

## **Bilateral Brief: India-Costa Rica**

**Overview:** 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. India appointed its Honorary Consul General in San Jose in 2022.

**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. This was a first ever high-level visit from India to Costa Rica and 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, biologicals, biosimilar. In September 2021, Secretary(East), led Indian delegation and met Vice Minister of Bilateral Affairs and International Co-operation to hold Foreign Office Consultations. External Affairs Minister visited Panama in April 2023 and participated in India-SICA Foreign Ministers meeting, where he met the Minister of Information technology of Costa Rica.

**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), 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; MoU on Economic Cooperation and Costa Rica has signed the International Solar Alliance Framework Agreement.

### **India's Assistance to Costa Rica**

India's assistance to Costa Rica includes a 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 program; donation of a telephone exchange to Costa Rica's telecom operator ICE in 1998, and 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 the relief and rehabilitation of victims of Hurricane Tomas in Nov 2010. A Centre of Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) was installed by CDAC at National Technical University (UTN), Alajuela, Costa Rica in Feb. 2016. APTECH deputed one head and two trainers for imparting training from May 2016 to April 2018. The Centre has been functioning with local professors since Oct 2018.

## **Economic & Commercial Co-operation**

India-Costa Rica bilateral trade was US\$253.50 in 2022-23. Principal commodities of imports from Costa Rica are wood and articles of wood, integrated circuits & micro assembles, and to a lesser extent, wood pulp, and paper waste, Iron & steel, nuts, and coffee while exports to Costa Rica are mainly miscellaneous chemical products, pharmaceutical products, medical or surgical implements/accessories, organic chemicals, rubber articles, and plastic articles.

Some Indian companies have already set up business operations, especially in the IT sector. Indian IT companies viz. Infosys, L&T Infotech, Wipro, WNS and CSS Corp, and Gravita (which specializes in the recycling of used batteries) are currently operating in San Jose and contributing to the economy of Costa Rica and also providing local employment. In 2019 United Phosphorus Ltd (UPL) established a unit in Costa Rica which will be the regional headquarters of the company for Central & Latin America.

Costa Rica has extended tax exemptions on the purchase of electric vehicles till 2024. 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.

### **ITEC Programme**

25 Training slots have been allotted to Costa Rica under the ITEC program in 2022-23.

**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 1950s and introduced studies on Indian History, Philosophy, and Sanskrit at the University of Costa Rica in San Jose. In recent years, a Costa Rican scholar, Prof. Adriana Molina taught Sanskrit at the University of Costa Rica. 'Little Guru' Sanskrit app was launched at the University of Costa Rica in 2021. Professor Roberto Morales Harley has written an introductory book for studying Sanskrit.

Cooperation in the cultural sphere has included performances of Indian cultural troupes, which have been visiting Costa Rica from time to time.

Since its inception in 2015, the International Day of Yoga is being celebrated with the 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 the promotion of Yoga and meditation have been declared to be in the public interest, and as part of this initiative, Yoga is being made a part of the curriculum

for students in public schools. ASOYOGA group and CRIA are active in organizing IDY in last few years

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. The Mission facilitated the recording of Gandhiji's favorite bhajan "Vaishnav Jan To" by Mr. Rene Monterrey Ramirez, a Costa Rican musician, and was also uploaded on social media.

Five Costa Rican students in 2020 took admission to the online Hindi diploma courses being conducted by Kendriya Hindi Sansthan, Agra. The 'Little Guru' Sanskrit app was launched at the University of Costa Rica in 2021.

Five Costa Rican youths went to India under the Gennext program to learn about Indian institutions and culture in October 2022.

### **Visa & Consular matters**

Indian nationals can enter Costa Rica as tourists for a stay up to one (1) month with a valid US, Schengen, or Canadian Multiple entry Tourist/Business Visa of at least 6-month validity. However, the Costa Rican work authorization as well as employment visas for spouses of Indian IT and other professionals working in Costa Rica often takes two to three years.

### **Indian Community**

Given Costa Rica's proximity to the US and the presence of multinationals such as Intel, various IT professionals, including about 600 persons from India, are deployed in the IT industry in the country. The Indian diaspora also includes businessmen, engaged in exports of wood, those in NGOs, and the Missionaries of Charity. There are several Indian restaurants run by Indians in Costa Rica. The Costa Rica Indian Association (CRIA) ([www.crindian.org](http://www.crindian.org)) established in 2010 has been active in organizing social and cultural programs, as well as trade promotion activities, in collaboration with the Indian Embassy. It is organizing a festive event during Diwali in which several stalls will be set up including some that would promote Indian apparel and Indian food.

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