

Embassy of India
Buenos Aires, Argentina
India- Argentina Bilateral Relations

BRIEF ON INDIA-ARGENTINA BILATERAL RELATIONS

Political Relations

India-Argentina relations were elevated to the level of Strategic Partnership during the State Visit to India of President of Argentina in February 2019. Multi-faceted relations between the two countries have strengthened over the years and encompass political, economic, cultural and scientific & technological cooperation. India opened a Trade Commission in Buenos Aires in 1943, which was later converted into one of the first Embassies of India in South America in 1949. Argentina had established a Consulate in Calcutta in the 1920s, which was transferred to Delhi as an Embassy in 1950. Argentina opened a Consulate General in Mumbai in April 2009.

Bilateral Exchanges

2. There have been exchanges at the highest level between the two countries. The last State Visit from Argentina to India was by President Mr. Mauricio Macri in February 2019. Earlier, President Ms. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner paid a State Visit in 2009. From India, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Buenos Aires to attend G20 Summit in November 2018. Earlier, President Giani Zail Singh paid a State Visit to Argentina in 1984.

3. External Affairs Minister (EAM), Dr. S. Jaishankar met the then Argentine Foreign Minister (FM) Mr. Felipe Solá on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting at Matera, Italy, on 30 June 2021. The two Ministers earlier had a telephonic conversation on 5 May 2020. EAM also had a telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero on 14 January 2022 and met him on 24 April 2022 in Delhi, during his visit to India to participate in the Raisina Dialogue 2022. Minister of State for External Affairs Shri V Muraleedharan paid a bilateral visit and held meetings with the then Argentine Foreign Minister and Vice Foreign Minister in Buenos Aires on 29 August 2019.

4. Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar held a video conference (VC) with Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Argentina on 20 November 2020. Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Thawar Chand Gehlot visited Argentina to participate in the Second Global Disability Summit at Buenos Aires and attended bilateral meetings from 6-8 June 2019. Delegations led by Dr. V. K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog, in October 2019 and Mr. Shri Alok Tandon, Secretary Mines, in August-September 2021 visited Buenos Aires and the Provinces of Salta, Jujuy and Catamarca for exploration of partnerships in the mining sector.

5. From the Argentine side, Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero visited India from 24-28 April 2022 to participate in the Raisina Dialogue 2022 and met External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar and Commerce and Industry Minister, Mr. Piyush Goyal. The then, Vice

President of Argentina Ms. Gabriela Michetti visited India and met with the Vice President of India and Secretary, Social Justice and Empowerment on 12 March 2019.

6. Various mechanisms of institutional bilateral dialogue have been reinvigorated in the recent past. The sixth round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) was held in Delhi on 24 November 2021. The third meeting of the India-Argentina Joint Trade Committee (JTC) took place after a gap of 29 years on 20 October 2020 via VC. The second meeting of the ISRO-CONAE (Argentine Space Agency) Joint Committee formed under the Agreement on cooperation on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space between India and Argentina signed in 2009, was convened on 2 December 2020 through VC. The first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Agricultural Cooperation between India and Argentina was held on 1 July 2020 via VC. The 5th India-Argentina JCM meeting was held in New Delhi on 14 January 2019.

Economic and Commercial Relations

Bilateral Trade

7. The India-Argentina bilateral trade registered a historic peak of USD 5.7 billion in the year 2021, with a growth rate of 72% over 2020, with USD 1.4 billion worth of exports from India to Argentina and USD 4.3 billion worth of imports by India from Argentina. India became 4th largest trading partner of Argentina in 2021. (Source: Argentine official statistical agency, INDEC). As per DGFT, India-Argentina bilateral trade during the fiscal year 2021-22 was USD 5.63 billion (an increase of 70.1% over 2020-21), with India's exports to Argentina valued at USD 1.43 billion registering a growth of 107.3% over exports in 2020-21 and Argentina's exports to India valued at USD 4.20 billion.

8. Major items of India's exports to Argentina include petroleum oils, agro chemicals, yarn-fabric-madeups, organic chemicals, bulk drugs and two-wheelers. Major items of India's imports from Argentina include vegetable oils (soya bean and sunflower), finished leather, cereals, residual chemicals and allied products and pulses.

Investments and Joint Ventures

9. Several Indian companies have established operations in Argentina with a total investment of over USD 1 billion. These include TCS, Mahindra Comviva, Infosys, AEGIS-Essar, Crisil, UPL, Bajaj Motorcycles, CEAT, TVS, Royal Enfield, Hero, Glenmark, Godrej and Sri Sri Tattva. Argentina's investment in India stands at approximately USD 120 million. Argentine companies with presence in India include Globant and OLX in IT services and TECHINT in the manufacturing sector.

10. A new assembly line of Royal Enfield was inaugurated by President Alberto Fernandez on 9 September 2020 at the production facility of SIMPA Group in Buenos Aires Province. This marks the first time in the 119 years' history of Royal Enfield that their bikes would be manufactured outside their own plants.

India-Argentina Business Council

11. A bilateral business chamber, 'India-Argentina Business Council (IABC)' was formally launched on 14 October 2020 by Ambassador Dinesh Bhatia and the Minister of

Productive Development of Argentina, Dr. Matías Kulfas. The Council, conceptualized as a non-profit organization comprising leading investors, exporters and importers between the two countries, is currently composed of over 30 companies, and it is envisaged that the membership of the Council will further increase in due course.

12. The Council, together with the Indian Mission in Buenos Aires, organized the first 'India-Argentina Business Forum' on 25 March 2021, which saw participation by the Argentine Minister of Productive Development and Secretary of International Economic Relations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, along with a host of businesspersons from both sides.

Trade and Investment Promotion Events

13. There have been regular exchange of visits and engagements between the two countries including participation of Government officials and businessmen in events organized by Governments; focused events by trade and export promotion agencies; delegation level visits in specific sectors; sector specific exhibitions, buyer-seller meets and B2B meetings.

14. Through effective use of technology to overcome geographical distances and travel restrictions imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian Embassy organized, coordinated and participated in several videoconferences/events aimed at boosting bilateral trade with Argentina in 2021. These included, series of conferences in the Lithium sector for Indian companies like KABIL, GFL with YPF, Camyen, Galen, Integra, etc.; RITES and TRENES Argentina; Exim Bank and Argentine Banks; Coffee promotion events; BSM among member of Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts and its Argentine counterparts; BSM among members of Electronics & Software Council of India and CESSI (Argentine Chamber of Software Exports); BSM among members of Chemical and Allied Products Export Council of (CAPEXIL) and its Argentine counterparts; FICCI organized India – LAC cooperation in Education; ICC organized event on Digital healthcare, PHDCI organized SME event; and meetings for NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) with Central Bank, Argentine Mint and Fintechs.

Cultural Relations and People-to-People Contact

15. The admiration for and impact of Indian culture, yoga, meditation, philosophy, spiritualism, dance and music in Argentina perhaps transcends that in any other country. Indian organisations such as Brahmakumari, Art of Living, Rama Krishna Mission, Sivananda Yoga and ISKCON among others have extraordinary followings.

16. FM Felipe Solá participated in the conclusion of the Gandhi@150 celebrations in Buenos Aires on 02 October 2020. Further, President Alberto Fernández addressed a letter to Prime Minister of India on the occasion. The Embassy also celebrated a "Gandhi Week" via social media, which included a virtual discourse "Gandhi Katha: A Story of Mahatma Gandhi", by Dr. Shobhana Radhakrishna. Earlier, on 2 October 2019, the then Vice President Ms. Gabriela Michetti, was the Chief Guest at main function held at the Embassy of India in Buenos Aires to celebrate Gandhi@150.

17. The Indian Embassy has been organizing cultural programmes, including 'India Weeks' and 'India Days' in prominent cities and provinces of Argentina. India tourism

promotion activities are periodically held in the capital city and provinces of Argentina in collaboration with India Tourism Office.

18. All eight editions of the International Day of Yoga to date have seen large-scale enthusiastic participation in Buenos Aires, as well as almost all provinces of the country, and have been attended by local dignitaries. In view of pandemic-related restrictions, International Day of Yoga was organized virtually through Mission's social media as well as specially created website www.diadelyoga.com.ar in 2020 and in 2021. The event online stream in 2020 received nearly 40,000 visitors, and in 2021, over 56,000. In 2022, the IDY celebrations under the theme "Yoga for Humanity" were held In-Person at the Sports Centre of Athletic Club of Boca Juniors in conjunction with a "Festival of India". The event received a footfall of close to 10,000 persons. In addition, virtual classes by 75 yoga schools and institutions were streamed from 1 June to 19 June 2022. The same received over 65000 views. Earlier, on 29 November 2018, an event titled 'Yoga for Peace' organized by Art of Living, Argentina that was attended by the Prime Minister of India saw participation by over 6000 people, with 600 people performing Yoga collectively. During the year, Yoga capacitation projects were also launched by the Mission in the training academies of Argentine Federal Police and the Provincial Police of Buenos Aires, the largest provincial police in the country.

19. The Indian Embassy curated an online event titled 'India and Argentina in the New World Order: Dialogue among Indian and Argentine Think Tanks', co-organized with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) and Center for Implementation of Public Policies for Equity and Growth (Spanish acronym: CIPPEC), held on 6 November 2020. EAM, Dr S Jaishankar and Argentine Foreign Minister, Mr Felipe Solá, delivered remarks in the Closing Session of the Dialogue. Spread across five sessions, the Dialogue witnessed participation by several distinguished members of the think tank community from India and Argentina. The live stream of the event on various platforms simultaneously in English and Spanish languages garnered over 1000 viewers from all over the world.

20. Mission co-organized celebrated Ayurveda Day 2021 with the theme "Ayurveda and Nutrition" on 2 November 2021. During the event, experts, doctors and Ayurveda influencers from Argentina participated in a on different aspects of Ayurveda, its fundamentals and its holistic approach to wellbeing. The celebrations were attended by over 130 participants physically while virtual transmission of the event via Mission's Facebook and Youtube has garnered over 2000 views. In 2020, Mission organized three virtual events with local organisations; with Fundacion Ayurveda Prema, Sri Sri Tattva and National University of Rosario. An e-book on AYUSH protocols for COVID was also launched in Spanish during the celebration in 2020.

21. As part of celebrations of 160th birth anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, the Mission published a book titled "Rabindranath Tagore: Visiones desde America Latina" in collaboration with CARI (Argentine Council for International Relations), the largest Argentine think tank. The Book was jointly launched on 16 September 2021 by Ambassador and Jose Octavio Bordon, CARI President. Minister of Culture Tristan Bauer joined Ambassador on 7 May 2021 for floral tributes at Tagore's bust, installed in 2019 at Parque Rosedal (Rose Park), Buenos Aires, to mark this occasion. While in 2022, Minister of Culture of Buenos Aires City, Mr. Enrique Avogadro joined Ambassador for a floral offering at Tagore's bust on the occasion of Tagore Jayanti.

22. Gurudev Tagore had visited Argentina in 1924 and stayed for two months as the guest of Ms Victoria Ocampo, a well-known literary personality, writer and feminist. A joint production feature film, *Pensando en el* (Thinking of Him) on his visit was the closing film at the International Film Festival of India, Goa in November 2017.

23. Ms. Victoria Ocampo was given an honorary doctorate by the Viswa Bharati University and this was handed over by Prime Minister Smt Indira Gandhi during her visit to Argentina in 1968. Ms Maria Rene Cura, an Argentine writer and close associate of Ms Victoria Ocampo was a renowned Indologist and was awarded the Padma Shri for her Indology work in 1984. Mr Raul Prebisch, the renowned Argentine economist was conferred Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1974.

24. In 2015, at the first World Indologists Conference held in Delhi, 100-year-old Indologist Dr. Fernando Tola represented Argentina and was selected for the Presidential Award of Certificate of Honour for the year 2016 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the cause of Sanskrit.

Technical and Development Co-operation

25. India extends between 40 and 45 Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scholarships to working professionals from Argentina every year. As the pandemic prevented candidates from joining courses in person in the later part of 2020-21, 26 Argentines underwent e-ITEC courses. The Professional Courses for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) conducted by the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, MEA have witnessed participation of 11 Argentine diplomats so far. A MoU has been signed on setting up of an India-Argentina Center of Excellence in IT in Buenos Aires, and work is underway for its establishment.

Indian Community

26. There are around 2600 NRIs / PIOs in Argentina. Most of the NRIs live in Argentina. Majority of these live in the capital city of Buenos Aires, including professionals working with Indian companies and multinational corporations such as TCS, Cognizant Technologies, IBM, J.P. Morgan, etc. A large number of earlier migrants who have been in Argentina for 3-4 generations are in provinces of Salta and Jujuy.

27. In the absence of VBM flights from the region during the unexpected pandemic situation, the Mission improvised and managed to repatriate over 130 Indians accommodating them in several special flights. It involved coordination with different entities, including Foreign Ministry, National Migrations Directorate, Ministry of Health, Federal and Provincial Police, Airport Security Force, Gendarmerie and various provincial governments.

Source: Embassy of India, Argentina Web site July 2022.