

**Embassy of India  
Panama**

**Bilateral Brief: India-Costa Rica**

India and Costa Rica enjoy cordial and warm relations, which are being strengthened by the growing commercial engagement between the two countries. Following India's appointment of an Honorary Consul in San Jose in 1995, Costa Rica reciprocated by opening an Honorary Consulate in New Delhi in 1996. Costa Rica opened its Embassy in New Delhi in April 2010. The Indian Embassy in Panama is concurrently accredited to Costa Rica.

**Recent important Bilateral Visits:** The Hon'ble Vice President of India (HVPI) visited Costa Rica from 7-9 March 2019. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation, including Shri K.J. Alphons, MoS for Tourism, Shri R.K. Kashyap, Member of Parliament and senior officials. This was a first ever high-level visit from India to Costa Rica and was highly successful in terms of opening up new opportunities for enhancing bilateral cooperation. The Minister of State for External Affairs, Gen (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd) visited Costa Rica on 21-22 July 2015.

**From the Costa Rican side,** Recently the Vice Foreign Minister of Costa Rica Ms. Lorena Aguilar Revelo, visited India (7-9 Sept. 2019) for attending a meeting of the 14<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties (COP 14) of UNCCD. During this visit, she also had a meeting with JS(LAC). The Second Vice President of Costa Rica, Ms. Ana Helena Chacon Echeverria, accompanied by Mr. Alexander Mora Delgado, the Minister of Foreign Trade participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> India-Latin America and Caribbean Conclave held on October 8-9, 2015 in New Delhi. This was preceded by the visit of Vice-Minister of Foreign Relations, Mr. Alejandro Solano Ortiz, for participating in the second round of Foreign Office Consultations in March 2015 and that of Mr. Alexander Mora, Minister of Foreign Trade in February, 2015 as a Guest Speaker at the NASSCOM Leadership Forum at Mumbai.

**Foreign Office Consultations** between India and Costa Rica were held in August 2012 in Costa Rica. Second round of FoCs was held on March 16, 2015 in New Delhi.

**Bilateral Agreements / MoUs:** The following MoUs/Agreements have been signed between the two countries: MoU on Foreign Office Consultations; MoU for setting up of Centre for Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT), which is now functional; MoU between the Foreign Service Institutes, Agreement on Exemption on Visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic, Official and Service Passports; Letter of Intent for Cooperation in the field of Biotechnology; MoU on Technical Cooperation; and International Solar Alliance (Costa Rica signed the ISA Framework Agreement, but it has not yet ratified).

**Indian's Assistance to Costa Rica:** India's assistance to Costa Rica includes, donation of photovoltaic equipment worth Rs.1.85 million in 1997 for setting up a solar energy research laboratory for training purposes at the University of Heredia under the

ITEC programme; donation of a telephone exchange to Costa Rica's telecom operator ICE in 1998, and a relief assistance of US\$ 25,000 to help rehabilitate flood victims in 1996. India also donated 18 Bajaj 3-wheelers in Dec 2005 to be used by the police department of San Jose. India donated US\$ 100,000 for relief and rehabilitation of victims of Hurricane Tomas in Nov 2010.

**Economic & Commercial Co-operation:** The eco-friendly policies of Costa Rica motivated the country to import 50 Reva electric cars duty-free a few years ago. Scorpio SUVs are imported in small quantities. Bajaj three-wheelers and two-wheelers are assembled in Costa Rica by MASESA, the leading importer and distributor of motorcycles in the country.

**Bilateral Trade:** India-Costa Rica bilateral trade in 2018-19 was US\$ 186.71 million. The exports to Costa Rica were US\$ 136.15 million while the imports from Costa Rica were US\$ 50.56. The main export items comprise of automobiles, pharmaceutical products, textiles and clothing, motor cycles, organic chemicals, electrical machinery, and miscellaneous products like notebooks, cables, and tyres. Major imports from Costa Rica, consist of wood and articles of wood, integrated circuits and micro assemblies, optical medical or surgical instruments, and to a lesser extent, nuts, coffee, tea, glass and glassware

**Commercial and Trade Delegations:** A 16-member delegation from the Export Promotion Council of India Plastic (Plexconcil) visited Costa Rica in March 2015. A 19-member business delegation from the Costa Rican Export Promotion Council, CRECEX, participated in the India International Trade Fair 2007 organized in New Delhi in 2007. There have been several exchanges between software companies in India and Costa Rica over the past decade.

**Indian companies operating in Costa Rica:** Four leading IT companies, viz. Infosys, Wipro, WNS, and CSS Corp are operating in San Jose.

**ITEC Programme:** The ITEC programme is popular in Costa Rica and 20 ITEC slots were allocated for the year 2018-19, which have been doubled to 40 slots in 2019-20 as announced during the HVPI Visit to Costa Rica in March 2019.

**Culture:** There is a great deal of interest in India's history and cultural heritage in Costa Rica and much of the credit for this goes to Prof Hilda Chen Apuy who visited India on a UNESCO scholarship in the 1950's and introduced studies on Indian History, Philosophy and Sanskrit at the University of Costa Rica in San Jose. Since its inception in 2015, the International Day of Yoga is being celebrated with widespread participation of over 200- 300 Costa Ricans in cooperation with local Yoga Institutes and the Indian Community in San Jose. Vide a Presidential Decree issued on October 26, 2018, all activities and initiatives related to promotion of Yoga and meditation have been declared to be in public interest and as part of this initiative, Yoga is being made a part of the curriculum for students in public schools. On the occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, celebrations were held in Costa Rica with the help of the Costa Rica Indian Association (CRIA) in Oct. 2018. The Mission facilitated recording of

Gandhiji's favourite bhajan "Viashnav Jan To" by Mr. Rene Monterrey Ramirez, a Costa Rican musician and was also uploaded on the social media. There is a proposal to establish a Chair for Indian Studies at the University of Costa Rica, as announced during the visit of HVPI to Costa Rica in March 2019. Mr. Mauricio Torres Paniagua, a Yoga instructor and a Civil Engineer travelled to India for participating in the Kumbh Mela in February 2019.

**Visa & Consular matters:** Indian nationals can enter Costa Rica as tourists for stay up to one (1) month with a valid US or Canadian Multiple entry Tourist/Business Visa. However, the Costa Rican work authorization and employment visas for spouses of Indian IT and other professionals working in Costa Rica, often takes two to three years.

**Multilateral Cooperation:** Costa Rica has, by and large, been supportive of India's candidature in the multilateral fora. Costa Rica has also signed the ISA Framework Agreement on Sept. 1, 2017, but is yet to ratify it.

**Indian Community:** Given Costa Rica's close proximity to the US and presence of multinationals such as Intel, various IT professionals, including about 600 persons from India, are deployed in the IT industry in the country. It also includes businessmen, engaged in exports of wood, NGOs and the Missionaries of Charity. There are nine Indian restaurants run by Indians in Costa Rica. The Costa Rica Indian Association (CRIA) ([www.criaindian.org](http://www.criaindian.org)) established in 2010 has been active in organizing social and cultural programmes, as well as trade promotion activities, in collaboration with the Indian Embassy.

**Conclusion:** The recent visit of Hon'ble Vice President of India to Costa Rica (7-9 March 2019) provided an opportunity to review, deepen and expand bilateral relations in diverse areas particularly in the field of development partnership. Some of the potential areas identified during the discussions for bilateral collaboration included: Tourism, particularly eco-tourism, space and biotechnology, renewable including solar and hydel, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, ICT particularly e-governance, urban transport and e-vehicles. Costa Rica was keen to benefit from Indian generics, biological and biosimilar.

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