

India-Panama Relations

Political

India-Panama connection is oldest in the Central American region, dating back to the middle of the 19th century when groups of Indians came to Panama to work on the construction of Panama railways and later the Panama Canal in the early 20th century. Panama is the first country in Central America where India established a resident Mission in 1973. Panama also has a Mission in New Delhi for many years.

Visits

Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MOS (EA) represented GOI in the inaugural ceremony of President Martin Torrijos on 1st September 2004.

Shri T.R. Baalu, Minister of Shipping & Highways visited Panama in November 2004.

Samuel Lewis Navarro, First Vice President and Foreign Minister of Panama visited India in November 2005 and again in June 2008 to attend the second India-SICA Foreign Ministers' meeting.

Alberto Vallarino, Panamanian Minister of Economy and Finance visited India in November 2010 during the World Economic Forum meeting in New Delhi.

A 20-member Indian Parliamentary delegation led by Smt. Meira Kumar, Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha visited Panama from April 14-21, 2011 to participate in the 124th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly.

Shri E. Ahamed, MOS (EA) visited Panama during May 3-5, 2011.

An 18-member Indian official delegation led by Shri J.M. Mauskar, Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests visited Panama to attend the UN Climate Change meetings on September 29-October 7, 2011.

Dr. Ruben Berrocal, Panamanian Secretary for Science, Technology and Innovation paid a visit to India during December 3-8, 2011.

Shri Sachin Pilot, Hon'ble MoS (Comm & IT) visited Panama during April 10-11, 2012.

Fourteen officers of National Defence College (NDC) led by Maj Gen P. K. Goswami visited Panama as part of their study tour on May 20-26, 2012.

Shri Vayalar Ravi, Hon'ble Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs visited Panama on July 29-30, 2012 and met with the officiating Foreign Minister of Panama and visited Gurudwara, Mosque and Temple.

A delegation led by Shri Milind Deora, Hon'ble MOS (Shipping, Comm & IT) visited Panama on Jan 22-25, 2013 and met Minister in the Presidency, Administrator General of Maritime Authority of Panama, Administrator General of Panama National Authority for Governmental Innovation and Vice-Minister of Finance.

A delegation led by Dr. D. Purandeswari, Hon'ble MOS (Commerce & Industry) visited Panama on April 15-18, 2013 and inaugurated the "Made-in-India" Exhibition on April 17, 2013 at Panama's biggest international trade show "ExpoComer". Over 120 Indian companies participated in the India Show. MOS met

President of the Republic, Foreign Minister and other senior functionaries of the Government.

Bilateral Agreements

Several agreements such as for Cultural and Educational co-operation, Foreign Office Consultations, mutual cooperation between the Foreign Service Institutes of MEA and the Diplomatic Academy (of the Ministry of External Relations) of Panama, Ministry of Agriculture of India and the Ministry of Agricultural Development of Panama for Cooperation in the Field of Agricultural Research and Education, have been signed with Panama.

After inauguration of the new administration of President Ricardo Martinelli on 1st July 2009, Government of Panama has announced that those nationals, including Indians nationals, having visa for USA, any country of EU, Canada or Australia and that has been used at least one time to enter the issuing country, will be granted tourism visa for Panama on arrival.

Trade and Economic

India-Panama trade (including with Colon Free Trade Zone of Panama)

Particular	Trade (in million US\$)			
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Import from Panama	366.67	188.51	163.21	117.80
Export to Panama	149.24	215.00	347.78	347.32
Total	515.91	403.51	510.99	465.12

Source: Ministry of Commerce of India and Colon Free Zone, Panama

The main items of India's exports to Panama include textiles; automobiles and accessories; articles of iron and steel; plastic products; pharmaceuticals; tobacco products; rubber products; furniture items; and electrical and electronic equipments, etc. The main items of India's imports from Panama include mineral fuels, oils, products and waxes; ships, boats and floating structures; and teak and other wood and wooden articles, etc.

Ten Indian garment exporting companies of AEPC participated in a BSM in Colon on November 21 and on November 22 in Panama City organised by the Embassy of India in collaboration with AEPC and Users Association in Colon Free Zone and Panama Chamber of Commerce, Industries & Agriculture (PCCIA) in Panama City. The BSM was well attended and proved to be a success resulting in good business deals and exports of Indian garments to Colon Free Zone and Panama City.

12 Indian companies from Chemexcil took part in a BSM on September 3, 2012 organised by Indian Embassy in collaboration with Panama Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture (PCCIA). The BSM was well attended and was

organised in the main hall of PCCIA and it was organised with active participation of PCCIA. The BSM proved to be a great success resulting in good business deals and exports of Indian Chemexcil products to Panama and Central America.

22 Indian companies sponsored by Pharmexcil took part in a BSM on September 10, 2012 organised by Indian Embassy in collaboration with PCCIA. The event was organised in the main hall of PCCIA and it was organised with full participation of PCCIA. Several pharmaceutical-related companies took part. The BSM resulted in several business deals which were finalised leading to exports of pharmaceutical products by Indian companies to Panama and Central America.

A business delegation consisting of nine engineering companies sponsored by Engineering Export Promotion Council (EEPC) and led by Shri Anup Wadhawan, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce and EEPC Chairman visited Panama on August 31 – September 2, 2011. The delegation met Panamanian Minister of Commerce and Industry and Vice-Minister of Economy and Finance. Business to business meetings and a Buyer-Seller Meet were also organized at Panama Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture. It was revealed that in addition to opportunities in the area of free trade zone, Panama also offered significant opportunities in the areas of IT / BPOs, infrastructure (hydro-power and civil construction) and manufacturing sector.

An Indian infrastructure company, Gammon India Ltd. invested US\$ 1.83 billion in May 2011 with the approval of RBI in a joint venture company in Panama called M/S Campo Puma Oriente S.A. for investment in the fields of agriculture, constructions, infrastructure, resorts, etc.

An 8-member delegation sponsored by EEPC visited Panama in March 2011 and held successful BSM in Panama. The delegation also met Vice Minister of Commerce and Industry and had fruitful discussions. TEXPROCIL sponsored a 6-member delegation which also visited in March 2011 Colon Free Zone and held successful BSM and individual meetings.

A 9-member Plexcouncil sponsored trade delegation visited Panama and held a successful Buyer - Seller Meet in Colon in March 2008.

An 8-member Chemical & Allied Products Export Promotion Council [CAPEXIL]-sponsored trade delegation visited Panama in April 2008 and held a highly successful Buyer - Seller Meet in Panama and individual meetings in Colon.

Mumbai-based Indian company, viz., "Rane Elastomer Processors" won the US \$2.3 million contract to supply rubber fenders to Panama Canal authorities in 2009. They had competed against the US and Chinese companies.

In March 2012, 50 Indian companies had successful participation in EXPOCOMER, the largest annual international trade exhibition held in Panama City. Business over US\$ 2-3 million was generated and orders booked. In April 2013, CII is organizing a big India-show Exhibition in Expocomer where CII has booked 3000 sq.m. and over 100 companies are likely to take part. Minister of Commerce & Industry is expected to inaugurate the event.

4 Panamanian IT firms took part in Indiasoft 2012 held at Hyderabad in March 2012. Panama is keen to receive several hundred thousands of economical laptops / tablets from India for schools in Panama.

Twelve companies from Chemexcil took part in a successful BSM in September 2012 organised by Indian Embassy in collaboration with Panama Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

22 companies sponsored by Pharmexcil held a successful BSM in September 2012 organised by Indian Embassy in collaboration with Panama Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Ten Indian garment exporting companies of AEPC participated in a BSM in Colon in November 2012 organised by the Embassy of India in collaboration with AEPC and Users Association in Colon Free Zone.

In April 2013, over 120 Indian companies took part in first-ever “Made-in-India” Exhibition at the biggest annual trade show in Panama, EXPOCOMER. India Show was inaugurated by Hon’ble MOS for Commerce & Industry, Dr. D. Purandeswari. The Indian companies represented various sectors including automobiles, auto components, textiles, handicrafts, diamonds, jeweler, electrical, engineering goods, leather, silk, bangles, shawls, Ashok Leyland trucks and buses, etc.

LOC of US\$ 10 million from MEA for setting up of a Centre of a Biodiversity and Drug Discovery Centre has been offered to Panama in April 2013.

Culture

To commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Nobel-laureate Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, an eight-member ICCR sponsored dance troupe led by Dr. Sonal Mansingh performed “NAYIKAA” in September 2011.

Another ICCR sponsored 15-member Odissi dance group led by Ms. Sutapa Talukdar performed ‘Shyama’ in October 2011 at the most prestigious National Theatre.

Indian Film Festival was inaugurated in June 2012 at Technological University of Panama and at University of Oteima Auditorium in David in October 2012 where 15 super-hit Indian films were screened.

India Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)

MEA offered in 2012-13 12 ITEC training slots in India and 15 were utilised with MEA’s prior approval. MEA has offered 20 ITEC slots to Panama for training in India during 2013-14.

Indian Community

As per Panamanian sources and records, there are about 15,000 PIOs and NRIs in Panama constituting the largest concentration of overseas Indians in Central America. The Indian community is mostly involved in wholesale and retail trade. The community is considered as one of the well to do and law-abiding communities. Indian community has people, predominantly from Gujarat and Sindh regions.

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