

## **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 countries marked the 60th Anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations in 2019. Resident Embassies have been in Caracas and New Delhi for over four decades. Venezuela is one of India's largest oil suppliers.

### **Political**

Venezuela has declared India as one of its main foreign policy priorities along with China, Russia and Iran. 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.

Then President and then 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 then 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 and former Oil and Mining Minister, Mr. Asdrubal Chavez.

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.

Former Venezuelan FM Dr Delcy Rodriguez led a 14 member delegation including Oil Minister Eulogio del Pino and Vice Minister Felix Plasencia to visit India during 17-18 August 2016. Dr. Rodriguez handed over an invitation from President Maduro for India's participation in the 17<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit. The delegation had meetings with EAM Smt Sushma Swaraj and MOS for Petroleum and Natural Gas (Independent Charge) Shri Dharmendra Pradhan. The two sides agreed to move ahead for an early finalization of a number of agreements in various areas and early holding of the next JCM.

The 17<sup>th</sup> NAM Summit was held in Margarita Island in Venezuela during 17-18 September 2016. Former Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari represented India at the Summit whereas MOS for External Affairs, Shri M.J. Akbar and PR to UN led the Ministerial and SOM respectively. Terrorism and UN reforms were the focal areas of India's intervention at the Summit. Former VP had a bilateral meeting with President Maduro.

Venezuelan FM Arreaza signed the International Solar Agreement on November 6, 2017. President Maduro ratified the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement on March 6, 2018. Venezuela sent a high-level delegation to the International Solar Alliance Founding Conference in New Delhi on March 11, 2018, led by FM Jorge Arreaza and accompanied by Minister of Foreign Trade, Vielma Mora and Petroleum Minister, Manuel Quevedo. On the sidelines, the delegation met the Indian Commerce and Industry Minister, Shri Suresh Prabhu and Petroleum Minister, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan. Although President Maduro was supposed to lead the delegation in the Summit, he cancelled his visit at the last minute, citing pre-occupations concerning the forthcoming Presidential elections. Venezuela did not participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> Assembly of the ISA held at New Delhi from October 3-5, 2018.

EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj met the FM of Venezuela Jorge Arreaza on the sidelines of Mid-term Ministerial meeting of NAM on 5 April 2018. President of the Supreme Court, H.E. Maikel Moreno participated in the 19<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Chief Justices of the World held in India from 14-20 November 2018 in Lucknow.

The Ministerial Meeting of the Coordination Bureau of the NAM took place in Caracas on July 20 and 21. India was represented by a 3-member delegation, headed by Shri Syed Akbaruddin, Permanent Representative of India to the UN. During NAM meeting within 74<sup>th</sup> UNGA in New York, India congratulated Venezuela for their successful leadership of NAM over the past 3 years.

India supported Venezuela's candidature in UNHRC whose elections were held on October 17, 2019. Venezuela won the seat.

In Baku, Azerbaijan, on October 24 Venezuelan FM Jorge Arreaza, met with the EAM of India, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, to strengthen South-South cooperation and boost the bilateral relationship. The meeting was framed in the XVIII Preparatory Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs for the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned

Movement (NAM), held since October 21. The high authorities discussed the commercial and economic agreements between the two nations.

VP Venkaiah Naidu held discussions with President of Venezuela Nicolás Maduro on the sidelines of the 18th NAM Summit in Baku, Azerbaijan on October 26. Venkaiah Naidu congratulated Maduro on the successful tenure as NAM chairperson. VP secretariat said that the two leaders held discussions on a wide range of issues of mutual interest. They also deliberated on the need to boost South-South cooperation by forging constructive development partnerships with countries across the globe.

In order to strengthen the ties of fraternity, cooperation and brotherhood between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the Republic of India, Executive Vice President Delcy Rodríguez, arrived to India on October 29, in the company of the Minister of Economy and Finance, Simón Zerpa, as part of a binational agenda coordinated by the President of the Republic, Nicolás Maduro and to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Solar Alliance General Assembly. This was stated by Vice President Rodríguez, through her account on the Twitter.

On October 30, Indian EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar had a cordial meeting with the Executive VP of Venezuela Delcy Rodriguez on the sidelines of the 2nd General Assembly of ISA. Both the sides discussed matters relating to bilateral and international cooperation. India looks forward to productive and forward-looking deliberations with partner countries to shape ISA's agenda in the coming years, said Jaishankar after the meeting.

A delegation from the Ministry of People's Power for Ecologic Mining Development of Venezuela, led by the Vice Minister for Exploration and Eco-Mining Investment, Magaly Hernandez, participated at the Kimberley Process Plenary 2019, hosted by India from 18-22 November 2019.

India was elected as a member of the Council of International Maritime Organization in Category (b) viz. States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade for 2020-21 in the IMO Assembly on November 29. Venezuela supported the Indian candidature.

Venezuela extended its support to the Indian candidature to the Human Rights Council, term 2022-2024, in elections to be held in June 2021, in New York, within the framework of the 75th Session of the UNGA. Also Venezuela extended its full and unilateral support to the Indian candidature to the Security Council, term 2021-2022, in elections to be held in June 2020, in New York, within the framework of the 74th Session of the UNGA.

The Executive Vice President, Dr. Delcy Rodriguez and the Foreign Minister, Jose Arreaza have indicated that President Maduro wants to visit India.

## **Commercial**

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.

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

Former 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.

Manuel Quevedo, Oil Minister of Venezuela visited India at an energy event (PETROTECH) on 11 February 2019. He also met Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan.

The main items of India's exports are pharmaceutical products, nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances, man-made staple fibers, organic chemicals and cotton. The main items of India's imports from Venezuela are mineral fuels and crude oil, aluminium and articles thereof and lead with articles thereof.

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. 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. Venezuelan Government as well as the private sector owes an amount of around US\$ 533 million and 12 million euros to the Indian companies. The figures include dividend payment of ONGC pending with Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA).

## **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 Sathya 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 Sathya Sai Baba devotees in Venezuela, many of whom visit India on a regular basis. Following the passing away of Sathya 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 AYUSH Information Cell of Venezuela and the second in Latin America was inaugurated in Maracay in July 2017. The first International Day of Yoga (IDY) was celebrated on 21 June 2015 in Caracas and Merida. The second and third IDYs were celebrated in many cities of Venezuela such as Caracas, Maracaibo, Merida, Cumana and Maracay. A 3-day Holi festival, was organized in March 2016, which saw a massive turnout of over 25000 people. A *Catedra Libre* (India Chair) was set up 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. A workshop and IT Centre was set up in Araira, Miranda State on 16 March 2017. Nearly 1000 students from the local community benefit from the project. A Vallabhbhai Patel India-Venezuela Association (VIVA) Centre was set up in El Hatillo, Caracas on 31 October 2016 to mark National Unity Day. Mahatma Gandhi Center was inaugurated in Caricuao on 2 October 2017. Mahatma Gandhi Foundation Venezuela, which was set up in June 2016, offers regular diploma courses on non-violence in two universities. Venezuelan experts are sent to India every year under ITEC programme. ICCR has approved 4 scholarships for Venezuela starting from academic year 2017. Several Gol sponsored cultural groups visited Venezuela in 2017, which include groups on Indian music, Bhangra, Manipuri, Odissi and Bharatanatyam dance forms. India was a participating country at the 13th International Book Fair (FILVEN 2017) in Caracas in November 2017. Two books on India in Spanish were released by the Venezuelan Minister of Culture at the event. Earlier, the first Spanish version of Arthasashtra authored by a Venezuelan Professor was released. Two books on North Eastern States were released in Spanish in March, 2018. 4th IDY was held on June 23 at PDVSA Parque La Estancia in the heart of Caracas and was co-sponsored by ONGC Videsh Ltd. To mark the commencement of the celebrations of

Mahatma Gandhi's 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary, Embassy organized an LED Projection on the 'Relevance of Bapu's message in the contemporary world.' The Commemorative Postage stamps on 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of the Mahatma were released.

Gandhi Hall was inaugurated at Maracay Venezuela on 30 October 2018 jointly by the Embassy and Gran Fraternidad Universal, Venezuela. Yoga classes are being conducted by the Teacher of Indian culture for 6 Venezuelan Ministries, Central Bank of Venezuela and other public/private establishments.

Professor Nobert Molina Medina of University of Los Andes visited India to participate in Kumbh Mela-2019. The Mission organized an exhibition of Mahatma Gandhi in Merida in March 2019. Gandhi cycling event was organized in Puerto Ordaz in coordination with a local organization FIVA in June 2019. The 5<sup>th</sup> IDY and the Vegetarian Food Festival in commemoration on the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi were held at Gran Fraternidad Universal, Maracay in June 2019. 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi was celebrated on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019 at Caricuao, where bust of Mahatma Gandhi is installed. Vice Minister for Asia, Middle East and Oceania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, attended the event. Mission celebrated the 550<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak Devji at Sant Bani Venezuela on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2019 which was attended by around 80 persons besides Vice Minister for Asia, Middle East and Oceania, Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On Constitution Day, Embassy organized a lecture on Indian Constitution by Prof. Miguel Mónaco at Universidad Católica Andrés Bello. The Rector of the University attended the event. The commemorative stamps on Guru Nanak Dev ji were released by the Mission and the Rector of the Universidad Católica Andrés Bello at the University campus. Mission organised an exhibition on Indian tea in a leading mall of Caracas from 5 to 7 December 2019, which was visited by around 800 people including representatives of Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Trade & Tourism, members of Diplomatic corps, business stakeholders and Venezuelan Citizens. The visitors were offered five varieties of Indian tea provided by the Tea Board of India, for tasting. 60 years of diplomatic relations between India and Venezuela was celebrated with the Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Participation from Venezuela was at the level of Vice Minister for Asia, Middle East and Oceania, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Rubén Darío Molina. Embassy celebrated Pravasi Bharatiya Divas and World Hindi Day on 09<sup>th</sup> January 2020 at the Mission's premises. A live streaming of the video interaction of Minister of External Affairs with 08 Indian Missions abroad, on occasion of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, was projected during the event. Hindi students recited Hindi poems, songs and quotes of Indian leaders. A Hindi quiz was also held for the audience. During the event, the video 'Spirit of Freedom' was screened to commemorate 'Constitution Day and Campaign on Citizens' Duties' and a photographic exhibition on the life of Mahatma Gandhi was displayed to mark his 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary. The flag hoisting ceremony on the occasion of 71<sup>st</sup> Republic Day of India was held on January 26 at the Embassy, which was attended by around 80 people. The Mission organized a reception on 27 January

2020 at Hotel J.W.Marriott, Caracas. The reception was graced by the Executive VP of Venezuela, Ms. Delcy Rodriguez. .In commemoration of 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the VP and Cd'A unveiled a painting made by a renowned Venezuelan artist, Mr. Ender Cepeda, at the behest of this Embassy. Lively performances of Odissi and Bollywood dances and Indian instrumental music, that followed, enthralled the spectators. About 300 guests were present in the event. President Maduro sent his warm greetings to the Government and people of India on the occassion.

A statue of Mahatma Gandhi has been sent by ICCR to be installed at Universidad Metropolitana by a local organization, Mahatma Gandhi Venezuela in March, 2020.

President of Venezuela, Mr. Nicolas Maduro and his wife as well as the Foreign Minister, Mr. Jorge Arreaza are followers of Sathya Sai Baba. It has also come to the knowledge of the Mission that there are around eleven Hindu temples in Venezuela.

Venezuela is a member of the following multilateral organizations:-

UN, IMF, World Bank, OPEC, OAS, NAM, G-15, WTO (G-20), Rio Group, Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of our America (ALBA), CELAC, UNASUR, IADB, PETROCARIBE, UN Human Rights Council.

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