

India-Venezuela Relations

India and Venezuela have been maintaining cordial relations. The 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations was celebrated in 2009. Resident Embassies have been in Caracas and New Delhi for over three decades and the two countries cooperate in multilateral forums. Venezuela has been elected as the next NAM Chairman in 2015. There is a similarity of views on major international, political and economic issues. Venezuela has emerged as India's fourth largest oil supplier.

Political

The main thrust to the bilateral relationship was imparted by President Chavez's State visit to India on 4-7 March, 2005. He held bilateral talks with former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and the then 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 hydrocarbons sector.

Shri Murli Deora, the then Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, visited Venezuela for the second time in May 2010 to witness the signing ceremony of the Carabobo Oil Project and brought a letter from PM for President Chavez. During Shri Deora's call on President Chavez, President Chavez agreed to supply more crude oil to India. Shri Deora carried back a letter from President Chavez to PM in which President Chavez expressed satisfaction that the oil companies of Venezuela and India were cooperating with each other and hoped that the two countries could further expand their cooperation.

During 2010, Mr. Temir Porras, Venezuelan Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs for Asia, Middle East and Oceania, visited India twice in May and September and held bilateral discussions with Secretary (West). In response to the devastation caused by rains in Venezuela in 2010, the Government of India gave a cash contribution of US\$1 million to the Venezuelan Government.

The President of India wished President Chavez a speedy recovery from his illness once this was announced. Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia, the then 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. MOS (C&I) held bilateral talks with the Venezuelan Trade Minister, Health Minister, Vice Foreign Minister and Vice President of State oil company (PDVSA), among others, to further deepen and expand bilateral trade and commerce for mutual benefit.

The then Foreign Minister of Venezuela Mr. Nicolas Maduro Moros (now President), visited India to attend the First Meeting of the India-CELAC Troika Foreign Ministers held in New Delhi on August 7, 2012 in which Foreign Minister of Chile, Mr. Alfredo Moreno Charme and Vice Foreign Minister of Cuba, Mr. Rogelio Sierra also participated. India was led by External Affairs Minister (EAM). The discussions were aimed at, inter alia, strengthening the multifaceted bilateral cooperation between India and CELAC, coordinating responses to regional issues and addressing international

challenges including UN reforms, the international financial crisis, climate change and international terrorism. Mr. Maduro also held bilateral talks with EAM and Shri Jaipal Reddy, the then Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Both sides agreed to work more closely to further strengthen and diversify bilateral cooperation in areas of mutual interest. Mr. David Velasquez, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs for Asia, Middle, East and Oceania, accompanied Mr. Maduro to India.

Shri V.S. Sampath, Chief Election Commissioner of India, visited Caracas from 27 August to 1 September, 2012 at the invitation of Dr. Tibisay Lucena Ramírez, President of the National Electoral Council (CNE) of Venezuela to attend an International Seminar on “Innovation and Technological Vanguard: Automated Voting Systems” in which election authorities of South Korea, Argentina, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay also participated. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Election Commission of India and the National Electoral Council of Venezuela was signed on 31 August. Both sides expressed their desire to strengthen the bonds of friendship between India and Venezuela and between their National Electoral bodies in the interest of strengthening democracy. Shri Sampath was accompanied by Dr. Alok Shukla, Deputy Election Commissioner.

Mr. Rafael Ramirez, the then Minister of Petroleum and Mining and President of PDVSA, Venezuela's State Oil Company, visited India and held wide-ranging talks with his counterpart, Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister, on 24 September 2013. They agreed to take the bilateral relationship to a new level by further deepening and expanding cooperation in the energy sector and India sought more oil fields, crude oil as well as gas assets in Venezuela. Ramirez expressed Venezuela's willingness to raise oil exports to India. Ramirez acknowledged India's huge refining capacity capable of processing medium and heavy crude oil produced in Venezuela. Ramirez mentioned that diversification of relations with India and other BRICS countries would ensure greater independence for Venezuela. Reliance Industries Limited, which currently imports about 300,000 bpd of oil from Venezuela for processing at its twin refineries at Jamnagar in Gujarat, expressed its intention of increasing its imports to the contracted level of 400,000 bpd. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) expressed its intention of importing 0.5 million tonnes immediately and raise it to 1.5 million tonnes when its Paradip refinery was commissioned next year. HAMEL also expressed its intention of importing at least two million tonnes of Venezuelan oil for processing at its Bhatinda refinery in Punjab. PNG Minister said that India was preparing a road map for expanded business relations with Venezuela. On behalf of the Government of India, Mr. Moily extended an invitation to President Nicolas Maduro to pay a visit to India and also said that he would also visit Venezuela in the near future.

EAM met the then Executive Vice President and present Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza in Jakarta on the sidelines of Asian African Summit 2015 (22 April 2015).

Venezuelan FM Dr Delcy Rodriguez led a 14 member delegation including Oil Minister Eulogio del Pino and Vice Minister Felix Placencia to visit India during 17-18 August 2016. The delegations had meetings with EAM Smt Sushma Swaraj and MOS for Petroleum and Natural Gas (Independent Charge) Shri Dharmendra Pradhan. A whole range of bilateral and multilateral issues were discussed in the meetings. 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. President Maduro said that the delegation was received 'with real spirit of friendship, cooperation, mutual respect and readiness for complementing economic development'.

The 17th NAM Summit was held in Margarita Island in Venezuela during 17-18 September 2016. The Summit was preceded by Meetings of FMs and Senior Officials. VP Shri Hamid Ansari represented India at the Summit whereas MOS(EA), 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. VP had bilateral meetings with President Maduro, Iranian and Cuban Presidents and VP of Nepal. He also met then UNSG candidate, Antonio Guterres. MOS had several bilateral meetings with several countries on the sidelines of the event.

Bilateral Trade

The main items of India's exports are pharmaceuticals, chemicals, calcined petroleum coke (CPC), textiles and engineering products such as scooters, equipment and machinery. The Indian pharma industry has already made a mark and some reputed companies (example: Sun Pharma, Dr. Reddy's) are operating in Venezuela. The main items of India's imports from Venezuela are crude oil, iron pellets and electrical cables. Tata Motors entered the market in 2007 with its first consignment of 1000 Indica and Indigo cars but they have not been able to bring more cars due to various constraints. A 35-member strong Pharmexcil delegation visited Venezuela from 26-29 February to explore business opportunities. They participated in a Business Seminar followed by a Buyers-Sellers Meet. The CII-led Business delegation (8-11 July, 2012) accompanying MOS (C&I) explored business opportunities with their Venezuelan counterparts in sectors such as petroleum and hydrocarbons, pharmaceuticals, plastics, Information Technology, mining and metallurgy, auto-parts, agro-products, among others. They also participated in a business-to-business meet and a seminar on "Investment in Venezuela" organized by Venezuela's National Council for Investment Promotion (Conapri).

The Embassy organized an India-Venezuela Business Meet to explore possibilities of expanding cooperation and trade in the auto parts sector in which several members of Venezuela's auto parts industry participated (30 November, 2012). Mr. Jose Cinnirella, Vice President, National Chamber of Commerce for Auto Parts (CANIDRA) attended the event and later assured all support to promote India's exports to the market. Many facts about the Indian auto industry were made known at this event which was appreciated by the businessmen present.

A highly successful Business Promotion Meet was organized at India House in which more than 50 Venezuelan business-persons from different sectors participated (14 March). Country Managers of ONGC (Videsh) and Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, with offices in Venezuela, also participated. The Venezuelan participants appreciated the initiative and said that they had a very good experience of doing business with India. They mentioned that they were looking at India as India was known for quality, competitive prices and innovative technology in several areas.

The Embassy participated in a large international fair, the Gran Bazar Kermesse 2013, organized by Asociacion de Damas Diplomaticas (ADD), in Caracas on 9 June 2013. An Indian stand was set up on this occasion and decorated with Indian motifs and artifacts. An Indian businessman displayed and Indian handicrafts and textiles. Indian food items, tourism material and literature were also available. Embassy also participated in similar Bazar organized by ADD on 2 November, 2014.

A Textiles Promotional event was held at Embassy Residence on 22 November 2013 in which several Venezuelan and Indian importers of Indian textiles and handicrafts participated and displayed their colourful fabrics and textiles sourced from India. A very successful Make in India event was organized at Embassy Residence on 26 Sept 2014 in which a large number of businessmen and diplomatic community participated.

A very successful and well appreciated pharmaceutical business promotion event was organized in Club Tachira on 26 March 2015 in cooperation of Indian pharmaceutical companies present in Venezuela. About 200 attendees from various pharma sector organizations, regulatory bodies, government ministries and private companies participated. The Indian companies made donation of medicines to hospitals at the event.

In 2017, an exhibition on Indian handicrafts, handlooms and home decor items was inaugurated in Tolon, one of the largest shopping malls in Caracas. Another exhibition on the same items was organized in Trujillo State, which the Governor inaugurated.

The bilateral trade figures for the past five years are as below:

(In Million US \$)

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	20017-18 Apr- Jul
India's Exports to Venezuela (CIF US\$)	196.96	258.07	130.66	62.22	21.02
Venezuela's Exports to India (non-oil) (FOB US\$)	13940.13	11729.89	5701.81	5512.06	1996.88

Source: Export-Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India.

Hydrocarbons: A bilateral Agreement on cooperation in the hydrocarbons sector was signed during 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. On April 8, 2008, an agreement between OVL and CVP (subsidiary of PDVSA, Venezuela's national oil company) 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. OVL's investment in the San Cristobal Project is US\$355.7 million.

In a major development on February 10, 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, while Petronas and Repsol each have 11%. The remaining 60% stake is with PDVSA. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), on March 19, 2010, approved an initial investment of US\$2.181 billion in the project. On May 12, 2010, a signing ceremony was held in Caracas for the creation of the Joint Venture, **PetroCarabobo S.A.**, between CVP and members of the international consortium, in the presence of President Hugo Chavez and witnessed by Shri Murli Deora, former Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas.

The "First Oil" from PetroCarabobo S.A. Project was produced on 27 December 2012. Production is expected go up to about 27000 bopd by the end of 2013 and up to about 400,000 bopd in about 5-6 years.

In another development, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) signed a 15-year crude supply contract with PDVSA, Venezuelan's State Oil Company, under which Venezuela will send up to 400,000 barrels of oil per day (bopd) to India (25 September). The contract was signed in the presence of Mr. Rafael Ramirez, Venezuela's the then Oil and Mining Minister and Mr. P.M.S. Prasad, Executive Vice President of Reliance.

As a follow-up of the visit to India by Venezuelan Oil and Mining Minister Rafael Ramirez on 24 September 2013, the **1st Business Roundtable Venezuela-India: Identification and Development of Opportunities** to explore greater bilateral cooperation in the energy and allied sectors was held in Caracas on 7-9 October 2013. Inaugurating this roundtable PDVSA headquarters, , Venezuelan Minister of Petroleum and Mining Mr. Rafael Ramirez said that **Venezuela was keen to establish a strategic partnership with India** and expressed that expanded bilateral cooperation in the energy and industrial sectors could pave the way for it. He warmly welcomed Indian companies to participate in Venezuela's development programmes. 8 Indian companies participated in the round-table: ONGC (Videsh) Ltd. (OVL), Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. (IndianOil), Oil India Limited (OIL), Engineers India Limited (EIL), HPCL-Mittal Energy Limited (HME), Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL), Essar Energy and Larsen & Toubro (L&T). Top executives of PDVSA and other allied energy institutions, including some from the private sector, participated in these roundtables. The Venezuelan side was impressed by the wide range of hi-tech expertise and innovative solutions which India could provide. The Roundtable served as an excellent opportunity for both sides to assess each other's requirements, synergies and complementarities. Nine joint venture agreements were signed between Indian companies and PDVSA and its subsidiaries.

In 2016, a three member team from OVL led by Shri P.K.Rao, Director visited Venezuela for discussion with PDVSA regarding payment of outstanding dues, further investment in the two JVs and other related issues. A two member team led by

Director(Security) also visited Venezuela to make an assessment of security-related issues of the two JVs in San Cristobal and Petro Carabobo. The MD of ONGC Videsh and President of PDVSA signed an agreement in the presence of President Maduro. OVL agreed to provide \$318 million to PDVSA to strengthen crude production at the joint venture Petrolera Indovenezolana with the target to double the daily oil production from 20000 to 40000 barrels and to enable OVL to recover the pending dividend payments in staggered manner.

In 2017, ONGC received the first installment of \$ 19 million from PDVSA towards outstanding dividend payment. Iran overtook Venezuela to become the third largest supplier of crude oil to India during April-December 2016. Venezuela shifted to fourth place with supply of 17.5 million tons as compared to 19.8 million tons of oil by Iran during the period.

Other Sectors: Venezuela has expressed interest in cooperation with India for import of relevant technologies and machinery for various development projects in the country such as agro-processing, milk and animal husbandry. Currently an agreement is in an advanced stage of negotiation for importing buffalo sperm and germplasm from India. There is also interest in collaboration with India in the health sector, bio-technology, remote sensing, IT and other areas. India and Venezuela are currently negotiating the draft Agreements for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Mutual Legal Assistance. The Embassy held a special screening of Shyam Benegal's film "Manthan" for Venezuelan Vice Foreign Minister Mr. David Velazquez, senior officials from Ministries of Agriculture, Food and Land and cooperative societies with the objective of exploring greater cooperation in the milk cooperative sector, training of Venezuelan personnel in India and export of powdered milk to Venezuela (22 May 2013).

Culture: Performances of Indian dance and music troupes used to be regularly sponsored through ICCR. However, the last such cultural troupe came here in 2009. Festivals of India, Indian Food Festivals and Indian Film Festivals are organized regularly by the Embassy in collaboration with the Venezuelan authorities. Venezuelan electronic and print media have been screening/ publishing documentaries/ programmes and stories on India. There are several centres in Venezuela established by Indian spiritual Gurus/groups like 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 Sai Baba devotees in Venezuela, many of whom visit India on a regular basis. Following the passing away of Sai Baba, the National Assembly of Venezuela passed a unanimous Resolution to honour him. Ayurveda is becoming popular here 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 7th Food and Cultural Festival of India in Caracas was held successfully at Hotel Marriott from 18-30 October, 2010 and the 8th edition of this festival was held from 12-24 March 2012. India successfully participated in the 39th International Fair of Barquisimeto in September 2011. The Embassy, in association with the Indian Association of Venezuela, organized a colorful India-Day celebrations at Ambassador's Residence which showcased various aspects of Indian culture including film, dances, music, the Art of Living etc. (9 December, 2012). A similar Diwali gala cum India business promotion event was organized at Pestana Hotel on 26 October, 2014. The evening was made possible with the help of Venezuelans who have dedicated themselves to various

aspects of Indian culture. On the occasion of 100 years of Bollywood Cinema, the *Cinemateca Nacional* of Venezuela screened 7 Indian films with Spanish subtitles in its theaters across Venezuela from 24 to 31 May, 2013. The films were made available to them by the Embassy. PDVSA Estancia has also responded favourably to Embassy's request to propagate Indian films and is planning an India week this summer. India participated in the 10th World Poetry Festival in Venezuela from 16-22 June 2013 in which eminent Hindi Poet Shri Laxmi Shanker Bajpayi represented India. The Indian Cultural Centre run by Mrs. Maria Eugenia Morales and her husband Mr. Cesar Pastran, organized a moving tribute to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore (June 30, 2013) at CELARG, a prestigious cultural centre in Caracas, during which poetry of Tagore was recited and was followed by Indian dances performed by their students.

An 11 member Bhangra Group participated in the Indian Music and Dance Festival in December 2016. A 3 member violin group performed in Barinas State in January 2017. The following events were organized in Caracas to mark Gandhi Jayanti : A conference 'United for Non-Violence' in Metropolitan University with participation of 300 students, faculty members and community leaders; An exhibition of photographs on the life of Mahatma Gandhi in Metropolitan University; a 'Peace Run' in the largest slum'Petare' with participation of 500 children; a concert by the'Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra' attended by 800 people; and a commemorative event at Gandhi Plaza with participation of local community. The great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Tushar Gandhi attended all the events. In 2017, a 6-member Manipuri dance group sponsored by ICCR gave two performances in Caracas. A photographic exhibition on Manipur was inaugurated. The Spanish version of 'Arthashastra' by Kautilya authored by Prof. Javier Fraizo from the Central University of Venezuela was released. The International Day of Yoga was celebrated in 23 places all over Venezuela and concurrently accredited countries in June 2017. The main event was held in Caracas in which more than 600 participated. A painting exhibition from ICCR was inaugurated on 19 July, 2017. The first AYUSH Information Cell of Venezuela and the second in Latin America was inaugurated. A local Ayurveda expert will be present at the Cell twice a week to attend to the queries. 100th birth anniversary of Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay was celebrated. A photographic exhibition by renowned photographer Isaac Paniza was inaugurated on October 23. The 142nd birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was celebrated on October 31. A photographic exhibition on the North Eastern States of India was also inaugurated.

Education: The Embassy was instrumental in starting a *Catedra Libre* (India Chair/Study Centres) in the University of Los Andes (ULA) in Merida in 2006 and in the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) in Caracas in 2007. The *Catedra Libre* in ULA is particularly active in organizing seminars, symposia, etc. on Gandhiji and India-related subjects on a regular basis. It has set up a permanent course on the "Thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi". It regularly publishes booklets and monographs on bilateral relationship such as an edited volume on "Simon Bolivar and Mahatma Gandhi: Paradigms of Liberty", Gandhiji's autobiography in Spanish and "Indira Gandhi in Venezuela (1968-2013)" to commemorate 45 years of the visit of PM Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Venezuela in 1968. ULA has also entered into a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with JNU and Delhi University. 'Catedra Libre-India' at the UCV was officially inaugurated on April 7, 2010 in the presence of former Ambassador Shri Lal Dingliana. With the active support of the Embassy, this *Catedra* intends to encourage

studies of Indian history, culture and polity through seminars, talks etc. within the university campus. Ambassador gave a lecture on "India as an Emerging Power" at the UCV Campus on 29 March and on 28 June at Los Andes University, both of which were organized by the India Chairs. Ambassador delivered a comprehensive lecture on various aspects of India and its growing international role at Simon Bolivar University in Caracas (3 December 2012). The students of International Relations of Santa Maria University (USM) in Caracas set up an Indian Stall as part of "3rd Model Diplomatic Representation" organized at the university campus on 1 February, 2013 and later on 26 July 2013 organized another international fair on the topic of "Technology applied to Diplomacy and Commerce" in which India, along with several countries, were represented. Ambassador inaugurated two photo exhibitions on India – "A Cultural Glimpse of India" at the Central Library of the Simon Bolivar University (USB) in Caracas on 6 May 2013 and "India: Enclave of a Subcontinent" at the Central University of Venezuela (UCV) on 20 May 2013. The latter was organized with the active support of the India Chair, Catedra Libre India Siglo XXI at UCV. Both the exhibitions saw enthusiastic response from students and professors of the two universities.

A new workshop and IT Centre was inaugurated at the Father Bernard Karikamury Socio-Educational Complex in Araira, Miranda State on 16 March 2017. The workshop is for conducting culinary and other training and the IT Centre has 10 workstations. Nearly 1000 students from the local community would benefit from the project. An amount of \$ 41000 was allocated for the purpose under Aid to LAC budget. A Study Centre named after Dr. B.R.Ambedkar was opened at Santa Maria University, Caracas on his 125th birth anniversary. Hindi classes were also launched. The Foundation 'Mahatma Gandhi Venezuela' was launched on 23 June at the Embassy Residence. Vice Minister for Asia attended the event.

Venezuelan experts are sent to India every year under the ITEC programme. ICCR approved 4 scholarships for Venezuela starting from academic year 2017.

Indian Community: There are about 30 Indian families in Venezuela, of which about 20 are in Caracas.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Caracas website : www.embindia.org
Embassy of India, Caracas Facebook: www.facebook.com/India in Venezuela
Embassy of India, Caracas Twitter: <https://twitter.com/India Venezuela>
Embassy of India, Caracas Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/136124907@N03/
Embassy of Venezuela, New Delhi: www.embaveneindia.com

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