

BRIEF ON INDIA-PARAGUAY BILATERAL RELATIONS

Political Relations

Diplomatic relations between India and Paraguay were established in 1961. The Embassy of India in Buenos Aires, Argentina, is concurrently accredited to Paraguay and has an Honorary Consul in Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay. The Embassy of Paraguay in India was officially opened in March 2006 and now has Honorary Consulates in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata.

Bilateral Interactions

2. The Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu paid an official visit to Paraguay from 5-7 March 2019; the senior-most visit from India to Paraguay since the establishment of diplomatic relations. The Vice President was accompanied by a high-level delegation including the Minister of State for Tourism Shri K.J. Alphons, Member of Parliament, Shri R. K. Kashyap and senior Government officials.

3. The then President of Paraguay Mr. Fernando Lugo had visited India, in May 2012, accompanied by Paraguayan Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture & Animal Husbandry and Commerce, besides senior officials.

4. Ministerial level visits between the two countries have taken place from time to time. Paraguayan Minister of Tourism Ms Sofía Montiel de Afara, visited India to attend the World Tourism day celebrations on 30 September 2019. She met Vice President of India and Minister of Tourism Shri Prahlad Singh Patel, and signed an MOU on Cooperation in the field of Tourism. External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay Mr Antonio Rivas Palacios on the sidelines of the 74th UNGA on 26 September 2019 in New York.

5. A Paraguayan Parliamentary Delegation visited India in 2010 and an Indian Parliamentary Delegation visited Paraguay in 2012.

6. Foreign Office Consultations between the two countries have been institutionalized through the signing of an MOU in 2002. The first round of Foreign Office Consultations was held in Asunción in October 2010 and the second round in New Delhi in August 2015.

Economic and Commercial Relations

Bilateral Trade

7. For the fiscal year 2018-19, India's exports to Paraguay were valued at USD 161 million, while Paraguay's exports to India were valued at USD 21 million. Soyabean oil accounts for over 90% of Paraguay's exports to India. Other significant export items of Paraguay to India are iron and steel, oils and resinoids and aluminum. Main export items from India to Paraguay include iron and steel, plastics, chemicals, vehicles and auto parts.

8. Paraguay is a member of MERCOSUR. An India-MERCOSUR Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) was concluded 25 January 2004 and became operational in June 2009. Preferential duty (10-20 % in most cases) is given to certain Indian Products entering MERCOSUR countries and vice versa. India offers an additional 10% margin of preference to Paraguay for a Tariff Rate Quota of imports of crude soybean oil up to 30000 MT/year.

Investments and Joint Ventures

9. Mahindra vehicles (pick-ups) have made a mark in Paraguay. Tata commercial vehicles, Royal Enfield motorcycles and Bajaj motorcycles have distributorship in the country. A joint venture plant, Carmenta, between Paraguayan firm, Grupo Barr and Alok Masterbatches has been producing masterbatches (plastic industry) since May 2011. Vemarcorp, an Indian owned company became the first steelmaker in Paraguay to produce recycled steel, in 2018.

10. Business- and investment-promotion visits from India to Paraguay in the recent past have included buyer-seller meetings by a Pharmexcil delegation in August 2015, visit by a CII delegation in September 2012 and visit by an EEPC delegation in March 2010. Seminars on doing business with India have been organised by the Indian Mission in collaboration with local partners from time to time.

Cultural Relations

11. There is a significant following of Indian arts, culture and heritage among Paraguayans. Indian Food Festivals and all editions to date of the International Yoga Day have seen enthusiastic participation by Paraguayans. Indian movies have been screened in various editions of the International Film Festival of Paraguay. As a part of the celebrations of the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, commemorative stamps were launched by Vice President Shri Venkaiah Naidu and his counterpart Mr Hugo Vélazquez in Asuncion in March 2019. A vegetarian food festival was also organized as a part of Gandhi@150 celebrations.

Technical and Development Cooperation

12. India offers 10 scholarships under the ITEC program to Paraguay. Nine (9) diplomats from Paraguay have attended past editions of the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats at the Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi. An India-Paraguay Center for Excellence in Information Technology is proposed to be set up in Paraguay.

Indian Community

13. Around 600 Indians live in Paraguay, mainly in Ciudad del Este, a city in the south-east of Paraguay on the border with Brazil and Argentina. Approximately 200 of them are NRIs and the remaining are PIOs who are involved in trading, wholesale and retail business.

Useful links

Embassy's website: www.indembarg.gov.in
Facebook: www.facebook.com/IndiaInArgentina
Twitter: www.twitter.com/Indembarg
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