

Belize Bilateral Brief

India and Belize have traditionally enjoyed friendly and cooperative relations, based on our shared values, our mutual regard for one another 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. Belize has a Honorary Consul in Delhi.

Political

India's political interaction with Belize has been by and large through meetings at the level of Foreign Ministers in or on the sidelines of multilateral, particularly regional groups of Central American countries SICA and Caribbean countries CARICOM. Presently no other dialogue mechanism exists with Belize.

Important bilateral visits/meetings:

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

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

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

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

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.

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. External Affairs Minister of India has extended an invitation to Foreign Minister of Belize, Mr Alfred Erlington to visit India on mutually convenient dates.

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

India-SICA Dialogue: 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 are being discussed by this forum including UN Reform, terrorism, climate change, nuclear disarmament, food and energy security and disaster management. A Business Forum has been set up to promote trade between India and SICA. It has been decided that efforts should be made to double India-SICA trade in three years. India has 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: 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 focussed on development partnership in areas of disaster management, capacity-building of professionals from Caricom, agriculture, culture etc. India has offered several disaster relief grants and developmental assistance to Caricom members, as well as Lines of Credit.

Multilateral

India's dialogue at the level of Foreign Minister in multilateral for a such as SICA, CARICOM, CELAC and the Commonwealth have provided institutional frameworks for strengthening ties with Belize. Belize has traditionally supported India on most issues in the UN and other multilateral fora.

Economic & Commercial

Bilateral trade is limited, ranging between US\$ 12-25 million. In 2018-19, the total trade was US\$ 18 million with exports from India totaling US\$ 17 million and imports from Belize of US\$ 1 million. Indian exports were mainly textiles, organic chemicals, pharmaceuticals & auto parts, and imports were mainly miscellaneous chemical products. Certain sectors of the Belizean economy such as tourism, fishery and food processing offer good potential for Indian investors.

Trade:

Bilateral Trade Belize 2014-15 to 2018-19

(USD in Millions)

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Export	24.49	14.51	15.23	13.48	16.98
Import	0.21	1.01	0.52	1.36	0.65
Total Trade	24.71	15.52	15.75	14.84	17.64

[Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India and Export Import Data Bank, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.]

No trade delegations visited Belize in 2018.

Development Partnership

India has been extending assistance to Belize for disaster relief and for meeting its developmental needs, including donation of medicines, computers etc.

India is also funding 2 projects under India-UN Development Partnership Fund. USD 340,000 is being donated for the creation of infrastructure for Belize Youth Challenge Campus. The program aims to support male youth aged 15-17 years who are unemployed/underemployed, out-of-school and at-risk of coming in conflict with the law. USD 250,000 is being donated for the creation of infrastructure for “San Ignacio Community Exercise, Social Sports and Women’s Group Feeding Programme Complex”.

India has offered a Line of Credit of US\$ 30 million to Belize, as part of similar Lines of Credit extended to all SICA countries during the third India-SICA meeting in 2015.

Scholarships for capacity-building are being availed by Belize under India’s ITEC and other schemes for many decades. GOI is also providing assistance in setting up an Engineering Centre in Belize.

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.

Cultural

ICCR’s cultural troupes, though quite few, are popular among both Indian and other communities in Belize. Last visit was made in August 2017 by the 11-member Kathak Dance troupe led by Hemanta Kalita in Belize City and Corozal sponsored by ministry of Culture. The celebration in Belize City was graced by the presence of Governor General.

The Directorate of Film Festival, for the first time, participated in the 10th edition of Belize International Film Festival held in July 2015 with entry of a short feature film.

Like previous years, the International Day of Yoga (5th) was organized in Belize in 2019 also with Yoga performances and related activities in several different locations including in Belize City and other prominent towns of Belize.

Indian Diaspora

Belize has over 500 strong Indian business community, mainly Sindhis, that migrated there from India in 1964 and onwards, and constitute a valuable link between Belize and India. Together with dependents, the community is about 1500 individuals of which roughly 200 are NRIs and the rest are PIOs. There are two community organisations, 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 centres for the larger cultural needs of the community.

There is also an “East Indian” community, about 7,000-8,000 strong, that arrived in Belize in 1838 as indentured labourers, who are now totally assimilated with the local society, but have evinced interest to re-discover their lost Indian roots, through various Indian cultural programmes 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 big participation including from other countries in the whole Caribbean region.

Visas and Consular Matters: The Honorary Consul General in Belize City provides help to the Indian community in completing application process for obtaining passport, visa and consular services from the Embassy of India in Mexico City. The Government of India has extended the facility of online e-Visa for visiting India to the nationals of Belize. This has considerably eased the visits of Belizeans, including those of Indian origin, for making family/business visits to India at short notice. Belize has allowed visa free entry of Indian nationals holding valid US Visa or US Residence Permit to Belize 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.

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