



## India – Mexico Relationship

*Aparaajita Pandey\**

“It was a wonderful visit”, commented Prime Minister Narendra Modi after concluding his five nation tour in Mexico. At the invitation of the Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto PM Modi visited Mexico on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

The visit by PM Modi to Mexico signifies the growth in the bilateral relations between India and Mexico, and also the opportunities that Mexico may provide in the future. Mexico and India have enjoyed a privileged partnership since 2007. This was also highlighted in the Joint Statement when the two leaders commented that a path needs to be defined for “India – Mexico Privileged Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”.<sup>i</sup> Though the geographical distance between India and Mexico is vast, both countries share a similar economic, social, and cultural structure.<sup>ii</sup> The bilateral relationship has long been characterized by warmth, friendship and commonality of views on a wide range of issues, even though there are differences on expansion of the permanent membership of the UNSC, environment and nonproliferation. During the Cold War, Mexico and India had worked together closely as members of the UN, G-77, G-15 etc. both actively championing the interests of developing countries such as in the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations.<sup>iii</sup>

Mexico was the first Latin American country to recognize India after independence. Diplomatic relations between the two democracies were established in 1950. There have been a series of high level official state visits between Indian and Mexico including a visit by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1961 and by the Mexican President Adolfo Lopes Mateos in 1962.<sup>iv</sup>

In 2007, the then Mexican President Felipe Calderon visited India. During this visit India and Mexico took their bilateral relations a step further and the two countries entered a 'privileged partnership' with each other. Mexico and India since then have worked towards forging closer ties with each other. In 2008 the former Indian President Pratibha Devi Singh Patil also visited Mexico.

The two countries have increased high-level interaction with each other by setting up joint groups on investment and trade. India and Mexico have also engaged in regular Joint – Commission meetings. The last one was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2014 and the session was co-chaired by Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs and Mr. Jose Antonio Meade Kuribrena, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico. This was the first time a Joint Commission Meeting was held at the ministerial level since 1984. The entire gamut of bilateral relations including political, economic & trade, energy, traditional medicines, science & technology, space, education, tourism, consular and cultural issues were discussed by the two Ministers. They also discussed important regional and multilateral issues including India's ongoing engagement with Community of Latin American Caribbean States (CELAC) and Pacific Alliance.

The Joint Working Group meetings on S&T, Tourism and Agriculture were held on the sidelines of the JCM on 20 October 2014. An MoU between ISRO and Mexican Space Agency on Space Cooperation for Peaceful Purposes was signed during the meeting.<sup>v</sup>

India and Mexico have signed several bi-lateral agreements in the past. Since 2007, Extradition Treaty (2007), Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (2007), Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (2007), Air Services Agreement (2008), MoU on Cooperation in the Field of New and Renewable Energy (2008) have been signed.<sup>vi</sup>

PM Modi's visit to Mexico was being seen in relation with the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) meeting that was held later in South Korea. India applied to the NSG on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2016. India has displayed interest in being a part of the 48 country elite export control regime. Mexico is already a part of the NSG. While India does have the support of the US, Mexico had shown reservation about India on the issue of non- proliferation. Mexico had been difficult to deal with during the 2008 negotiations of the NSG for an India specific exemption.

However the Mexico visit was not only focused on the NSG but had a wider agenda of deepening the bilateral ties between the two countries. Attempts have been made by the two developing nations to strengthen the relationship so as to augment collaboration between the two. President Nieto commented that it was time to “upgrade ties to a strategic partnership”.<sup>vii</sup>

The visit has also reiterated the endeavor by both countries to strengthen collaboration and cooperation in select sectors. The Joint Statement highlights the opportunities that India and Mexico offer each other for trade and investment. Similar views were echoed in the Joint Statement released after the visit by H.E. Ms. Claudia Ruiz Salinas, Secretary of Foreign Affairs to India 11<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2016 and her meeting with Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Hon. Minister of External Affairs of India.

### **Possible Areas of Cooperation**

Mexico offers India opportunities for enhancing international trade and investment as well as collaborating at the global platform. Mexico has an advantage in the western hemisphere as it enjoys a strategic location and has acted as a bridge between Latin America and North America. Mexico also provides India with a lucrative economic opportunity as it is a part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). At present Mexico is making strides in the economic sector.<sup>viii</sup> Mexico today is a trillion dollar economy that has been ranked eleventh largest economy in the world and has an export market of approximately \$ 400 billion USD per annum.<sup>ix</sup>

Trade between the two countries has seen a steady rise since 2007. Bilateral trade between India and Mexico amounted to \$2.9 billion USD in 2008; it increased to \$ 4 billion USD in 2013 and then rose to \$6.4 billion USD in 2014. It has been estimated that it can potentially grow to approximately \$10 billion USD per annum.<sup>x</sup> India’s exports mainly comprise organic chemicals, vehicles and auto parts, electrical machinery & equipment, mineral fuels and oil, aluminium products, pharmaceuticals, textiles & garments, engineering goods, gems & jewellery, iron and steel and agriculture produce. India’s imports mainly consist of crude oil, minerals, electrical goods and machinery, organic chemicals and iron & steel. Indian companies also have a growing presence in Mexico. Most of the major Indian IT companies, few pharmaceutical companies, engineering, packaging and electrical equipment firms have set up shops in Mexico. Mexican investments in India are in multiplexes, housing, cement, auto parts and food processing. Companies like TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL, Tech Mahindra, NIIT, Sun Pharma, Dr. Reddy’s,

Ranbaxy, PMP Auto, JK Tyre, etc are well established in Mexico.<sup>xi</sup> India's exports to Mexico grew by 33 percent in 2011.

### **Energy**

Mexico also offers India with growing opportunities in the oil and gas sector. President Nieto elaborated on the series of reforms that his regime has introduced in Mexico, to make the economy more open and competitive.<sup>xii</sup> These reforms have also opened the oil and gas sector of the country. This provides investment opportunities for India and at the same time Mexico has become an important supplier of crude oil to India.<sup>xiii</sup> India is now the third largest buyer of Mexico's crude oil.<sup>xiv</sup>

### **Cultural Ties**

India and Mexico have made sustained effort to strengthen their economic ties. The Exim Bank of India has also given Bancomext; its Mexican counterpart a \$10 million USD line of credit.<sup>xv</sup>

The two countries have also made continuous efforts to bridge the cultural gap between the two. In 2010, the Gurudev Tagore Indian Cultural Centre in Mexico was instituted as a result of the unwarranted interest of Mexicans in Indian culture, yoga, music and dance. Cultural troupes from India participate and perform in cultural festivals in Mexico every year. The distinguished Mexican institute 'El Colegio de Mexico' has a centre of Indian studies. Here in 2010, ICCR established 'Octavio Paz Chair of Indian Studies'.

It was realized that cultural and educational exchanges were the best way to enhance people to people interaction between the two countries. To this end, India offers Mexican students 15 ITEC slots in addition to four other scholarships every year.<sup>xvi</sup>

### **Tourism**

Tourism has also seen a surge in the recent past. The embassy of Mexico reported a 60 percent increase in the number of Visas issued for India from 2006 to 2011.<sup>xvii</sup> There has also been a surge in Indians visiting Mexico. In a bid to bring the two cultures closer and to create awareness among people, in 2013 a replica of the Labna's Arch<sup>1</sup> was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of Delhi, Smt. Sheila Dixit.<sup>xviii</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> \* Labna's Arch in the ceremonial centre of the Mayan Civilization.

## Science and Technology

The two countries have shown an affinity towards similar causes in the past. Former President Felipe Calderon during his visit to India in 2007 had mentioned that he would like to see the scientific communities of India and Mexico perform<sup>xix</sup> joint research on fields of electronics, seismology, usage of water, and environment. As mentioned India and Mexico have also have an MoU on Cooperation in the Field of New and Renewable Energy which was signed in 2008. During the recent visit by PM Modi to Mexico, the two leaders seemed to follow the same theme when they talked about collaboration in the fields of space technology, remote sensing, climate change. They also mentioned the mutual benefit for both India and Mexico from collaboration between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Mexican Space Agency (AEM)<sup>xx</sup>

Mexico helped India overcome its problem of food shortage during the 1960s. Green Revolution helped India increase its food production. This was done through the use of pest resistant and high yielding varieties of crops. The programme was first adopted in Mexico. During 1940s, Norman Borlaug an agronomist from the US conducted his research in Mexico and was successful in developing high yielding, pest resistant varieties of rice and wheat. A research institute called The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre was established in Mexico. India benefitted from this research and implemented the Green Revolution, thereby increasing food production and bringing prosperity to several states of the country in addition to warding off a potential famine.<sup>xxi</sup>

## Multilateral Institutions

The privileged partnership between the two countries has led the two to support each other on multilateral forums. The two countries have come out and supported each other during the G-8 global outreach programme in the past. Similar support was displayed by Mexico when President Nieto of Mexican supported the International Solar Alliance during the recent visit by PM Modi. The two leaders emphasized that it “transform the global canvas for solar energy” and would also be beneficial to small and developing nations. They also committed to ratifying the Paris Agreement as soon as possible.<sup>xxii</sup>

Both India and Mexico have been part of various regional forums and have a growing presence in Global Governance. Mexico is an active member of international organisations like the UN, G-20, Pacific Alliance and the newly formed MIKTA which is Mexico, Indonesia, South

Korea, Turkey and Australia. MIKTA is predicted to be the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest economy in the world. Mexico and India also favour reforms in the UN Security Council however; they both have different visions of the reform. Nevertheless, the two leaders agreed that it was important to continue to support the process of comprehensive reforms in the UN Security Council.

Mexico and India are both developing countries and also have similar programmes. Both countries endeavor to be manufacturing hubs of the world. 'Make in India' has a counter part in the 'Moving Mexico' Programme and both countries are also attempting to usher in an era of enhances digitization for augmented efficiency.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### **Conclusion**

India and Mexico are looking forward to the Seventh Mexico- India Joint Commission Meeting that will be held in Mexico later this year.

As the two countries explore opportunities on collaborating further it there is a need to build greater connectivity between the two. There is a need for greater cultural familiarity between the two countries. India and Mexico need to create opportunities for greater people to people contact. Further opportunities for academic exchange, travel, cultural exchange could be built to boost socio-economic ties between the countries. Collaboration between India and Mexico would be an apt example for South- South Cooperation.

\*\*\*

\* Aparajita Pandey is a Research Intern at Indian Council of World Affairs, Sapru House, New Delhi.

Disclaimer: The views expressed are that of the Researcher and not of the Council.

### **Endnotes:**

---

<sup>i</sup> India-Mexico Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Mexico (June 08, 2016) Press Information Bureau Government of India Prime Minister's Office, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=146077> (Accessed 10 June 2016)

<sup>ii</sup> Opening Remarks by Amb. Nalin Surie, DG, ICWA during 22<sup>nd</sup> Sapru House Lecture, 11 March 2016

<sup>iii</sup> India - Mexico Relation, MEA , [https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Mexico\\_July\\_2014.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Mexico_July_2014.pdf) (Accessed 8 June 2016)

<sup>iv</sup> Mexico-India A Tale of Friendship and Cooperation, September 2015, Diplomatist, <http://www.diplomatist.com/dip0201509/article004.html> (Accessed 6 July 2016)

- <sup>v</sup> Sixth India-Mexico Joint Commission Meeting, 22 October 2014, Ministry of External Affairs, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24127/Sixth+IndiaMexico+Joint+Commission+Meeting> (Accessed 13 July 2016)
- <sup>vi</sup> India-Mexico Relations, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Mexico-January-2012.pdf> , (Accessed 6 July 2016)
- <sup>vii</sup> Ibid
- <sup>viii</sup> Lecture by H.E. Ms Claudia Ruiz at the Indian Council of World Affairs on 11 March 2016.
- <sup>ix</sup> Aparajita Pandey, (2016), Mexican Energy Reforms and Opportunities for India, <http://icwa.in/pdfs/IB/2014/MEXICANENERGYREFORMSANDOPPORTUNITIESFORINDIAiBo7012016.pdf> (Accessed 6 June 2017)
- <sup>x</sup> India- Mexico Trade and Economic Relations, Embassy of India, <http://www.indembassy.org/eoi.php?id=Trade> (Accessed 12 July 2016)
- <sup>xi</sup> **Melba Pría, Mexico's Ambassador to India**, "Indian Companies Have A Growing Presence In Mexico", March 2016, The Dollar Business, <https://www.TheDollarBusiness.Com/Magazine/-Indian-Companies-Have-A-Growing-Presence-In-Mexico-/41642> (Accessed 8 June 2016)
- <sup>xii</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xiv</sup> India – Mexico Relations, MEA , <http://www.indembassy.org/eoi.php?id=Bilateral> (Accessed 6 June 2016)
- <sup>xv</sup> Regionalism and South-South cooperation: The case of Mercosur and India, 2004, UNCTAD, [http://unctad.org/en/Docs/tdxibpd11\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/Docs/tdxibpd11_en.pdf) (Accessed 12 July 2016)
- <sup>xvi</sup> India – Mexico Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, [http://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Mexico\\_Relations.pdf](http://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Mexico_Relations.pdf) (Accessed on 12 July 2015)
- <sup>xvii</sup> Mexico-India A Tale of Friendship and Cooperation, September 2015, Diplomatist, <http://www.diplomatist.com/dipo201509/article004.html> (Accessed 6 July 2016)
- <sup>xviii</sup> CM to inaugurate replica of Mayan structure today, 16 September 2013, the Indian Express, <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/cm-to-inaugurate-replica-of-mayan-structure-today/1169768/> (Accessed 13 July 2016)
- <sup>xix</sup> Sixth India-Mexico Joint Commission Meeting, 22 October 2014, Ministry of External Affairs, <http://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/24127/Sixth+IndiaMexico+Joint+Commission+Meeting> (Accessed 13 July 2016)
- <sup>xx</sup> India-Mexico Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Mexico (June 08, 2016) Press Information Bureau Government of India Prime Minister's Office, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=146077> (Accessed 10 June 2016)
- <sup>xxi</sup> Amanda Briney , History and Overview of the Green Revolution, About Education , <http://geography.about.com/od/globalproblemsandissues/a/greenrevolution.htm> (Accessed on 27 July 2016 )
- <sup>xxii</sup> Ibid
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Lecture by H.E. Ms Claudia Ruiz at the Indian Council of World Affairs on 11 March 2016.