

Embassy of India
Mexico City

As on 28 September 2023

India-Belize Bilateral Brief

India and Belize have traditionally enjoyed friendly and cordial relations, based on our shared values, mutual regard and broad understanding on diverse issues, including in the international fora. Both countries are strong democracies and share commonalities such as membership of NAM and the Commonwealth, an English-speaking population and love for cricket. India and Belize established diplomatic relations on 28 March, 1983. The Indian Embassy in Mexico is concurrently accredited to Belize. India has an Honorary Consul in Belize while Belize has an Honorary Consul in Delhi.

History and Background

2. The two countries share an active, diversified, and expanding bilateral relationship characterized by shared values and mutual understanding on a broad range of issues. Belize considers India as a major development partner, as well as a partner in multilateral approaches on major global issues. The two countries actively consult and cooperate in international fora, including the UN. Belize has acknowledged the leading role played by India in the South-South cooperation. At the India- CARICOM Fourth Foreign Ministers' Ministerial Meeting in Georgetown on 21st April, 2023, Belize was represented by Ambassador Amalia Mai, CEO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration. On April 25, 2023 at the SICA-India Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation in Panama City, EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar met with Foreign Minister of Belize Mr. Eamon Courtenay along with the Foreign Ministers of other SICA member countries and adopted a joint communique. This was the fourth time, EAM has met Belizean Foreign Minister Courtenay.

Political

3. India's political interaction with Belize has been by and large through meetings at the level of Foreign Ministers at or on the sidelines of multilateral forums such as the Commonwealth, or particularly regional groups of Central American Integration System (SICA) and Caribbean countries (CARICOM).

Important ministerial and other high level visits from Belize to India:

Mr. Philip Zuniga, President of Senate of Belize attended a Parliamentary Conference in Delhi in September 2007.

Mr. John Birchman Saldivar, Minister for Sports and Governance of Belize visited India for the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in October 2010.

Mrs Kimi Ernese Simplis Barrow, spouse of Hon'ble Prime Minister of Belize visited India in November 2014 for making a presentation at a high level conference hosted by UNESCO regarding the role of Information Technology for persons with disabilities.

Important ministerial and other high level visits from India to Belize:

Shri Sujan Chakraborty, MP visited Belize for a Commonwealth Parliamentary study on environment, in February/March 2007.

Shri Kamal Nath, Minister of Urban Development of India visited Belize for Board Meeting of Commonwealth Local Government Forum in May 2012.

Shri Sudarshan Bhagat, MoS Tribal Affairs visited Belize from 14-16 May, 2018 as part of India's 'Abhinav Pahal' initiative. He called on Belize's Governor General, Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture among other dignitaries. He also interacted with members of the Belize Indian Community and Belize Indian Merchants Association.

Important bilateral interactions

MOS (EA), Gen (Retd) V K Singh had a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister of Belize, Mr Alfred Erlington in May 2015 on the sidelines of India-SICA Meeting in Guatemala City.

EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar had a telephone call with the Foreign Minister of Belize in March 2021. He also had a brief encounter with PM and FM of Belize during his visit to Mexico on 27 September 2021.

PM Narendra Modi held a meeting with PM of Belize, John Briceno on the sidelines of COP 26 in Glasgow on 1 November, 2021.

EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar met with Foreign Minister Mr. Eamon Courtenay on the sidelines of the Commonwealth Head of Governments' Meeting (CHOGM) 2022. They discussed deepening Belize-India cooperation, expanding India's engagement with CARICOM and the future of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Christopher Coye, MoS for Finance, Economic Development and Investment of Belize, participated in the virtual VOICE of the Global South Finance Ministers' Summit organized by India on 13th January, 2023.

On April 25, 2023 at the SICA-India Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation in Panama City, EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar met with Foreign Minister of Belize Mr. Eamon Courtenay along with the Foreign Ministers of other SICA member countries and adopted a joint communique.

Economic & Commercial

4. Bilateral trade is limited at US\$ 18.27 million. In 2022, Belize exported products worth US\$ 0.302 million to India. The main products that Belize exported to India were Chemical products, Animal Food, Light Rubberized Knitted Fabric, and Scrap Aluminum. During the last 24 years the exports of Belize to India have increased at an annualized rate of 30.5%, from US \$ 0.07 million in 1997 to US \$0.425 million in 2021. In 2021, Belize did not export any services to India. Certain sectors of the Belizean economy such as tourism, fishery and food processing offer good potential for Indian investors.

5. Indian exports to Belize is around US\$ 17.97 million, with main products being Cigarettes and tobacco, flat -rolled products of iron or non-alloy steel; dialysis fluid other medicaments; Textiles (women's or girls dresses (unknitted), organic chemicals, pharmaceuticals and auto parts. During the last 30 years, the exports of India to Belize have increased from US\$ 0.304 million in 1995 to US \$17.97 million in 2022. No trade delegations visited Belize in 2020 or 2021 because of the Covid restrictions. Most of the Indians living in Belize are merchants engaged in small scale textiles manufacturing and trade.

Development Partnership

6. India has been extending assistance to Belize for disaster relief and for meeting its developmental needs, including donation of medicines, computers, fire-trucks etc. Scholarships for capacity-building are being availed by Belize under India's ITEC and other schemes for many decades. Solar mamas trained under ITEC are playing critical role in electrifying villages with solar panels and Belize has requested for training of more solar mamas. GOI provided assistance in setting up an 'India-Belize Centre of Engineering' at University of Belize implemented by HMT (India). Indian experts from HMT (I) started on-the-job training of Belizeans at this institute in July 2023. A Mahatma Gandhi Internet Resource Centre established with Indian aid was inaugurated in February 2019. In February 2013 and March 2017, government granted 50 and 39 computers respectively to the St. John's College Belize for upgrading the IT infrastructure at the Orange Walk Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

7. Belizean Diplomats regularly attend the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats and Special Courses for CARICOM Diplomats organized by the Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of External Affairs of India.

8. Government of India donated 25,000 doses of Covishield vaccines to Belize in March 2021 and a shipment of medical supplies in June 2020 to fight Covid19. Further 10,000 doses of Covishield vaccines were donated in July 2022. A shipment of 10,000 doses of Covovax vaccine was received by Belize in April 2023.

Cultural

9. ICCR's cultural troupes, though quite few, are popular among both Indian and other communities in Belize. An 11-member Kathak Dance troupe led by Hemanta Kalita visited Belize City and Corozal in August 2017. The celebration in Belize City was graced by the presence of Governor General of Belize. The Directorate of Film Festival participated in the 10th edition of Belize International Film Festival held in July 2015 with entry of a short feature film. An 'India Day' is proposed to be celebrated in Belize in 2023.

10. A mega yoga practice was held in Belize in June 2021 on the occasion of International Day of Yoga.

11. A Mahatma Gandhi statue has been commissioned by ICCR and is soon to be installed in Belmopan, capital of Belize.

Indian Diaspora

12. Belize has a 600 strong Indian business community, mainly Sindhis, that migrated from India in 1964 and onwards, and constitutes a valuable link between Belize and India. Together with dependents, the community is about 1200 individuals of which roughly 200 are NRIs and the rest are PIOs. There are two community organizations, viz., the Belize Indian Merchants Association (BIMA) based in the Corozal Free Trade Zone and the Belize Indian Community (BIC) based in Belize City. Both have their own temples which act as community centers for the larger cultural needs of the community. There are three Indian restaurants in Belize City and one in Corozal.

13. There is also an "East Indian" community, about 7,000-8,000 strong, that arrived in Belize in 1838 as indentured laborers, who are now totally assimilated with the local society, but have evinced interest to rediscover their lost Indian roots, through various Indian cultural programs and activities. 'The Corozal Organisation of East Indian Cultural Heritage' & 'The East Indian Council of Belize' organized the 'First Indian Diaspora Conference' in Belize in August 2014 with support from the National Institute of Culture and History, Govt. of Belize. The event had huge participation including from other countries in the whole Caribbean region.

Visas and Consular Matters

14. The Honorary Consul in Belize City, Shri Arun Hotchandani, provides help to the Indian community in obtaining consular services from the Embassy of India in Mexico City. The Government of India has extended the facility of online e-Visa facility to the nationals of Belize. This has considerably eased the visa process for Belizeans, including those of Indian origin, for undertaking family/business visits to India at a short notice. Belize has allowed visa free entry of Indian nationals holding valid US Visa or US Residence Permit for single visits for non-employment purposes. This has addressed the long-standing grievance of the Indian community in Belize about difficulties in getting visas for their family members. This measure will also facilitate visits of other Indian nationals, trade delegations and officials deployed by GOI to

Belize. In 2017, Belize and India signed an Agreement on exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic and official/service passports for a period of 90 days.

India-SICA Dialogue

15. India established a dialogue forum at the level of the Foreign Ministers, with the countries of the System of Integration in Central America (SICA), including Belize, in 2004 to provide an institutional framework for strengthening and expanding the relationship with the Central American countries. The third meeting of India-SICA Foreign Ministers was held in May 2015 in Guatemala City. Cooperation in a wide range of issues was discussed in this forum including UN Reform, terrorism, climate change, nuclear disarmament, food and energy security and disaster management. A Business Forum had been set up to promote trade between India and SICA. India had announced a Line of Credit of US\$ 240 million to the eight SICA countries, including US\$ 30 million to Belize, either for country-specific or joint SICA projects.

India-CARICOM Dialogue

16. India has stepped up its engagement with CARICOM, of which Belize is a member, in the last one decade. Three rounds of India-CARICOM Ministerial meeting have been held till date, the last one being in September 2017 on the sidelines of the UNGA in New York. Discussions have focused on development partnership in areas of disaster management, agriculture, culture and capacity-building of professionals from CARICOM. India has offered several disaster relief grants and developmental assistance to CARICOM members, as well as Lines of Credit. Prime Minister Modi met all 14 CARICOM leaders on the sidelines of the 74th UNGA in New York on 25 September 2019 where PM Modi made several major announcements for CARICOM countries including (i) US\$ 14 million grant (US\$ 1 million per CARICOM member state) for quick impact community development projects in CARICOM; (ii) US\$150 million line of credit for solar energy and climate change related projects; (iii) Special capacity building courses, training and deputation of experts based on the needs and requirements of the CARICOM countries. These are being followed up with the Belizean side. Belize has utilized the US \$1 million grant for procuring Covid related medical equipment in a project implemented by PAHO and the India-UN Development Partnership Fund.

17. Belize has ratified the framework agreement on establishment of International Solar Alliance (ISA). Belize is a member of ISA since 2017.

(Annexure on list of MoU's/Agreements on next page)

Copies of MoU/Agreement/Treaties between India and Belize

Agreement between the Government of Belize and the Government of the Republic of India for the **exchange of Information with respect to Taxes** (Belmopan, 18 September 2013)

Agreement between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of Belize on **Exemption of Visa Requirements for holders of Diplomatic and Official/Service Passports** (Belize City, 18 September 2017)

MoU between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of Belize for the establishment of the **India-Belize Centre of Engineering** (Belize City, 20 December 2017)