

India-Venezuela Relations

Political

The President and Prime Minister of India condoled the passing away of President Hugo Chavez on March 5, 2013. President Shri Mukherjee conveyed condolences to the family of President Chavez and to the Government and people of Venezuela on behalf of the Government and people of India. He wrote that the longstanding ties between the people of India and Venezuela were strengthened under President Chavez's leadership, and that the Government and people of India stood by the people of Venezuela in their hour of grief (May 7). In his message, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh said that President Chavez made a tremendous contribution to the development of closer relations among the countries of the developing world. India was grateful for his personal efforts in strengthening relations between India and Venezuela and would continue to work towards even closer relations with the friendly people of Venezuela (6 March). The Rajya Sabha paid tribute to President Chavez and also observed one minute's silence in his memory (6 March). Shri Sachin Pilot, Hon'ble Minister of State for Corporate Affairs, represented India at the State Funeral of President Chavez on 8 March 2013. Shri Pilot also held bilateral talks with Foreign Minister Mr. Elias Jaua who thanked the Government of India for expression of solidarity with Venezuela at a difficult time for the country (9 March). Both leaders also agreed to further deepen and expand bilateral relations and hold the Joint Commission Meeting at a mutually convenient time later this year.

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, congratulated Mr. Nicolas Maduro Moros upon his election as the new President of Venezuela in the 14-April Presidential election (17 April). Ambassador Ms. Smita Purushottam represented India at President Maduro's swearing-in ceremony held at the National Assembly (19 April).

Earlier, EAM had sent his greetings to Mr. Elias Jaua on his appointment as Foreign Minister (January 2013). Mr. Jaua reciprocated by writing a very warm letter of congratulations on the occasion of India's Republic Day.

India and Venezuela have been maintaining cordial relations. The 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations was celebrated in 2009. Resident Embassies have been in Caracas and New Delhi for over three decades and there is mutual goodwill and cooperation between the two countries including in multilateral fora. Venezuela is a member of NAM and G-15 and has been elected as the next NAM Chairman. There is a similarity of views on major international, political and economic issues. The leadership and people of Venezuela have regard for India, its policies, culture and traditions and the role India has played in international affairs since independence. Venezuela has been supporting India in international organizations.

President Chavez paid a State visit to India on 4-7 March, 2005. He held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and the then 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 hydrocarbons sector.

Shri Murli Deora, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, visited Venezuela for the second time in May 2010 to witness the signing ceremony of the Carabobo Oil Project and brought a letter from PM Manmohan Singh for President Chavez. During Shri Deora's call on President Chavez, President Chavez agreed to supply more crude oil to India. Shri Deora carried a letter from President Chavez addressed to PM Manmohan Singh in which President Chavez expressed satisfaction that the oil companies of Venezuela and India were cooperating with each other and hoped that the two countries could further expand their cooperation for the good of the peoples of the two countries.

During 2010, Mr. Temir Porras, Venezuelan Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs for Asia, Middle East and Oceania, visited India twice in May and September and held bilateral discussions with Secretary (West). In response to the devastation caused by rains in Venezuela in 2010, the Government of India gave a cash contribution of US\$1million to the Venezuelan Government. The President of India has wished President Chavez a speedy recovery from his illness.

Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia, Hon. 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. MOS (C&I) held bilateral talks with the Venezuelan Trade Minister, Health Minister, Vice Foreign Minister and Vice President of State oil company (PDVSA), among others, to further deepen and expand bilateral trade and commerce for mutual benefit.

The then Foreign Minister of Venezuela Mr. Nicolas Maduro Moros (now President), visited India to attend the First Meeting of the India-CELAC Troika Foreign Ministers held in New Delhi on August 7, 2012 in which Foreign Minister of Chile, Mr. Alfredo Moreno Charme and Vice Foreign Minister of Cuba, Mr. Rogelio Sierra also participated. India was led by External Affairs Minister (EAM) Shri S.M. Krishna. The discussions were aimed at, inter alia, strengthening the multifaceted bilateral cooperation between India and CELAC, coordinating responses to regional issues and addressing international challenges including UN reforms, the international financial crisis, climate change and international terrorism. Mr. Maduro also held bilateral talks with EAM and Shri Jaipal Reddy, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Both sides agreed to work more closely to further strengthen and diversify bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest. Mr. David Velasquez, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs for Asia, Middle, East and Oceania, accompanied Mr. Maduro to India.

Shri V.S. Sampath, Hon'ble Chief Election Commissioner of India, visited Caracas from 27 August to 1 September, 2012 at the invitation of Dr. Tibisay Lucena Ramirez, President of the National Electoral Council (CNE) of Venezuela to attend an International Seminar on "Innovation and Technological Vanguard: Automated Voting Systems" in which election authorities of South Korea, Argentina, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay also participated. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Election Commission of India and the National Electoral Council of Venezuela was signed on 31 August. Both sides expressed their

desire to strengthen the bonds of friendship between India and Venezuela and between their National Electoral bodies in the interest of strengthening democracy. Shri Sampath was accompanied by Dr. Alok Shukla, Deputy Election Commissioner.

Bilateral Trade

The main items of India's exports are pharmaceuticals, chemicals, calcined petroleum coke (CPC), textiles and engineering products such as scooters, equipment and machinery. The Indian pharma industry has already made a mark and some reputed companies (example: Sun Pharma, Dr. Reddy's) are operating in Venezuela. The main items of India's imports from Venezuela are crude oil, iron pellets and electrical cables. Tata Motors entered the market in 2007 with its first consignment of 1000 Indica and Indigo cars but they have not been able to bring more cars due to various constraints. A 35-member strong Pharmexcil delegation visited Venezuela from 26-29 February to explore business opportunities. They participated in a Business Seminar followed by a Buyers-Sellers Meet. The CII-led Business delegation (8-11 July, 2012) accompanying MOS (C&I) explored business opportunities with their Venezuelan counterparts in sectors such as petroleum and hydrocarbons, pharmaceuticals, plastics, Information Technology, mining and metallurgy, auto-parts, agro-products, among others. They also participated in a business-to-business meet and a seminar on "Investment in Venezuela" organized by Venezuela's National Council for Investment Promotion (Conapri). The Embassy organized an India-Venezuela Business Meet to explore possibilities of expanding cooperation and trade in the auto parts sector in which several members of Venezuela's auto parts industry participated (30 November, 2012). Mr. Jose Cinnirella, Vice President, National Chamber of Commerce for Auto Parts (CANIDRA) attended the event and later assured all support to promote India's exports to the market. Many facts about the Indian auto industry were made known at this event which were appreciated by the businessmen present.

A highly successful Business Promotion Meet was organized at India House in which more than 50 Venezuelan business-persons from different sectors participated (14 March). The Country Managers of ONGC (Videsh) and Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, with offices in Venezuela, also participated. The Venezuelan participants appreciated the initiative and said that they had a very good experience of doing business with India. They mentioned that they were looking at India as India was known for quality, competitive prices and innovative technology in several areas.

Bilateral trade figures are given below:

(In Million US \$)

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Growth Rate: Between 2007-08 and 2011-12
India's Total	142.80	184.51	183.96	169.86	251.10	47.82%

Exports to Venezuela						
India's Imports from Venezuela	389.91	4,217.05	2,885.76	5209.96	6704.2	28.68%
Total Bilateral Trade	532.7	4401.56	3069.72	5379.81	6955.29	1205.67%

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

Joint Commission: An MOU on the establishment of an Indo-Venezuelan Joint Commission was signed during the visit of President Chavez to India in 2005. Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, former Minister of State (External Affairs), visited Venezuela in August 2005 for the first session of the Joint Commission. The Joint Commission discussed cooperation in areas such as energy, infrastructure and railways, low cost housing, trade, science and technology, culture, poverty alleviation, consumer protection and standards, health, agriculture and defense. The second session of the Joint Commission is expected to be held in New Delhi later this year.

Hydrocarbons: A bilateral Agreement on cooperation in the hydrocarbons sector was signed during 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. On April 8, 2008, an agreement between OVL and CVP (subsidiary of PDVSA, Venezuela's national oil company) 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 a major development on February 10, 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, while Petronas and Repsol each have 11%. The remaining 60% stake is with PDVSA. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, on March 19, 2010, approved an initial investment of US\$2.181 billion in the project. On May 12, 2010, a signing ceremony was held in Caracas for the creation of the Joint Venture, **PetroCarabobo S.A.**, between CVP and members of the international consortium, in the presence of President Hugo Chavez and witnessed by Shri Murli Deora, Hon'ble Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas of India.

The "First Oil" from PetroCarabobo S.A. Project was produced on 27 December 2012. Production is expected go up to about 27000 bopd by the end of 2013 and up to about 400,000 bopd in about 5-6 years.

In another major development, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) signed a 15-year crude supply contract with PDVSA, Venezuelan's State Oil Company, under which Venezuelan will send up to 400,000 barrels of oil per day (bopd) to India (25 September). The contract was signed in the presence of Mr. Rafael Ramirez, Venezuela's Oil and Mining Minister and Mr. P.M.S. Prasad, Executive Vice President of Reliance. Venezuela currently sends around 270,000 bopd to India.

Other Sectors: Venezuela has expressed interest in cooperation with India for import of relevant technologies and machinery for various development projects in the country such as agro-processing, milk and animal husbandry. Currently an agreement is in an advanced stage of negotiation for importing buffalo sperm and germplasm from India. There is also interest in collaboration with India in the health sector, bio-technology, remote sensing, IT and other areas. India and Venezuela are currently negotiating the draft Agreements for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Mutual Legal Assistance. The Embassy held a special screening of Shyam Benegal's film "Manthan" for Venezuelan Vice Foreign Minister Mr. David Velazquez, senior officials from Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Land and cooperative societies with the objective of exploring greater cooperation in the milk cooperative sector, training of Venezuelan personnel in India and export of powdered milk to Venezuela (22 May).

Culture: Performances of Indian dance and music troupes used to be regularly sponsored through ICCR. However, the last such cultural troupe came here in 2009. Festivals of India, Indian Food Festivals and Indian Film Festivals are organized regularly by the Embassy in collaboration with the Venezuelan authorities. Venezuelan electronic and print media have been screening/ publishing documentaries/ programmes and stories on India. 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. Ayurveda is becoming popular here 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 7th Food and Cultural Festival of India in Caracas was held successfully at Hotel Marriott from 18-30 October, 2010 and the 8th edition of this festival is scheduled to be held from 12-24 March 2012. India successfully participated in the 39th International Fair of Barquisimeto in September 2011. The Embassy, in association with the Indian Association of Venezuela, organized a colorful India-Day celebrations at Ambassador's Residence which showcased various aspects of Indian culture including film, dances, music, the Art of Living etc. (9 December, 2012). The evening was made possible with the help of Venezuelans who have dedicated themselves to various aspects of Indian culture. On the occasion of 100 years of Bollywood Cinema, the *Cinemateca Nacional* of Venezuela screened 7 Indian films with Spanish subtitles in its theaters across Venezuela from 24 to 31 May, 2013. The films were made available to them by the Embassy. PDVSA Estancia has also responded favourably to Embassy's request to propagate Indian films and is planning an India week this summer.

Education: 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 2007. The *Catedra Libre* in ULA is particularly active in organizing seminars, symposia, etc. on Gandhiji and India-related subjects on a regular basis. It has set up a permanent course on the “Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi”. Gandhiji’s autobiography has also been published in Spanish by the Embassy in collaboration with the University. ULA has also entered into a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with JNU and Delhi University. ‘*Catedra Libre-India*’ at the UCV was officially inaugurated on April 7, 2010 in the presence of former Ambassador Shri Lal Dingliana. With the active support of the Embassy, this *Catedra* intends to encourage studies of Indian history, culture and polity through seminars, talks etc. within the university campus. Ambassador gave a lecture on “India as an Emerging Power” at the UCV Campus on 29 March and on 28 June at Los Andes University, both of which were organized by the India Chairs. Ambassador delivered a comprehensive lecture on various aspects of India and its growing international role at Simon Bolivar University in Caracas (3 December 2012). The students of International Relations of Santa Maria University (USM) in Caracas set up an Indian Stall as part of "3rd Model Diplomatic Representation" organized at the university campus on 1 February, 2013. Ambassador inaugurated two photo exhibitions on India – “A Cultural Glimpse of India” at the Central Library of the Simon Bolivar University (USB) in Caracas on 6 May 2013 and “India: Enclave of a Subcontinent” at the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) on 20 May 2013. The latter was organized with the active support of the India Chair, *Catedra Libre India Siglo XXI* at UCV. Both the exhibitions saw enthusiastic response from students and professors of the two universities.

ITEC: Encouraged by the response last year, the Government of India has allotted 15 ITEC seats to Venezuela for 2013-14 and 5 seats to the countries of concurrent accreditation. Curacao, a territory of concurrent accreditation, could utilize only 1 slot last year. We are making all efforts to disseminate information about ITEC courses.

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.

June 2013