colombia in February and delivered lectures on the life, thoughts, teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and the continued relevance of philosophy of peace and non-violence, Professor Rajiv Saxena from JLN University also visited Colombia in May to promote culture, heritage and knowledge about contemporary India and modern teaching of Spanish through digital means,

The International Day of Yoga events were organized in 19 cities of Colombia with participation of around 10,000 people. Popa Yoga and the Embassy organized a Yoga Festival at Popayan in September.

Gandhi@150 celebrations were launched on Gandhi Jayanti in the Embassy. Colombian and Ecuadorian versions of “Vaishnav Jan to....” *Bhajan*, and the Gandhi@150 commemorative postal stamps were released on the occasion.

To mark the 550<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary year celebrations of Guru Nanak Dev ji, the Embassy, with the help of Indian community, organized a well-attended function in Pereira on 23 November.

A Khadi Exhibition was inaugurated by Gen (Dr.) V.K. Singh, Minister of State (External Affairs), during his official visit to Colombia in October.

### **ICCR Scholarships:**

Several Colombian students have pursued Indian dance and music studies under the ICCR scholarship in the past. The slots have been increased to 10 from the year 2018-19.

### **Indian Community:**

The Indian Community comprises of approximately 400 members, majority of them being professionals employed with Indian IT firms like TCS, Infosys, Tech Mahindra Comviva etc. There is also an increasing presence of Indians in Indian pharma companies, automobile sector, agro-chemicals etc. Most of them live and work in Bogota and Medellin. The community is very active and in association with the Embassy organizes cultural events like Diwali, Holi, Ganesh Chaturthi and Durga Pooja every year.

In 2016, the Mission came in touch with a 150 strong Indian community located in the 'Valle de Cauca' region of Colombia. Their forefathers migrated to Colombia in 1920s-30s from Bengal. Although settled in Colombia, some of them have kept Indian traditions and culture alive.

### **Colombian visitors to India:**

The number of Colombian visitors to India is on the rise every year and more and more are utilizing the facility of e-Visa. During the year 2017, 7950 Colombians visited India of which the majority went for tourism, business, study, yoga and spiritualism.

### **Select useful references:**

- i. The Making of Modern Colombia, David Bushnell, Berkley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993
- ii. Bolivar Liberator of a Continent, Bill Boyd, S.P.I. Books, New York, 1998

- iii. One Hundred Years of Solitude, Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- iv. The Sound of Things Falling, Juan Gabriel Vásquez
- v. One River: Explorations and Discoveries in the Amazon Rainforest, Davis Wade

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December, 2018