

India-Venezuela Relations

India and Venezuela have always enjoyed cordial relations. There is a similarity of views on major international, political and economic issues. Besides actively promoting bilateral relations, the two countries cooperate in multilateral forums. The 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations was celebrated in 2009. Resident Embassies have been in Caracas and New Delhi for over four decades. Venezuela has emerged as India's third largest oil supplier.

Political

A major thrust to the bilateral relationship was imparted by former President Hugo Chavez's State Visit to India on 4-7 March 2005. He held bilateral talks with former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and former President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Six Agreements/MoUs were signed, including on setting up of a Joint Commission and cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector.

Former Foreign Minister of Venezuela, Mr. Nicolas Maduro (now President) visited India to attend the First Meeting of the India-CELAC Troika Foreign Ministers held in New Delhi on 7 August 2012. India was led by former External Affairs Minister, Shri S.M. Krishna.

Shri V.S. Sampath, former Chief Election Commissioner of India visited Caracas from 27 August to 1 September 2012 to attend an International Seminar on "Innovation and Technological Vanguard: Automated Voting Systems". The Election Commission of India (ECI) and the National Electoral Council (CNE) of Venezuela signed an MoU during the visit. The President of CNE visited India in January 2010 to attend the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of ECI and again in 2011.

The President and the Prime Minister of India condoled the passing away of President Hugo Chavez on 5 March 2013. Shri Sachin Pilot, former Minister of State for Corporate Affairs represented India at the State funeral of President Chavez. Shri Pilot paid his condolences to President Chavez's mother, Mrs. Elena Frias de Chavez and to Acting President, Mr. Nicolas Maduro.

External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj met former Executive Vice President Mr. Jorge Arreaza on 22 April 2015 on the sidelines of Asia Africa Summit 2015 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen. (Dr.) V. K. Singh visited Caracas on 24-25 May 2015. He held meetings with former Vice President, Mr. Jorge Arreaza, Foreign Minister Dr. Delcy Rodriguez, former Oil and Mining Minister, Mr. Asdrubal

Chavez, and President of Venezuela's national oil company, PDVSA Mr. Eulogio Del Pino.

External Affairs Minister, Smt. Sushma Swaraj had a pull aside with Foreign Minister Dr. Delcy Rodriguez in New York on 30 September 2015 on the sidelines of UNGA session.

Commercial

An MoU on the establishment of an Indo-Venezuelan Joint Commission was signed during President Chavez's visit to India in 2005. Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, former Minister of State (External Affairs) led the Indian delegation for the first session of the Joint Commission in August 2005 in Caracas. The 2nd JCM, led by Shri Salman Khurshid, former EAM and Mr. Elias Jaua, former Foreign Minister of Venezuelawas held in Delhi on 20 December 2013. 9 Vice Ministers of Venezuela dealing with Petrochemicals, External Trade, Agriculture, Food, Health, Air and Water Transport, Telecommunications, IT & Postal Services, Culture and Education accompanied Mr. Jaua.

Shri Murli Deora, former Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas visited Venezuela in May 2010 to witness the signing ceremony of the Carabobo oil project. During Shri Deora's call on former President Chavez, the latter agreed to supply more crude oil to India.

Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia, former Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, along with a 20-member CII business delegation paid an official visit to Venezuela on 8-9 July 2012. He held bilateral talks with the Venezuelan Trade Minister, Health Minister, Vice Foreign Minister and Vice President of PDVSA.

Mr. Rafael Ramirez, former Minister of Petroleum and Mining and President of PDVSA visited India and held wide-ranging talks with former Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Mr. Veerappa Moily on 24 September 2013.

PDVSA President, Mr. Eulogio Del Pino visited India on 15-16 June 2015. He met Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan and Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen. (Dr.) V.K. Singh.

Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan met former Oil and Mining Minister, Mr. Asdrubal Chavez on 4 June 2015 in Vienna.

The main items of India's exports are pharmaceuticals, chemicals, textiles, calcined petroleum coke (CPC), engineering products such as scooters, equipment and machinery. The Indian pharma industry has already made a mark and some

reputed companies (Sun Pharma, Dr. Reddy's, Glenmark, Claris, Cipla) are operating in Venezuela.

The main items of India's imports from Venezuela are crude oil, iron pellets and electrical cables.

The bilateral trade figures for the past four years are as below:

(in million US\$)

	2012	2013	2014	2014-15	2015-16
India's Exports to Venezuela (CIF US\$)	355.365	352.720	245.60	258.07	130.66
Venezuela's Exports to India (non-oil) (FOB US\$)	4.162	2.907	33.60	60.75	23.18

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
India's oil Imports from Venezuela	6653.12	14105.91	13936.59	11669.14	5678.63

Source: Venezuelan National Institute of Statistics & Export-Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India.

A bilateral Agreement on cooperation in the hydrocarbons sector was signed during former President Chavez's visit in March 2005, along with a MoU offering ONGC Videsh Ltd. (OVL) opportunities for oil and gas exploration in Venezuela, including a heavy oil field in the Orinoco belt, following which OVL opened its office in Venezuela. In April 2008, an agreement was signed for the creation of a Joint Venture called "Petrolera IndoVenezolana SA" for production and exploration of oil in the San Cristobal field in which OVL has a 40% stake while PDVSA has the remaining 60% share. OVL's investment in the San Cristobal Project is US\$355.7 million.

In another significant development in February 2010, an international consortium comprising ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Oil India Ltd. (OIL), Repsol of Spain and Petronas of Malaysia were declared the winners of an international bidding process to develop a multi-billion dollar integrated onshore Carabobo oil project in the Orinoco belt of Venezuela. The three Indian companies together hold 18% of the stake. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), in March 2010, approved an initial investment of US\$2.181 billion in the project.

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has a 15-year crude supply contract with PDVSA. The other major importer of oil from Venezuela is Essar. Total annual imports, which were to the tune of USD 12 billion, have reduced by nearly half in the last one year due to a sharp decrease in oil price.

Culture

There is a great deal of interest and appreciation for Indian art and culture in Venezuela. There are several centres in Venezuela established by Indian spiritual Gurus/groups like Sai Baba, Brahma Kumaris, Radha Swami etc. There are also Krishna/ISKON temples and several yoga centres all over the country. There are a large number of Sai Baba devotees in Venezuela, many of whom visit India on a regular basis. Following the passing away of Sai Baba, the National Assembly of Venezuela passed a unanimous Resolution to honour him. Several Indian nuns from the Missionaries of Charity are based in Venezuela.

Ayurveda is becoming popular and has been recognized as an alternative system of medical treatment in a health regulation issued by the Government of Venezuela in February 2001.

The first International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated on 21 June 2015 in Caracas and Merida. The second edition of IDY was celebrated on 19 June 2016 in many cities of Venezuela such as Caracas, Maracaibo, Merida, Cumana, Maracay etc. A 3-day Holi festival, was organized during 18-21 March 2016, which saw a massive turnout of over 25000 people.

The Embassy was instrumental in starting a *Catedra Libre* (India Chair/Study Centres) in the University of Los Andes (ULA) in Merida in 2006 and in the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) in Caracas in 2010. Dr. B.R Ambedkar Study Centre was opened in Santa Maria University, Caracas on 14 April 2016.

Venezuelan experts are sent to India every year under ITEC programme. ICCR has approved 4 scholarships for Venezuela starting from academic year 2017.

Indian Community

There are about 50 Indian families in Venezuela, of which about 35 are in Caracas. The Indian Association of Venezuela, which was revived in 2003, organizes Indian festivals like Diwali, Holi, etc in which members of Indian community and friends of India participate.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Caracas website:

www.embindia.org

Embassy of India, Caracas Facebook:

www.facebook.com/IndiaInVenezuela

Embassy of India, Caracas Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/IndiaVenezuela>

Embassy of India, Caracas Flickr:

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