Embassy of India  
Mexico City

**Brief on India-Belize Relations**

Belize, formerly British Honduras, is the only English-speaking country in Central America and is a member of the Commonwealth and the System of Integration in Central America group. Belize gained independence on 21 September 1981. It is a small country with area of 22,800 sq. kms. and a diversified population of around 370,000 and is located on the Caribbean Sea - with Mexico in the north and Guatemala on the west.

The Indian Ambassador to Mexico is concurrently accredited as India’s non-resident High Commissioner to Belize. Present High Commissioner, Shri Manpreet Vohra presented his credentials on 12th August 2019. Both sides have an Hony. Consul General in the other country.

**Political**

Notwithstanding the distance, India and Belize enjoy friendly, warm, and cordial relations. Belize traditionally supports India on most issues, in the UN and other multilateral fora, and vice versa. Several bilateral visits at political and senior levels have helped promote ties, which included those of Mr Philip Zuniga, President of the Belizean Senate for attending a Parliamentary Conference in New Delhi in September 2007 and Mr John Birchman Saldivar, Minister for Sports and Governance for the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi in October 2010, from the Belizean side and of Shri Sujan Chakraborty, MP, for a Commonwealth Parliamentary study on environment in Belize in February/March 2007, Shri Kamal Nath, Minister of Urban Development for the Board Meeting of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum in Belize in May 2012. MOS (EA) Gen. (Retd) V K Singh had a meeting with Foreign Minister of Belize in May 2015 on the sidelines of India-SICA Ministerial meeting in Guatemala City and Shri Sudarshan Bhagat, MoS (TA) visited Belize on a bilateral mission from 14-16 May 2018.

**Bilateral cooperation**

India has offered a line of credit of US$30 million to Belize as part of the lines of credit extended to SICA countries. India also offers 12 training slots to Belize under ITEC Program. Belizean diplomats are also provided training at the Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of External Affairs.
In recent years, India has extended cooperation to Belize for development by way of a gift of Bajaj 3-wheelers, medicines, cricket sets, and computer sets for an India Belize Friendship Computer Centre (St. John’s College). During 2013, India sent on deputation a senior IPS Officer under the ITEC programme for one year as Adviser to the Commissioner of Police of Belize. An MoU finalising the proposal for setting up India Belize Centre of Engineering in the University of Belize, Belmopan was signed in 2018 and HMT(I) is implementing the project which is expected to be completed by end of 2019.

Recently, Government of India has donated 40 computers at a cost of US$ 50,000/- for The Orange Walk Institute for Vocational Education & Training. Fire Fighting Truck for the remote town of Punta Gorda at a cost of US$ 300,000/- is in the pipeline. Recently on 21 February 2019, Mahatma Gandhi Internet Resource Centre with 10 computers was inaugurated and dedicated to general public.

Belize and India have concluded the bilateral Agreement for the Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection w.r.t. Taxes (AEI&ACT), the Visa Waiver Agreement for persons holding Diplomatic/ Official passports between the Governments of India and an MoU for setting up of India-Belize Centre of Engineering (IBCE) in Belize.

India-SICA Dialogue

India established this dialogue forum at the level of the Foreign Ministers, with the countries of the System of Integration in Central America, including Belize, to provide an institutional framework for strengthening and expanding the relationship with the Central American countries. The third meeting was held in May 2015 in Guatemala City. Cooperation in a wide range of issues are being discussed by this forum including UN Reform, terrorism, climate change, nuclear disarmament, food and energy security and disaster management.

A Business Forum has been set up to promote trade between India and SICA. India also announced a Line of Credit of US$ 240 million to the eight SICA countries, including US$ 30 million to Belize, either for country-specific or joint SICA projects.

Economic & Commercial

Bilateral trade is understandably limited ranging in recent years to US$ 12-25 million. In 2017-18, the total trade was US$ 14.84 million only. Indian exports (US$ 13.48 million) were mainly tobacco products, textiles and auto parts, and imports (US$ 1.36 million) were mainly agricultural products, processed foods and apparel. In 2018 (CY), India exported goods worth US$12.46 million and imported goods worth
US$48 thousand. Certain sectors of the Belizean economy such as tourism, fishery and food processing offer good potential for Indian investors. The pharmaceuticals sector may also be of interest to Indian companies based in Latin America to expand their distribution network to Belize.

**Indian Community**

Belize has over 500 persons by way of an Indian business community, mainly Sindhis, that migrated there from India in the recent decades and constitute a valuable link between Belize and India. Together with dependants, the community is about 1500 individuals of which roughly 200 are NRIs and rest PIOs.

There is also an “East Indian” community, about 7,000-8,000 strong, that migrated to Belize from the Caribbean over a period of time beginning 150 years ago, who are totally assimilated with the local society but have evinced interest to re-discover their lost Indian roots, through various Indian cultural programmes and activities. There are two community organisations, viz., the Belize Indian Merchants Association (BIMA) based in the Corozal Free Trade Zone and the recently revived Belize Indian Community (BIC) based in Belize City. Both have their own temples which act as community centres for the larger cultural needs of the community. The community organized a Diaspora Conference in August 2014, with participation from several Caribbean and other countries.

Belizean nationals have been extended the facility of online e-Tourist visas for visiting India. Recently, Belize government has exempted Indian nationals (among other nationals), who possess a valid US visa or US Green Card from the requirement of obtaining Belizean visa for short term visits to Belize for business, tourism or official work. Such Indian nationals will be issued an entry permit for stay up to 90 days at their entry point to Belize.

**Useful Link**
Embassy of India to Mexico & Belize website: [http://www.indiainmexico.gov.in](http://www.indiainmexico.gov.in)

**23 September 2019**