

**Embassy of India
Panama**

India - Panama Bilateral Relations

Political

India-Panama relations are the oldest in the Central American region, dating back to the middle of the 19th Century when groups of Indians came to Panama to work on the construction of Panama Railways and later the Panama Canal in the early 20th Century. Panama also has a Resident Mission in New Delhi. India enjoys warm and cordial political relations with Panama. The diplomatic relations between India and Panama were established in 1962 and Panama was the first country in Central America to establish diplomatic relations with India.

Bilateral Visits:

From India

1. Joint Secretary(LAC), Shri Ashok Das visited Panama on 30 Nov. - 1 Dec: and held meetings with Vice Minister of External Relations, Mr. Luis Miguel Hincapie Director General of Foreign Policy, Ms. Nicole Wong, National Director for Investments, Ms. Essie Mastellari, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Deputy Administrator, Panama Canal Authority, Mr. Manuel Benitez. Discussions covered several bilateral, regional and global issues, ranging from the early conclusion of pending bilateral agreements; India's desire to finalize the Tax Information Exchange Agreement at the earliest; renewed request to Panama to join the International Solar Alliance; cooperation in areas of IT, agriculture and energy. Cross-border terrorism menace that India is faced with, was also highlighted. Ministerial-level visits in 2017 were also discussed. It was evident that both sides are equally desirous of strengthening the relations, including through an exchange of ministerial-level visits.
2. A delegation led by Dr. D. Purandeswari, the then Minister of State (Commerce & Industry) visited Panama on April 15-18, 2013 and inaugurated the "Made-in-India" Exhibition on April 17, 2013 at Panama's biggest international trade show "ExpoComer". Over 120 Indian companies participated in the India Show. MOS met President of the Republic, Foreign Minister and other senior functionaries of the Government
3. Earlier, Shri Milind Deora, the then Minister of State (Shipping, Comm & IT), Shri Vayalar Ravi, the then Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, and Shri Sachin Pilot, the then Minister of State (Comm & IT), had visited Panama in January 2013, July 2012 and April 2012, respectively.

From Panama

- 1 First Lady of Panama Mrs. Lorena Castillo de Varela, visited India to participate in the Laureates and Leaders for Children Summit 2016, at the invitation of Kailash Satyarthi Children Foundation. The Summit was held from December 10-11, 2016. Mrs Varela is the UNAIDS Special Ambassador for AIDS in Latin America.
- 2 Ms. Maria Luisa Navarro, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs and Multilateral Cooperation Affairs, led the Panamanian delegation to participate in the Women's Economic Forum, 2016, held in New Delhi. During the visit, Ms. Navarro met MOS(VKS) and held discussions on the various aspects of our bilateral relations. The visit, although meant mainly for participation in the World Women's Forum, lent an impetus to the enhancement of bilateral engagement.
- 3 Mr. Jorge Barakat Pitty, Minister for Maritime Affairs, of Panama Maritime Authority visited India from March 14-19, 2015. He held meetings with Secretary (Shipping) and MoS for Shipping.
- 4 Mr. Ricardo Quijano, the then Minister of Commerce & Industry (Cabinet rank) of Government of Panama led a high level delegation of 14 members to CII's 5th India-LAC Conclave held in New Delhi on December 9-10, 2013.

Bilateral Agreements

1. MoU on Foreign Office Consultations 2001
2. MoU on Cultural and Educational co-operation 2001
3. Mutual Cooperation between the Foreign Service Institute of MEA and the Diplomatic Academy (of the Ministry of External Relations) of Panama, 2001
4. Mutual Cooperation between Ministry of Agriculture of India and the Ministry of Agricultural Development of Panama in the Field of Agricultural Research and Education, 2001

Trade and Economic Relations

India-Panama trade in US Dollar million (including with Colon Free Trade Zone of Panama -Source: Department of Commerce (India))

	2013-14 (Apr-Mar)	2014-15 (Apr-Mar)	2015-16 (Apr-Mar)	2016-17 (Apr-Sep)
Exports	211.76	302.47	201.16	113.65
Imports	63.05	30.46	72.49	22.08
Total	274.81	377.18	273.65	135.73

India's exports to Panama registered a hike in 2014-15, but decreased in 2015-16 fiscal, reflecting the broad global trends of economic slowdown. India's imports from Panama reflect an upward trend compared to previous years. The main items of India's exports to Panama consist of : textiles; automobiles and accessories; pharmaceuticals articles of iron and steel; plastic products; tobacco products; rubber products; furniture items; electrical and electronic equipments, etc. The items of India's imports from Panama are comprised of teak, other kinds of wood and wooden articles, etc.

The economic resurgence of Panama during the last decade has opened up business and investment opportunities for foreign entrepreneurs, including those from India. Sectors, such as port development, port-related services, infrastructure-building and modernization, mega-engineering projects, energy projects, and IT & ITES, in which Indian companies have earned international reputation, have enormous potential in Panama. The Panama Diamond Exchange, the first such bourse for diamond trading is marked by the presence of some leading Indian companies.

The successful visit of a large Pharmexcil delegation from August 28-31, 2016, during which BSM organized by the Indian Embassy in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture of Panama (CCIAP) was held which lent a marked boost to bilateral engagement in the Pharmaceutical sector. The Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Trade Director of PROINVEX, National Director of Pharmacy and Drugs as well as leading pharma companies of not only Panama, but also Costa Rica and Nicaragua, also participated. In addition to clinching business deals, the Indian companies fully utilized their pre-arranged meetings with the General manager of Colon Free Trade Zone and the CEO of the largest Panamanian private pharmaceutical, logistics company in Central America.

The participation of the Indian companies in the largest annual Central American trade fair, has been significant since the last few years. While 50 Indian companies participated in the EXPOCOMER 201, 120 companies were present at EXPOCOMER 2015 and 66 in EXPOCOMER 2014.

The Embassy organized a 'Make-in-India' event at the Presidential Hall of the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce on October 8, 2014, which was attended by an impressive gathering of Panamanian industrialists, businessmen including Indians, and local dignitaries.

In April 2013, over 120 Indian companies took part in the first-ever "Made-in-India" Exhibition at the biggest annual trade show in Panama, EXPOCOMER. India Show was inaugurated by MoS for Commerce & Industry, Dr. D. Purandeswari. The Indian companies represented various sectors, including automobiles, auto components, textiles, handicrafts, diamonds, jewelry, electrical, engineering goods, leather, silk, bangles, shawls, Ashok Leyland trucks and buses, etc.

Culture

The Embassy organized the celebration of the first and second International Days of Yoga, at the prestigious venue of Parque Omar, in 2015 and 2016, respectively, in cooperation with local Yoga institutes and Yoga practitioners. The event was supported by the Offices of the First Lady, the Mayor of Panama, and the National Cultural institute of Panama (INAC). Commending India's gift of Yoga to the world, Dr. Irvin A. Halman, Administrator General of the National Authority for Government Innovation, and Dr. Jorge Motta, National Secretary for Science & Technology (SENACYT) – the highest ranking presidential advisors for strategic policy on S&T and Education – thanked Ambassador Ms. Shamma Jain for uniting India with Panama through Yoga. Dr. Motta expressed his keen interest in initiating Yoga classes for scientists at the SENACYT. Representatives from the Office of the Mayor, Panamanian Ministry of External Relations, and prominent members of the Indian community attended the events.

An ICCR sponsored Rajasthani Dance Troupe of 8 members, led by Bundu Khan Langa presented a highly appreciated programme of Rajasthani Folk Dances and Songs on July 23rd and 24th, 2015 at the Teatro Anita Villalaz, in Casco Viejo, Panama City. A interactive workshop for the troupe was also held on 24th July, at the premises of the National Cultural institute of Panama (INAC).

India Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)

Under India-SICA cooperation, an India-Panama IT Education Centre of Excellence, sponsored by the Government of India was established in the City of Knowledge in August 2006, by Tata Consultancy Service. The Centre was run efficiently by TCS personnel for two years and later handed over to the National Institute for Professional Formation and Training of Human Development (INADEH), Panama in 2008.

The Government of India has offered 10 ITEC training slots to Panama in 2016-17.

Indian Community

There are around 15,000 PIOs and NRIs (mostly Gujaratis and Sindhis) in Panama, which is the largest Indian Diaspora in South America, south of Texas, USA, excluding the Indian Diaspora in Caribbean countries. The Indian community is mostly engaged in wholesale and retail trade and micro-credit business. The community is financially well-settled and has contributed to the Panamanian society. There are several places of Indian worship in Panama City – a Hindu Temple, a Gurudwara, and two Mosques, and another Hindu Temple in Colon.

December, 2016

Useful Resources :

A) Website of Embassy of India , Panama

<http://www.indianembassyinpanama.com/>

B) Facebook Account :

Embassy of India in Panama :

<https://www.facebook.com/embassyofindiainpanama>

C) You Tube Account :

Embassy of India Panama,

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdnZ2n6EpfrFx12-GgRWRhA>