

The Blue Moon

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Investment of Time and Energy in LAC will be Rewarding

Benefits for India
for investing in the
Andean Community
P-8

Tropical Treasures
The Journey of
Latin American Fruits
to Indian Shores
P-13



H. E. Dr. Roger Gopaul
High Commissioner of
Trinidad and Tobago to India

H. E. Mr. Jason Hall
High Commissioner of
Jamaica to India

H. E. Ms. Yasiel A. Burillo R.
Ambassador of
Panama to India

H. E. Mr. Alejandro Simancas Marin
Ambassador of
the Republic of Cuba to India

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Across the Globe

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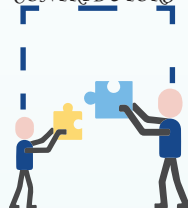
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IFESTYLE



The vanishing stripes – “jeene bhi do yaaron”

The stripes are vanishing. If National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is to be believed 146 tigers have died in the past nine months. The tally is the highest in past 11 years. Of these 24 were cubs.

Compared to this 88 tigers died in 2012 and 68 in 2013.

The largest number of tiger deaths were reported from Madhya Pradesh with 34 deaths followed by Maharashtra with 32. It is astonishing to note that 70 tigers died in different tiger reserves in the country.

There seems to be diversion of funds and attention from tigers to African Cheetahs. More attention is being paid to Cheetahs compared to tigers resulting into rising deaths.

There have been reports of tigers turning man-eaters. People in the bordering villages of

Telangana and Maharashtra are scared by fear of tiger attacks after a second incident took place at Anandguda in Lakkadkot gram panchayat of Maharashtra. In the past 19 days there have been two incidents of tigers killing adivasis on the border of Maharashtra and Telengana. There has been an increase in tiger movement in Tadoba tiger reserve.

The Maharashtra government has increased the compensation to Rs 20 lakh from Rs 5 lakh to families of those killed in tiger attacks. Telengana government gives Rs. 5lakh to the families of those killed by tigers.

There are reports of tiger killings in Pilibhit of Uttar Pradesh too.

While there are protests on animal killings in the Capital with protestors carrying placards reading “Jeene bhi do Yaaron”. Who is going to take care of these animals in the wild ?

Amit Mittal

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Unveiling Diplomacy

An Exclusive Tête-à-Tête with the Ambassador of Trinidad & Tobago

H.E. Dr. Roger Gopaul
High Commissioner of
Trinidad and Tobago to India

by Amit Mittal

Thanks to His Excellency Dr. Roger Gopaul, Trinidad and Tobago High Commissioner to India for granting us the interview.

H.E. : Thanks for your interest and efforts.

To understand the history of the indenture system that arrived in Trinidad and Tobago from India, we need to go back to the time when slavery was the primary form of labour imposed by the colonial rulers. In my country, the slaves were mainly from Western Africa. However, slavery was abolished in 1838, and the African slaves left the plantations unoccupied. There was a need for more labour, and the British Empire sought cheap labour sources outside of their slave trade. India was one of the significant sources, and the first ship carrying indentured labourers left Calcutta in 1845 to Trinidad and Tobago. They landed in our country on May 30, 1845.

At that time, there was no animosity or division between the descendants of the African slaves and the newly arrived Indians. This was simply because the British had already controlled the land. The slaves moved towards the ports, and the indentured Indians were placed on the plantations to do their work. Therefore, there was no cultural clash or animosity between the two groups at that time or at any other point in history. So to answer your question, there was never any cultural clash, animosity, or division between the descendants of the African slaves and the East Indians.

Q. Which religious group has a larger population in Trinidad and tobacco today, Hindus or Christians?

H.E. : It's interesting that the dominant religion in Christen Dam is Christianity. However,

Christianity in Christen Dam is diverse, consisting of both Protestants and Catholics. Protestants can be further divided into subgroups such as Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. If we compare the number of Protestants and Catholics in Christen Dam, Protestants make up 32.1% of the population and Catholics make up 21.6%.

Apart from Christianity, Hinduism is also a significant religion in Christen Dam, with approximately 18.2% of the population following it. Muslims make up around 5% of the population. These are the major religions in Christen Dam, and they shape the religious demographics of the community.

Q. What is the main religion currently practiced in Trinidad and Tobago?

H.E.: One of the most interesting questions to ask any Trinidadian is about their religion, because while the figures that are quoted represent the religion in terms of baptism or orientation, it does not reflect what is actually practiced. For instance, Christmas is celebrated by every single Trinidadian and Tobagonian.

We are all participants because on a small island like Trinidad and Tobago, there is no room for discrimination, bias, or bigotry. We are one people.

Q. What caused the division between East Indian immigrants and labourers in the mid-20th century?

H.E.: Between 1845 and 1917, around 1.6 million Indians left for countries like Fiji, Mauritius, Sina, Ghana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica. Trinidad and Tobago alone received 143,000 Indian immigrants, who formed a unique identity known as the Jiji Bai.

After the indenture period ended, there was no second wave of immigration to Trinidad and Tobago, which helped in the integration of the Indian migrants into the local culture. Today, Trinidad and Tobago welcomes numerous Indian professionals and businesses who contribute to the economy and are assimilated into the local culture.

Trinidad and Tobago is a Caribbean country that embodies unity and equality, and discrimination is not a part of its culture.

Q. Despite the trade agreement signed between India and Trinidad, bilateral trade between the two countries has remained relatively low. Although the two countries have had relations since 1860, bilateral trade was valued at only US dollar 90.42 million in 2012. This is a small and old figure. Excellency, I request you to provide new figures on this. As of 2013-14, India exported US dollar 81.52 million, and Trinidad and Tobago exported US dollar 8.90 million. This figure increased to US dollar 47-25 million by September. Could the distance between the two countries be a factor for the small trade volume, or is there another reason? Please highlight any other reasons as the world has changed.

H.E.: The world has changed a lot in the past decade. While it may have been true that distance limited trade between countries in the past, it's not necessarily the case today. Thanks to the many

digital platforms available, we can utilise the digital economy without the need for shipping.

With digital infrastructure, one can do business from anywhere in the world. For example, someone in Mumbai can do business in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana, or any part of the Caribbean. The nature of trade has changed, even for musical collaboration, which no longer requires tangible goods.

However, there is always room for improvement. That's why the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is hosting an important Conference to address critical issues. The objective is to identify business and investment opportunities in Trinidad and Tobago, as well as in the wider Latin American and Caribbean region.

This conference will bring together various stakeholders from our region, particularly Trinidad and Tobago, to interact and engage with the main stakeholders in India. The goal is to address issues related to increasing foreign investment, business relations, and trade.

Q. We had been discussing trade and I had wanted to ask about the Latin conclave in Delhi that has already taken place. Could you tell me more about the delegation from your country? What were their requirements and what issues did they bring to the table?

H.E.: Our country had taken this invitation very seriously, and we were proud to announce a strong delegation that attended the conference in India. The delegation included members from our Ministry of Digital Transformation, such as a senior project manager, an associate professional, and a senior digital transformation advisor. They focused on the digital economy's impact on all aspects of Trinidad and Tobago's infrastructure and development.

Additionally, we had the President of Invest TT, who led investment discussions with various associations. We also had a senior economist from the Ministry of Trade joining the delegation. As the High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago, led this delegation to the conference.

Many things had been happening and we were excited to look forward to even greater opportunities that were expected to be manifested by the end of the conference.

Q. Could you share your country's position on renewable energy, particularly on solar energy? How is your country engaging with the International Solar Alliance? Are there any ongoing projects in collaboration with EXIM Bank in this regard? Additionally, has a Minister of Economy or Trade representative discussed solar products and projects during their recent visit?

H.E.: We have been making steady progress in developing several parks dedicated to green energy. Trinidad and Tobago is an energy-based economy, and natural gas is one of our main products. Natural gas is a viable source of cleaner energy for the world to use. We have demonstrated our commitment to this cause and plan to continue in this direction.

Q. Could you please share your thoughts on tourism in Trinidad and Tobago for our Indian readers who love to travel? What are some of the local cuisines they should try? What kind of music can they enjoy in your country?

H.E.: India loves spices, and Trinidad and Tobago is known for having some of the spiciest food in the world. The country is also famous for its unique cuisine, rum, and cultural offerings. Trinidad and Tobago has some unique offerings like the tallest Hanuman Murti(statue) outside of India and the only Temple built in the sea. The country celebrates Diwali traditionally and hosts a large carnival after the Lenten period. Trinidad and Tobago's music is known all over the world and has been featured in Bollywood movies. Come to Trinidad and Tobago for a unique cultural experience, spiritual tourism, a relaxing vacation on the beach and savour the taste of our delicious food.

Q. Are there any direct flights from India to Trinidad and Tobago, or do travellers need to take a connecting flight? What is the duration of the travel time?

H.E.: When traveling to our part of the world, you have multiple options. However, the most popular and best options we have seen are:


1. From here to Delhi to New York, and then a direct flight to Trinidad and Tobago using Caribbean Airlines.
2. Or you can fly from Delhi to London and then connect straight to Trinidad and Tobago.
3. Another option is to go through KLM using

Amsterdam to reach Trinidad and Tobago. These are the more direct routes to reach our shore.

Could you please share the literacy rate in your country? What percentage of people in Trinidad and Tobago are literate citizens?

H.E.: Our first prime minister, Dr. Eric Williams, had a vision to promote education among our people, which has been our mantra since 1962. Today, our government has achieved this objective, with our literacy rate standing at an impressive 98.7%. We offer free education from preschool to tertiary level, regardless of financial background. This has led to a significant increase in primary education participation rates, creating a vast pool of skilled individuals ready for sectoral development.

Along with education, our government is also focusing on the skill development of our youth. We have various programs that are designed to develop the practical skills of our young people, such as mechanics, construction, and other skills that are essential for the betterment of our society. In Trinidad and Tobago, we believe in the all-round development of our society, which is why we focus on improving all aspects of human capital development, not just academic education.



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BENEFITS FOR INDIA FOR INVESTING IN THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY

Amb. (retd.) Jorge Castaneda
Ex Ambassador of Peru to India

The Andean Community (CAN) is a subregional integration mechanism created on May 26, 1969 with the purpose of improving the standard of living and balanced development of the inhabitants of the Member Countries through integration and economic and social cooperation. It is a supranational body endowed with its own bodies and regulations, which channels the united action of its members: Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia. Associated countries are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay and observer countries Spain and Morocco.



MARKET SIZE

The Andean Community has a total population of 114 million (2022) with a combined GDP of US\$ \$685,567 million (2022). It integrates a space that guarantees freedom of movement and subregional trade. In addition the common identity that unites its members, this unification process has brought important economic advantages and a boost to innovation and development.

EXPANDED MARKET

In the commercial field, two of the main achievements of the CAN are the free circulation of goods of Andean origin in the expanded market and the development of common regimes in customs matters. The four countries currently form a free trade zone, that is, a space in which their produ

TRADE IN SERVICES

Trade in services in the Andean Community is practically liberalized by Decisions 439 and 659, sectoral services such as transport and telecommunications have been regulated by specific regulations such as Decisions 462, 398, 399 and 837. Liberalization of the services sector is pending and the minimum percentages of national production in national open television services are being discussed in the Andean Committee on Services and Investments to make liberalization effective.

INVESTMENT REGIME

The Andean Community has had a Common Investment Regime since 1991, embodied in Decision 291, which focuses on removing obstacles to foreign investment and encouraging the free circulation of subregional and foreign capital.

On the other hand, Decision 292 from the same year, establishes a Special Regime for Andean Multinational Companies (EMAs), defined as those in which at least 60% of the capital stock belongs to investors from two or more countries of the Andean Community. These companies receive national treatment in terms of public procurement of goods and services, national treatment in tax matters, and the right to establish branches in other member countries. Likewise, the CAN has an Andean Investment Promotion Strategy issued in 2003.

Investment is also promoted by Decision 578, which establishes the Regime to avoid Double Taxation and Prevent Tax Evasion. Said regime applies to persons domiciled in any of the Member Countries, with respect to taxes on income and wealth. The purpose of the regulation is to avoid double taxation of the same income or assets at the community level. In this way, the income will only be taxable in the Member Country in which such income has its producing source and the other countries that have the power to tax the aforementioned income must exempt them.

Being an entrepreneur in a member country of the Andean Community of Nations entails several benefits:

- Access to an expanded market of 114 million and liberalized services and investment regulations.
- It opens the markets for goods, services, public purchases and investments. It establishes a general framework of principles and rules for the liberalization of trade in services at the Andean level. In this sense, each Member Country immediately and unconditionally grants the services and service providers of the other Member Countries, a treatment no less favorable than that granted to the services and similar service providers of any other country, member or not of the Andean Community.
- Better conditions for trade through new rules on non-tariff barriers, competition, transparency and intellectual property rights.
- The Andean Community of Nations offers a more stable and hopeful environment for businessmen with a bilateral dispute resolution mechanism and a mediation system for non-tariff barriers.
- Arrangements and protection for cooperation in terms of competitiveness, innovation, modernization of production, trade facilitation and technology transfer.
- A comprehensive chapter on trade and sustainable development with commitments to ensure high levels of labor and environmental protection, including a transparent arbitration system and procedures for engaging with civil society.
- Establishment of common regulations in matters related to trade such as customs, industrial property, international land transport, sanitary measures, among others.

EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE OF MERCHANDISE OF THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY

In the last 53 years, intra-community exports have increased at an average annual rate of 10.5%, going from 52.7 million dollars in 1969 to 10,632 million dollars in 2022.

(Miles de dólares FOB)

Año	Total Mundo	Extra comunitario	Exportaciones a la Comunidad Andina				
			Total	Bolivia	Colombia	Ecuador	Perú
1969	1 797 556	1 744 877	52 679	3 295	30 893	7 495	10 996
1980	11 163 091	10 656 712	506 379	37 931	108 718	106 326	253 404
1990	13 715 116	13 161 401	553 715	57 180	169 093	170 982	156 460
2000	26 199 127	24 175 757	2 023 370	258 959	871 228	554 127	339 056
2010	98 002 777	90 192 312	7 810 465	636 131	3 062 998	2 126 894	1 984 442
2022	163 011 723	152 379 712	10 632 011	2 371 800	3 124 468	1 948 154	3 187 589

Fuente: Institutos de Estadística de Bolivia y Colombia, Banco Central del Ecuador y Aduana del Perú. SICEXT. Decisión 511.

For their part, extra-community exports increased at an average annual rate of 8.8%, going from 1,745 million dollars in 1969 to 152,380 million dollars in 2022.

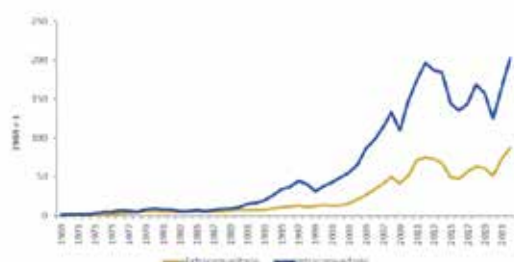
AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF IMPORTS FROM THE WORLD AND FROM THE COUNTRIES OF THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY, 1969 – 2022

Año	Total Mundo	Extra comunitario	Importaciones originarias de la Comunidad Andina				
			Total	Bolivia	Colombia	Ecuador	Perú
1969-1980	18,0	17,9	22,0	23,9	24,8	24,6	14,9
1980-1990	0,3	0,2	3,2	-0,8	-1,8	-2,8	14,4
1990-2000	8,9	8,5	14,8	18,8	15,9	21,0	10,8
2000-2010	14,4	14,4	14,5	12,9	11,0	17,5	14,8
2010-2020	1,0	1,2	-2,1	3,7	-0,5	-2,2	-4,5
1969-2022	9,3	9,2	10,9	12,0	10,0	11,7	10,7

Fuente: Institutos de Estadística de Bolivia y Colombia, Banco Central del Ecuador y Aduana del Perú. SICEXT. Decisión 511.

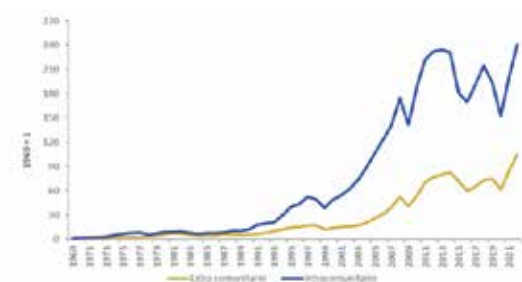
In 2022, intra-community exports were equivalent to 202 times the record for the year 1969 and extra-community exports in 2022 were equivalent to 87 times the record for the year 1969. On the other hand, intra-community imports were equivalent to 241 times the record for the year 1969 and extra-community imports in 2022 were equivalent to 106 times the record for the year 1969.

EVOLUTION OF INTRA AND EXTRA COMMUNITY EXPORTS, 1969 – 2022



Fuente: Institutos de Estadística de Bolivia y Colombia, Banco Central del Ecuador y Aduana del Perú. SICEXT. Decisión 511.

EVOLUTION OF INTRA AND EXTRA COMMUNITY IMPORTS, 1969 – 2022



Fuente: Institutos de Estadística de Bolivia y Colombia, Banco Central del Ecuador y Aduana del Perú. SICEXT. Decisión 511.

INDIA-ANDEAN COMMUNITY

In June 2003, India and the Andean Community established a Political Dialogue and Cooperation Mechanism for the purpose of strengthening and diversifying their friendship, understanding and cooperation developing mutual trade and investment relations and cultural and scientific exchanges. During an official visit to Peru in January 2010, the then MOS Dr. Shashi Tharoor met CAN Secretary General Freddy Ehlers, the then Chair Pro Tempore (Peru) of the CAN and the Andean Ambassadors accredited to Lima. The CAN Secretary General wished to cooperate in the fields of environment, energy and food security, rural development and science and technology. Since then to date there is no known initiative from India to approach the Andean Community. It is now up to the Indian Chambers of Commerce and the Indian business community to take that post.

Indian entrepreneurs interested in doing business in one of these Andean countries must work with experienced and distinguished specialists in market entry and commercial law to successfully initiate their expansion.

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Brazil is Back

by *Hari Seshasayee*
foreign trade analyst

The proactive foreign policy by Lula aims to raise Brazil's global profile. Whether this comes to fruition is yet to be seen and it remains a difficult task to complete in a short span of four years

Shortly after being elected as president of Brazil for the third time, Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva exclaimed at the November 2022 COP27 United Nations Climate Change Conference, "Brazil is back." He emphasised that "Brazil is emerging from the cocoon to which it has been subjected for the last four years," to cooperate on issues as diverse as deforestation and climate change, poverty, technology transfers, peace, and multilateralism.

Such slogans are commonplace in the world of politics, and even more so in geopolitics. So, is Brazil really back, and if so, how will this manifest?

The most telltale sign that Brazil is back is Lula's rather regular international visits since assuming office in January 2023 to diverse geographies. In a short span of just seven months, Lula visited 15 countries. He has covered all the major continents—Argentina, Colombia and Uruguay in South America; the United States (US) in North America; Belgium, France, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom and the Vatican in Europe; China and the United Arab Emirates in Asia; and most recently, Cape Verde in Africa.

The most telltale sign that Brazil is back is Lula's rather regular international visits since assuming office in January 2023 to diverse geographies.

This is a break from former president Jair Bolsonaro's term in multiple ways. Notably, Bolsonaro never visited Africa throughout his four-year term; Lula has already visited more European nations than Bolsonaro, at an arguably more important time for Europe due to the Ukraine crisis. Bolsonaro also made a record eight visits to the US, and Washington DC (and moreover, former president Donald Trump) was central to Bolsonaro's foreign policy calculations. On the other hand, while the Lula government does prioritise its relationship

with the US, it is by no measure its most important bilateral partner.

Another major departure from the previous term is Lula's attendance at global and multilateral summits, in an effort to include Brazil's voice on global and regional dialogues that align with Brasília's priorities. Over the past seven months, Lula has attended the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Summit (CELAC)—a 33-country grouping, the Mercosur Summit—a regional bloc consisting of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, the G7 Summit—a grouping of seven advanced economies), the Power Our Planet festival and New Global Financing Pact summit in France, the Amazon Technical-Scientific summit in Colombia, and the CELAC–European Union in Brussels; he will also visit South Africa for the 15th BRICS Summit on 22–24 August 2023.

This rather proactive foreign policy by Lula has been termed by policymakers and observers as *ativa e ativa* (active and assertive, translated from Portuguese) and also by some as the Lula doctrine. Mauro Vieira, Brazil's foreign minister, elaborated in a recent interview that “the Lula doctrine is one of restoring Brazil's image and its relationships—not just with our Latin American neighbours, but also restoring Brazil's presence in the world, on all the different kinds of world stages, be they bilateral or multilateral.”

For the remainder of his term, we should expect Lula to expand his global outreach to more countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. Brazil will also lend its voice more often to dialogues of global import, be it the war in Ukraine, poverty and hunger, climate change, currency controls, multilateral groupings and the reform of major international institutions.

For the remainder of his term, we should expect Lula to expand his global outreach to more countries in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Although Lula's effort to raise Brazil's global profile is genuine, it has so far been met with mixed success. Lula's failed attempt at being an interlocutor between Ukraine and Russia, and his comments defending Venezuela's authoritarian leader Nicolas Maduro are both examples that Brazil could perhaps be less hasty and recalibrate its responses on certain issues. Already, Lula has learnt from his mistakes to attempt to mediate between Russia and Ukraine

and noted more recently that he doesn't want to get involved in their war, instead choosing to fight his own war at home against hunger, poverty and unemployment.


Brazil certainly has the ability and wherewithal to become a major global leader. In fact, Brazil's biggest claim to fame is perhaps its enviable aura of peace—Brazil has not fought any major external wars for more than 150 years; it has peaceful relations and no major border disputes with its 10 neighbouring countries; Brazil is also free from terrorism and major domestic conflicts. Unlike countries in Asia, such as India and China, which constantly face security threats in the form of terrorism or territorial disputes and the occasional war, Brazil mostly has domestic issues to contend with.

As Brazilianist Brian Winter notes, Lula and his foreign policy team believe that the “world is headed toward a new, more equitable ‘multipolar’ era in which, instead of one country at the head of the table, there will be, say, eight countries seated at a round table—and Brazil will be one of them, along with China, India and others from the ascendant Global South.”

Unlike countries in Asia, such as India and China, which constantly face security threats in the form of terrorism or territorial disputes and the occasional war, Brazil mostly has domestic issues to contend with.

Still, despite this renewed motivation to insert Brazil in global affairs, it is still possible that Brazil reverts to its rather infamous moniker as the “country of the future.” Whether Lula's intention to raise Brazil's global profile comes to fruition is yet to be seen and it remains a difficult task to complete in a short span of just four years.

Source : ORF



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Tropical Treasures

The Journey of Latin American Fruits to Indian Shores

The Blue Moon Bureau

The fresh fruit industry of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is a major contributor to the global market. The region is blessed with fertile land and favourable agro-climatic conditions for the production of tropical fruits. Bananas, pineapples, mangoes, avocados, papayas, blueberries, cherries, apples, avocados, and grapes are the most commonly cultivated and traded fruits in the region, in descending order of popularity.

Production and Export

On average, approximately 25 percent of total global banana and major tropical fruit production originates in Latin America and the Caribbean, with an annual production volume of roughly 54 million tonnes between 2016 and 2018. Shipments of bananas and major tropical fruits from suppliers in LAC make up about 75 percent of world exports, with a total annual average volume of 25 million tonnes over the same period.

An estimated 80 percent of these exports are destined for developed country markets, primarily the United States of America and the European Union (EU). The total combined export value is around USD 11 billion for bananas and major tropical fruits from LAC.

Export to India

India is one of the largest producers of fruits and vegetables globally. Despite its vast domestic production, India imports a significant number of fresh fruits from other countries. Fruits like bananas, pineapples, kiwi, Apples, Blueberries, Cherries, mangoes, and avocados are majorly imported from Latin American Countries.

Blueberries: Latin America has seen a remarkable transformation in blueberry production. Peru has become a powerhouse in blueberry production and the world's largest exporter of them, with annual production of more than 283,000 metric tons. The blueberry exports from Chile amounted to 103.4 thousand metric tons.

Cherries: Latin America is also a leading exporter of cherries. Chile is the world's largest exporter of sweet cherries (US\$2.1 billion (47% of world exported sweet cherries))

Apple: Chile, is a significant exporter of apples. India is among the countries that imported the highest dollar value worth of apples in 2021. The demand for apples in India is robust.

Kiwi: Chile also exports kiwifruit. The Indian kiwi fruit market soared in 2021, growing by 33% against the previous year. This growth indicates a strong demand for kiwi fruits in India.

Avocados: Latin America accounts for 75% of the global production of avocados. Total exports of avocados from Latin America averaged 1.6 million tonnes per year over 2016-2018, valued at about USD 3.5 billion.

Grapes: Latin America is a major player in the global grape export market. The region accounts for 33% of the global total. In 2021, India imported \$114M in Grapes, being from Chile (\$795k).

PERU EMERGING INTERNATIONAL EXPORTER OF FRESH FRUITS

Peru is an emerging international exporter of fresh fruits), with exports expanding rapidly in the past two decades due to government's further investments in high-tech irrigation works, the bolstering of private investment and the expansion of the nationwide network connectivity and building the country's solid phytosanitary capacity.

Peru's agricultural industry has undergone a significant transformation over the last decade, with exports rising from \$540 million in 2010 to US\$10.421 billion in 2022, a 13.6% growth compared to the sales recorded in 2021. A notable contributor to this growth was the fruit category, which exceeded USD 4.806 billion in 2022. The products include fresh cranberries, fresh grapes, avocados, fresh mangoes, other citrus fruits, frozen

mangoes, other fruits and other uncooked or cooked fruits, bananas including plantains, other fresh fruits, frozen strawberries, that were located as the main items in the export ranking.

The top three fruit exports that drove this growth were blueberries, table grapes, and avocados, each surpassing the \$1 billion mark. Peru's position as the world's largest blueberry exporter is noteworthy. The exported value of blueberries reached in 2022 close to USD 1.400 million, 12% more than in the 2021-22 campaign (US\$1.242 million),

Peru's grape production and exports have been on the rise since 2018, hitting new benchmarks and setting new records each year. Last season, Peru announced grapes were its largest agricultural export and that it was the world's top grape exporter by value and the second largest by volume.

Peru's grapes production is forecast to increase by 7% during 2023 compared to the previous season, reaching 766,000 metric tons. Exports are expected to hit a new record of 586,000 metric tons, which is 8% higher than in 2021/22.

Peru has emerged as a leading supplier of avocados, particularly the popular Hass variety, in the global market. Peru's avocado production has significantly increased over the past few years. The Association of Hass Avocado Producers of Peru (ProHass) projects that in the 2023 campaign, Peru would export 624 thousand tons of Hass avocado, which would represent an increase of 12.5% compared to the 554,498 tons shipped in the 2022 campaign.

Exportation of Citrus Fruits from Latin America to India

The Latin American and Caribbean regions are significant players in the global market for citrus fruit exports. These regions are renowned for their production of various citrus fruits, including oranges, mandarins, lemons, limes, and grapefruits.

In 2021, citrus fruits were the world's 247th most traded product, totalling a trade value of \$16.7 billion. Between 2020 and 2021, the volume of citrus fruit exports grew by 2.16%, rising from \$16.4 billion to \$16.7 billion. The leading exporters of citrus fruits were Spain, South Africa, China, Turkey, and Egypt.

India has experienced a remarkable increase in the

import of citrus fruits. Between 2020 and 2021, India was among the fastest-growing importers of



citrus fruits, with an increase of \$59.4 million.

Trade Agreements Logistics between India and Latin America

India has signed two Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) with Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) countries. The first agreement was made with MERCOSUR, comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, on January 25, 2004. The second agreement was signed with Chile on March 8, 2006.

These PTAs cover a limited percentage of bilateral trade, but India and MERCOSUR have agreed to reduce import duties on 450 and 452 tariff lines, respectively, ranging from 10% to 100%. Though the precise tariff applicable to Latin American fruit imported into India is difficult to determine due to a lack of readily available information, the PTAs have resulted in a reduction in import duties.

Transporting perishable fruits from Latin America to India involves a complex supply chain process. The fruits are shipped to a local packing plant, washed, sorted, weighed, and packed before being transported in refrigerated containers with temperature control technology. Some shipping companies have implemented Remote Container Management (RCM) technology to enhance the monitoring process during transit. Average maritime transport between India and Latin America is 40-45 days.

Challenges

India and Latin American and Caribbean countries still face challenges for trade growth. A combination of production practices, supply chain issues,

transport challenges, government policies tariff and non-tariff barriers elevated total bilateral trade costs between LAC and India. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving exports. Gains could be achieved by enacting reforms aimed at reducing trade costs. It will require an effective institutional framework, businesses and people-to-people networks, increasing the coverage of trade and investment agreements, enhancing trade facilitation measures, undertaking proactive and targeted trade promotion activities, as well as boosting investment in infrastructure and promoting reforms in the logistics sector.

Conclusion: The fresh fruit industry in Latin America holds significant potential. With increasing global demand for fresh fruits and a growing trade relationship with countries like India, LAC countries have the opportunity further to expand their reach in the global fresh fruit market. However, it's crucial for these countries to continue improving their agricultural practices, ensuring sustainability, and enhancing the quality of their produce to compete effectively on the global stage.



Bridging Diplomatic Frontiers

An Inside Look at Ambassadors, Delegations and Diplomatic Activities

Our publication covers diplomatic activities worldwide, including in-depth interviews with ambassadors, reports on diplomatic activities and features on ministerial delegations. We pride ourselves on offering exclusive insights, such as behind-the-scenes coverage of high-level meetings and cultural exchanges. We also provide country-specific reports, with a dedicated section focusing on diplomacy. Join us to stay informed on the latest developments in the intricate world of diplomacy and business opportunities.



India and Ukraine Chamber of Commerce to be set up

An India-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce will be established in the upcoming months in an effort to strengthen commercial ties. The Chamber will work to increase opportunities for investment and cooperation in industries including infrastructure and power with the help of the Ukrainian government.

India and Ukraine Chamber of Commerce: Key Points

The event happened after Emine Dzhaparova, Ukraine's first deputy foreign minister, visited India. Dzhaparova recommended during the tour that Indian infrastructure companies take part in the restoration of Ukraine, which is at war with Russia. The private sectors in both countries were unable to interact and look for opportunities in the absence of a chamber of commerce.

India and Ukraine Trade Relations

The Ukrainian Embassy in India reports that in 2021, bilateral trade between India and Ukraine totalled \$3.45 billion.

Ukraine sold fertilisers and vegetable oils worth \$2.49 billion to India, but it also received \$961.2 billion worth of commodities from that country.

Pharmaceuticals and electrical equipment made up its two primary imports.

India and Ukraine have signed a number of agreements over the past 20 years in a variety of industries, including the promotion of investment, standardisation, merchant shipping, research, and technology.

However, since its conflict with Russia erupted in February 2022, Ukraine's GDP has experienced a sharp decline.

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BRICS Beyond Borders

South Africa in the Expanding Circle of Influence



Dr. Mono-Mashaba

Fruit SA Specialist Consultant
Market Development

The membership applications to the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) group had been suspended since South Africa joined the original group in 2011. However, approximately 20 nations, including Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sudan, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay, Venezuela and Zimbabwe have formally applied for membership, with about 12 expressing interest in joining BRICS.

The expansion of BRICS raises the question of what advantages South Africa will gain. The forum aims to transform the system to reflect the development interests of poor countries. Nevertheless, the absence of several poor countries from the list of potential new members raises concerns about the forum's inclusivity. South Africa's advantageous position as an entry point to the African continent and its significant role in the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) make it a prime candidate for benefiting from BRICS's commitment to assisting Africa in accelerating industrialisation and infrastructure development, particularly in sectors such as agriculture.

Despite its limited focus on agricultural trade liberalisation, Fruit SA remains committed to addressing market access issues and engaging on every available pre-summit engagement platform. The inclusion of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Indonesia in BRICS will further bolster their status as export destinations for South African fruits, with future trade deals between BRICS members expected to be beneficial.

To strengthen the forum, BRICS will primarily rely on expanding intra-BRICS trade. However, the efficacy of this tool will only become apparent once global trade figures reflect sufficient information. As such, Fruit SA's market access efforts continue to focus on demand and supply dynamics to mitigate unforeseen risks.

Given that larger BRICS member countries may leverage the forum for their political and economic interests, Fruit SA is poised to pursue any potentially beneficial resolutions that arise from the Summit. This underscores the importance of remaining vigilant in the face of potentially divergent interests within the forum.

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Various estimates place Ukraine's economy's pre-war size at between a third and half of what it is today.

Ukraine's economy has been severely hampered by its year-long conflict with Moscow, the destruction of important industrial districts, and relentless strikes on its electrical infrastructure.

According to a calculation made by the World Bank, the European Commission, and Ukrainian authorities, Kyiv's economy would need to be rebuilt with close to USD 349 billion.

How did India support Ukraine?

India has supported Ukraine by sending numerous batches of emergency medical supplies and humanitarian aid.

New Delhi agreed to give Ukraine school buses during the recent visit of deputy foreign minister Emine Dzhaparova to India. Discussions about commerce and the economy also took place during Minister Dzhaparova's visit.

Additionally, Kyiv asked India to provide additional humanitarian aid and urgent relief.

Unfurling the Spirit of Unity

A Vibrant Spectacle of National Day Revelries in New Delhi

Chad National day



Cote'd Ivory National day



Jamaica National day



Peru National Day





Investment of Time and Energy in LAC will be rewarding

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the 9th CII-LAC Conclave to further economic partnerships between India and LAC countries. The program encompasses various sectors, including regional groupings such as CARICOM and SICA. Parallel investment tracks, reverse buyer-seller meets, and sector-specific sessions will provide a comprehensive understanding of India's promise. India's relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean has grown significantly in recent years, with 34 high-level visits. The most recent among them, has been the visit of our President to Suriname, where she was conferred the country's highest distinction, the "Grand Order of the Chain of the Yellow Star", and this honour only underlines our historic relationship and the tremendous goodwill between India and the region.

techniques complement LAC's availability of arable land-mass, making food security critical to both populations.

Indian businesses have invested in decarbonization technologies in the Latin America Caribbean region, including millet farming, edible oil production, and agro-R&D centers. India is executing critical infrastructure projects in power transmission, roads, oil and gas, connectivity, renewable energy, and defense. Our development partnership is expanding, generating local employment and impacting lives in the region. India's car and motorcycle exports to Latin America are significant, with Mexico and Colombia being the largest markets, respectively. Latin America's capabilities in producing and supplying raw materials give it a special edge in trade, with significant gold, copper, mineral concentrates and wood supplies.

India has emerged as a leading supplier of Covid vaccines worldwide, providing nearly 100 countries with vaccines and 150 with medicines. The Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region has received around 9 million doses of the vaccine from India. India is proud to have been the first supplier of Covid vaccines to many of its LAC partners, even when supplies were available locally. India is promoting the concept of the 'People's Pharmacy,' Jan Aushadhi, which aims to provide affordable medicines to the low-income segments of the population. India has a direct trade with LAC countries worth about a billion and a half dollars and is the top supplier of

pharmaceuticals to some countries in the region. India is willing to work with LAC countries to facilitate movement between their businesses and people. India believes that setting targets is a vital motivator and aims to achieve its target of US\$ 100 billion by 2027. The four pillars of intensified engagement between India and the LAC region are supply chain diversification, resource partnerships, technology and digital, and people-to-people ties..

As Global South nations, we can benefit by sharing our experiences in digital capabilities, health solutions, agriculture, and infrastructure. We should



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) President R. Dinesh and CII Director General Chandrajit Banerjee at the 9th CII India-Latin America & Caribbean (LAC) Conclave in New Delhi on 3 August, 2023.

India's commitment to greater engagement with the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region is evidenced by its hosting of high-level dignitaries, establishment of new embassies, and regular visits to the region. Bilateral trade between India and LAC has surged to close to US\$50 billion, with Indian companies investing approximately \$15 billion in various sectors. India's sustainable farming



Mr Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce & Industry, Textiles, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, GOI with 20 senior leaders from Latin America and Caribbean at Special Ministerial Session of 9th CII India-LAC Conclave at New Delhi on 3 August 2023.

tailor training and exchange programs to meet the specific requirements of the Latin American and Caribbean region.

While bilateral and regional cooperation is essential, we must also address global issues such as climate change, the concerns of the Global South, and reforming global financial and multilateral structures. By leveraging our shared strengths, experiences, capabilities, and resources, we can establish a mutually-beneficial partnership. With modern logistics and communication technologies, distance is no longer an impediment.

This conclave is a significant step in advancing the intensity of our cooperation and will yield substantial rewards.



Ms Meenakshi Lekhi, Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India with H.E. Ms Deley Eloina Rodriguez Gomez, Executive Vice President and Minister of People's Power for Economy, Finance & Foreign Trade of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela with senior Leaders from Latin America Region and Senior Indian Government officials at valedictory session of the 9th edition of CII LAC Conclave 2023 at on 4 August at New Delhi

Bridging Borders

Conversations with Latin American & Caribbean Ambassadors

by *JJuliaa Gangwani*



H. E. Mr. Alejandro Simancas Marin

Ambassador of
the Republic of Cuba to India

“We are proud of our communal history in the struggle against colonialism, for the rights of the peoples to their development, sovereignty and culture; and we maintain cooperation in the defence of fundamental values such as peace of international law, of international stability, and of the necessary multilateralism.”

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H. E. Mr. Jason Hall
High Commissioner of
Jamaica to India

“The trade balance is not surprisingly heavily in India’s favour. However, as India emerges as increasingly discerning market for high end luxury products there is scope for the import of premium Jamaican rum, Blue Mountain Coffee, spices/condiments as well as other nutraceutical and wellness products. Additionally, Jamaica is well positioned to engage India in trade of services, specifically, BPO and other digital services.”



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H. E. Ms. Yasiel A. Burillo R.
Ambassador of
Panama to India



“We have experienced in the last year an increase in export of copper to India which has led to a positive commercial balance. Other products are wood, especially teak, leather and scrap from aluminium & iron.

On the other hand, India exports to Panama, motor vehicles and spare parts, medicines, electricity cables, insecticides, organic surface agents, car wheels, etc.”

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Unlocking Potential

A Deep Dive into the Emerging Diplomatic and Business Synergies between Cuba and India

Q. What are the main areas of cooperation between India and Cuba? Any recent updates on their relations? Have any significant visits by leaders of both countries lately?

Bilateral relations have their origins in the visit to India made by Ernesto Che Guevara in June 1959 and the meeting in October of the same year in New York between the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, and the Indian independence leader Jawarlahal Nehru. Formally, the relations were established on January 12, 1960 and at their foundations are the sentiments of friendship respect, as well as the permanent will for cooperation and dialogue.

Next September 11 will be the 50th anniversary of Fidel Castro's first visit to India. Since that moment, there has been a fluid exchange of high-level visits, of which the visit of former President Ram Nath stands out in the last period, in 2018 and the visit to India of the then-first Vice President and the current Cuban President, Miguel Diaz Canel in 2015.

After the gloomy phase of COVID-19, which affected us all, we resumed our political dialogue with the visit last year to Havana of the Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, Shri Saurabh Kumar.

This year we had the honour of receiving the Minister of State for External Affairs in Havana, Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi and the Chief Minister of Kerala, Pinarayi Vijayan. Both of them were received by the President of the Republic of Cuba, Miguel Diaz Canel.

While this year, the Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, the Vice Minister of Communications, the Governor of the province of Cienfuegos and the Vice Minister of Foreign Trade have visited India.

All of the foregoing reflects the priority that Cuba grants to bilateral relations with India and the will to develop them to their full extent, both in maintaining political dialogue and in cooperation in the multilateral space, as well as the strengthening of commercial economic ties and cultural relations.

We are proud of our communal history in the struggle against colonialism, for the rights of the peoples to their development, sovereignty and culture; and we maintain cooperation in the defence of fundamental values such as peace, of international law, of international stability, and of the necessary multilateralism.

We are deeply grateful for the position of the Indian government and people against the US commercial, financial and economic blockade, which is expressed every year in India's support

for the United Nations General Assembly resolution demanding an end to the blockade. The blockade is a unilateral and criminal policy, with a marked unilateral extraterritorial character.

We must emphasise that this is a year of renewed commitment for Cuba with the global South, as we are chairing the Group 77 + China, whose Summit will be held on September 15 and 16 in Havana. On this occasion, the Summit will address the theme "Current Development Challenges: Role of Science, Technology and Innovation" and will be a relevant space to provide the countries of the South with strategies for their development after the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis. India is a member of this group, so it will be an honour to receive high representation from India at this Summit and to continue working together in benefit to the interests and aspirations of the global south, as we have done throughout our shared history.



Mr. Alejandro Simancas Marin
Ambassador of
the Republic of Cuba to India

Solar Energy

Q. Can you give me information on India's solar projects in Cuba and the financing agreement with Exim Bank and Banco Exterior De Cuba? Also, what's the capacity and value of India's credit line for solar parks in Cuba, and what's the terminal utilization period? What is the 1150 MW solar project by the International Solar Alliance, and NTPC's role in it? Lastly, are there any other renewable energy projects in Cuba by the International Solar Alliance?

Cuba has a renewable energy development plan to reduce our dependence on oil for electricity generation. In this context, the projects we develop with India in the renewable energy sector have a strategic character for Cuba.

Cuba is a member and founder of the International Solar Alliance, which has been an essential space for the development of our projects, the training of specialists, and of course, the coordination of initiatives to promote solar energy at a regional and global level.

We highly appreciate the facilities also created through EXIMBANK for the Development of various projects in renewable energy, both referred to solar, wind and biomass.

Likewise, we continue to work closely with NTPC and its experienced leadership and consultancy on a relevant solar project in Cuba, which is progressing satisfactorily.

Biotechnology and Traditional Medicine

Q. Can you provide information on any joint research projects or initiatives related to biotechnology and traditional medicine between India and Cuba? Additionally, have there been any notable developments or achievements in these areas as a result of their collaboration?

The biotechnology sector has indeed been one of the most dynamic and stable in bilateral economic relations for the past 25 years. This sector in Cuba has registered a high and recognized development. It would be enough to highlight that Cuba has developed four vaccines against Covid, the only ones of their kind in Latin America. In addition, unique and innovative products and treatments have been

developed for cancer and diabetes, among others. Local production covers around 65% of finished pharmaceutical products used in the national health system.

This has enabled a relationship with different Indian institutions and companies, which goes beyond the simple commercial relationship and has led to the cooperation and production of certain Cuban products in India, such as monoclonal antibodies, the training of professional resources. However, we believe that there is even greater potential and, in particular, the possibilities for research and development are wide.

We have recently expressed interest in joining the Indian Initiative for "Quality generic medicines at affordable prices for all". This proposal is in accordance with the strong international medical cooperation that Cuba maintains, mainly with the countries of the global south.

ITEC

Q. Could you give us details on the ITEC program collaboration between India and Cuba, such as the number of training slots allotted to Cuba and the main areas of training provided?

We highly appreciate the capacities that we have received through the ITEC scholarships, they have been a useful way and instrument for the formation and professional training of Cuban specialists in different spheres. We are currently organising new training capacities for Cuban filmmakers in India, which we are convinced will be very useful in the bilateral cultural cooperation. This project resulted from the exchange during the visit to Havana by the Minister of State for External Affairs, Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi. We are grateful to her for support given in this objective.

Indian Investment

Q. Give us a brief overview of India's investments in Cuba, including the main sectors involved and any recent developments or challenges? Also, what is the role of the Cuban government and are there any joint ventures or partnerships with Indian companies? Lastly, can you share information on notable Indian companies and their sectors in Cuba?

Cuba is open to Indian investments and makes available the facilities that exist in general for

business and, in particular, in the Mariel Special Economic Zone, which enjoys exceptional tariff facilities and the availability of the port of Mariel, one of the most modern in the region.

We believe that there are favourable conditions for investments for Indian companies in agriculture, mining (including nickel and gold), the information and technology industry, electronics, electric vehicles, and the retail trade sector, among others.

Economic and commercial relations between Cuba and India continue to be limited. That is why we have paid special attention to this aspect. The Cuban Government is willing to give India special priority in our interest to see India as a prominent player in our national economic development plan.

In recent years, relations have increased in the renewable energy sector, the biopharmaceutical industry and imports of agricultural products. However, we believe the potential is still much more significant in these and other sectors.

Tourism

Q. Can you tell us about tourism from India to Cuba? We would like to know about the main attractions for Indian tourists, direct flights, average cost, visa requirements, best time to visit, and cultural differences/similarities.

Tourism is the primary industry in Cuba, therefore, it offers particular opportunities of different types. In the same way, we would like to work to achieve a better promotion of the Cuban tourist destination in India. Cuba may not only offer the most beautiful beaches in the world but also a destination of history and culture. Indian visitors will always find Cuban people who admire, know and respect India, and above all, always express the feeling of friendship.

Similarly, Cuba is known for its dance and music; its rhythms could be summed up in what is known worldwide as "salsa". It is the land of tobacco, "Habanos" and rum from sugar cane. The history of Cuba is well-known and admired in India. Cuba has a lot to offer as a destination of culture and history.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the popularity that Indian history and culture have gained in Cuba. Through the film industry, yoga and Ayurveda, among others.

Cuba – India Future Outlook

Q. What is the outlook for the ITEC program, ISA, Bollywood, Biotechnology and Traditional Medicine, Investments & Tourism between India and Cuba?

We have achieved beneficial cooperation between the Ministry of AYUSH and the Institute of Ayurveda, which has stimulated the creation of the Panchakarma Centre in Havana and which we aspire to expand to other medical institutions. Also, establish the academic cooperation of Ayurveda at the University of Medical Sciences of Havana.

Philippines and US launch largest joint military exercise to counter China

The Philippines and the United States have launched their largest-ever joint military exercises, called Balikatan, involving nearly 18,000 troops to counter China's growing assertiveness in the region.

The annual drills, which include a live-fire exercise in the South China Sea, are being held for the first time under President Ferdinand Marcos, who seeks to strengthen ties with the US. The manoeuvres include military helicopters landing on the Philippine island of Luzon and the retaking of an island by amphibious forces.

Balikatan drills aimed at protecting Philippine sovereignty

Philippine exercises spokesman Colonel Michael Logico said the drills were aimed at protecting the country's sovereign territory. The exercise features troops staging an amphibious landing on Palawan, the closest Philippine landmass to the Spratly Islands, where China and the Philippines have rival claims.

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Mr. Jason Hall
High Commissioner of
Jamaica to India

A Melting Pot of Culture, Business Potential, and Natural Wonders

Q. Can you provide information on the products India exports to Jamaica and vice versa?

In recent years, Jamaica's main imports from India have been chemicals, especially pharmaceuticals, manufactured goods, machinery and heavy equipment and food, while it exports to India have been pimento, rum and waste paper.

Q. How has the trade relationship between India and Jamaica evolved?

The trade balance is, not surprisingly heavily in India's favour. However, as India emerges as increasingly discerning market for high end luxury products there is scope for the importation of premium Jamaican rum, Blue Mountain Coffee, spices/condiments as well as other nutraceutical and wellness products. Additionally, Jamaica is well positioned to engage India in trade of services, specifically, BPO and other digital services.

Q. Have there been any significant visits between the two countries lately?

The former President of India, His Excellency Ram Nath Kovind visited Jamaica in May 2022. Also of note is the visit of Dr. the Honourable S. Jaishankar to the Region for the 4th CARICOM – India Ministerial Meeting, held in Georgetown, Guyana, in April 2023.

Q. What are the similarities between India and Jamaica?

Jamaica and India are bound by deep cultural and historic ties that date back to the 1840s when the first set of Indians entered Jamaica to work on the sugar plantations as indentured labourers. Ever since we have shared an inextricable genetic link, manifested in our diverse ethnicity and our delectable world renown cuisine.

Both countries are superlative on the world stage in sport and music. We also have a common appreciation for rule of law and democracy. Though quite different in size and scale, Jamaica, like India is a tremendously diverse country of breathtaking beauty. From pristine beaches, through lush forests to majestic mountains, Jamaica has 4 UNESCO Heritage sites.

Q. What is your vision for the future of Indo-Jamaican relations?

Jamaica has deep respect for India's contributions to civilization and humanity. We have high regard for India's prominent voice in the international arena. This year marks 61 years of uninterrupted diplomatic relations. The priority right now is to generate greater awareness of Jamaica's solid value proposition as a destination for Indian investment

in infrastructure, digital services, alternative energy, tourism, agritech, and creative industries, while promoting increased exchanges and cooperation in technology, education, health care delivery, culture, art and sport. All told, I envisage strengthened mutually beneficial bi-lateral relations between our nations, positioning Jamaica as the gateway for Indian innovation to the region.

Q. Can you tell readers about the sectors India has invested in Jamaica? Additionally, what are the primary challenges that Indian investors face in Jamaica?

India has invested in the global digital services, with the set-up of BPO centres in Jamaica. There are also Indian business interests in medical services and education as well as pharmaceuticals.

Tourism

Q. I would appreciate it if you could provide me with the visa requirements for Indian citizens planning to visit Jamaica.

Holders of a valid Indian Passport do not require an entry visa for Jamaica and there are over 400 flights weekly calling at 3 international airports across the island. However, presently there are no direct flights from India and a transit visa will be required if flying through USA, Canada, UK or EU. There are a few options flying through the Netherlands, Curacao or Panama which can be achieved without a transit visa.

Q. Our readers would be interested in learning about the popular tourist destinations in Jamaica that are recommended for Indian travellers as well as the best time of year to visit.

We spoke earlier of the diversity of the island from the coastline to the mountains, Jamaica has 6 distinct resort areas; Kingston (UNESCO designated Creative City of Music), Port Antonio (The birthplace of tourism in the Americas), Ocho Rios (highest concentration of attractions in the Caribbean), Montego Bay (the resort capital of Jamaica), Negril (the land of laid-back, and capital of casual), South Coast (off the beaten track and home of Appleton Rum)

Jamaica offers a wide array of tourism services, ranging from MICE events, all-inclusive sand sun and beach options, resorts and boutique hotels, water sports, including rafting, hiking in the Blue

Mountains, horseback riding, zip-lining, heritage tourism, amazing food, seas and landscape, romantic get-aways and medical tourism due, in part to the abundance of natural hot springs.

Jamaica, as a result of the tropical weather all year round, is suitable for visit at any time. For lovers of reggae music, January is good time to visit for Rebel Salute, held on 15th January, February – Reggae Month Celebrations and mid- July for Reggae Sumfest, the largest music festival in Jamaica and the Caribbean.

Q. Curious to know if there is a burgeoning market for Indian weddings in Jamaica.

Jamaica is actually the world’s leading honeymoon destination. Boasting a staggering diversity of natural beauty from the mystical energy of the Blue Mountains to warm azure embrace of our crystalline waters. For many, these stunning settings are synonymous with love, offering an awe-inspiring backdrop for some of the most dazzling romances and weddings. Couples looking to find the ideal place to say “I do” are spoiled for choice on this island paradise, which is complemented by an even greater array of very capable event planners, musicians, caterers and all manner of wedding specialists who excel at their craft. Getting married in Jamaica is an unforgettable experience not only for the couples but for the whole wedding party.

In view of the growing trend for Indian weddings overseas, normally characterized by massive number of travellers and longer stay due to the extensive celebrations associated with those weddings, Jamaica is the ideal location given its natural, idyllic and scenic land and seascape, high number of rooms, cultural affinity with India, visa-free entry and proximity to countries with large Indian diaspora communities. Jamaica ranks high among the world’s most romantic destinations, and has received a number of awards in this area, including The World’s Leading Family, Cruise and Wedding Destination at the 27th Annual World Travel Awards in 2020. Jamaica can, therefore, become the next big destination for big Indian weddings.

Bollywood

Q. Are there any Projects Jamaica and India work on together?

Jamaica is an ideal film location due its stunning diversity of land and seascapes. Many films have

been shot on island over the years, such as “How Stella Got Her Groove Back,” “Cool Runnings” and “Popcorn”, as well as the first and last movies in the James Bond series

There has been active engagement, in recent times, between the relevant stakeholders on both sides towards collaboration on film projects. The Jamaican Film Commission, part of Jamaica’s trade and investment agency, has the responsibility to promote the Jamaican film industry by facilitating activities that increase investment, export, and employment in the sector.

Q. How can Jamaica and India work together to promote their respective film industries?

Jamaica is a prime destination to film movies, TV series and reality shows and there is scope for co-venture opportunities between Jamaican and Indian content producers. There is great potential for cooperation in animation and distribution of Jamaican content in India.

Energy sector

Q. What are the primary sources of energy in Jamaica?

Jamaica has a vibrant and open energy sector which uses a mix of petroleum products and renewable sources for residential and commercial uses.

Q. What are the potential areas for collaboration between India and Jamaica in renewable energy? Are there any current joint projects in this area?

Jamaica offers investment opportunities in the energy sector across several areas, including electric power generation, energy supply/renewables, fuel crops, exploration, joint ventures and trading in fuels. Jamaica continues to benefit from capacity building and solar deployment projects via the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA), most recently from a US\$50,000 grant that funded a solar irrigation pump for farmers in rural Jamaica. In addition, the Government of Jamaica (GoJ), from time to time, invites expressions of interests from independent power producers (IPPs) for electricity generation through renewable energy. These, among other initiatives, are line with the targets to diversify the energy mix, the National Energy Policy 2009-2030, Vision 20/30: Jamaica’s National Development Plan and international commitments such as the SDGs (goal #7) and

Jamaica’s nationally determined contribution under the Paris Agreement.

Q. I would appreciate any insight on the potential benefits for India in investing in Jamaica’s energy sector.

Considering India’s advancement in solar energy, green hydrogen and biofuels, electric vehicles and battery charging, these areas present opportunities for investment in, and collaboration with, Jamaica. It is also noteworthy the impending launch of the Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA) under India’s G-20 Presidency.

Agri Business

Q. What steps has Jamaica taken to diversify its agricultural production through its agriculture policy?

The Government of Jamaica has through its “Grow Smart, Eat Smart” Initiative aimed at deploying a major thrust to drive the consumption of wholesome and nutritious foods and grow strategically, optimising operations by using empirical an approach, innovation and technology, as well as advancing research and development towards better operations to develop and ultimately achieve better results.

This works in tandem with regional initiatives such as the “25 by 25” initiative – reducing the food import bill by 25% by 2025, aimed at achieving food security and the CARICOM Agri-Food System aimed at boosting agricultural production and commercialisation of the sector.

Q. What opportunities exist for India to invest in Jamaica’s agricultural sector?

There is scope for investment in the manufacturing sector, transfer of technology, for the modernisation of the sector and production of value-added agricultural products.

Logistics

Q. Kindly provide further details about the Global Logistics Hub Initiative and the Jamaica Special Economic Zone Authority (JSEZA) and elucidate how these initiatives can benefit the Indian business community.

Jamaica is strategically located as a potential

gateway to the markets of the Americas and enjoys favourable trading arrangements with the developed countries of USA and Canada. Our logistics sector has witnessed close to US\$1 billion in port investments in recent months. Therefore, with a potential TEU capacity surpassing 3 million and a sophisticated Special Economic Zone (SEZ) regime, the Government of Jamaica is making good progress towards its goal of making Jamaica the Logistics Hub of the Americas. The SEZ regime allows for the several fiscal incentives, including low corporate income tax of 12.5%, duty-free importation, no value added tax on importation, expedited business services and withholding tax exemptions. The Indian business community is invited to explore the opportunities associated with these developments.

Global Digital Services

Q. What makes Jamaica an attractive destination for Indian businesses looking to invest in global digital services?

Jamaica's value proposition includes its business and investment friendly ecosystem, combined with its strategic geographic positioning; at the centre of the Caribbean and proximate to North, South and Central America, within a four-hour flight radius of more than half of the population of the western hemisphere, all bolstered by a low-cost, well-trained and educated workforce. It is the place where you want to live, work, raise families and do business.

Q. Are there any Indian businesses currently operating in Jamaica's global digital services sector?

Hinduja (Sagility) and Fusion BPO.

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US troops to use Philippine bases including one near Taiwan

The exercises follow China's three-day military exercise, which simulated targeted strikes and a blockade of Taiwan, which Beijing considers part of its territory. While the joint news conference did not address questions about the Taiwan tensions, U.S. troops will be allowed to use four Philippine military bases under the agreement, including a naval base near Taiwan.

Balikatan exercises to improve military tactics, techniques, and procedures

This year's Balikatan exercises will see a significant increase in the number of troops involved compared to last year. Approximately 12,200 American, 5,400 Filipino, and over 100 Australian soldiers will participate in the two-week military drills. This represents almost twice as many troops as the previous year's exercise. The Americans will also use their Patriot missiles, one of the world's best air-defense systems, and the HIMARS precision rocket system, which has been used by Ukrainian forces fighting Russian troops.

According to Colonel Medel Aguilar, spokesperson for the Philippine military, the exercises will improve "tactics, techniques, and procedures" for a broad range of military operations.

The Balikatan exercises are part of recent agreements between Manila and Washington to restart joint maritime patrols in the South China Sea and expand the US military's presence in the Philippines, which has infuriated China. As a result, China accused the US of "endangering regional peace and stability".



Strengthening Panama Canal Indian Ocean Relationships



Ms. Yasiel A. Burillo R.
Ambassador of
Panama to India

Q. The relationship between India and Panama is one of the oldest in the Central American region. It dates back to the mid-19th century when groups of Indians were brought to Panama to work on constructing the Panama Railways. It is estimated that several workers stayed in Panama. What is the estimated number of PIOs?

You are right, our story with India began with the construction of the Panama Railway and the Panama Canal. At that time, Panama needed manpower to support those ambitious constructions, and people from all over the world came to establish during this opportunity. Indians were well received for the projects and when the construction was finished, they decided to stay with their families. It is estimated that around 15-20 thousand Indian descendants live in our country, they have prospered with different kinds of businesses.

Q. What items does India import from Panama and what does Panama export to India?

We have experienced in the last year an increase in exporting copper to India which has led to a positive

commercial balance. Other products are wood, especially teak, leather, and scrap from aluminium & iron.

On the other hand, India to Panama, motor vehicles and spare parts, medicines, electricity cables, insecticides, organic surface agents, car wheels, etc.

Q. What is the latest quantum of bilateral trade with India, which is Panama's largest trade partner in Central America?

The latest quantum of bilateral trade according to the INTELCOM Data on 2022 from January to October (Panama Ministry of Commerce) is USD 308M.

Panama's largest trade partner in Central America can be seen as a strategic block that is an economic and political organization called SICA. In English this means, the Central America Integration System. SICA has several FTAs between their members which facilitate commerce.

Q. Are Indian films popular in Panama? Is there any incentive for Bollywood or Tollywood movies?

Yes, Panamanians have knowledge of Indian films, especially because of the vast access to applications and streaming services for movies.

We do offer incentives for Bollywood and Tollywood movies. In fact, we are one of the few countries in Latin America to offer incentives under a legal frame with a number of benefits. Our highlights are: 25% Cash rebate program for a minimum investment of USD500,000; a special permit from customs authority that will allow a temporary import of equipment in any production without a minimum expenditure; no current unions.

To facilitate filming, we have a one-stop shop office called Panama Film Commission. All international productions must contact them and arrange a meeting to discuss further steps in any kind of production, they will provide proper information accordingly.

Q. Can you provide information on any signed MOUs?

Our most recent MOU was signed in India this year on January 10, 2023, between both Ministers of

External Affairs. It consists of the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate the training of diplomats from both countries.

In 2022, both countries signed also the renewal of a Cultural Agreement that strengthened the previous agreement to seek initiatives that execute activities of cultural exchange and contemplate music programs, dance festivals, theatre performances, and the exchange of art exhibitions. Thanks to this kind of agreement, we will have two important cultural events this year that constantly exchange appreciation between us, and this is extremely positive.

Q. Can you tell our readers about the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance that Panama has recently signed?

Panama is constantly seeking for multilateral cooperation in different areas. In this sense, we are proud to have signed the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) on 2022. We have an Energy Transition Agenda which is developed and followed up by the National Secretariat of Energy in conjunction with the Ministry of Environment and the United Nations program.

As a country, we have led an example in the use of renewable energy. The energy we use in our country consists of 81% renewal (Panama Energy Secretariat Data: 2022). Most of it comes from hydropower energy. This is very positive since we have taken advantage of the large number of rivers that flow through our territory. In the solar sector, we still can grow, especially in remote areas where only this kind of energy is recommended to be implemented. We hope that being signatory members of ISA can enhance more opportunities for development in this sector.

Q. In which field is Panama looking for investment from India, and what is the scheme?

Panama is looking for Indian companies that want to take advantage of all the great portfolio of attractive regimens and laws for investment we are offering. Panama is a very strategic country for trade, it has a privileged geographical position in America and at the same time a multimodal logistic platform for world trade that integrates the connection of 3 seaports, one train, an airport, and a highway. This, with the Panama Canal transportation, facilitated the maritime

connections.,

We have also an important Air Hub through our Tocumen International Airport, with more than 82 destinations, its terminals move passengers throughout the region. For these convenient reasons and more, around 170 multinational headquarters companies had already trusted in Panama.

In this sense, our strategy for boosting Panama's trade with India and vice-versa is to begin by associating with each other more. This will be possible only by making people to people connections. In this sense, last April 2023, the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture signed an MOU with the Confederation of Indian Industries to begin the first steps for this great interaction. At the same time, Propanama is in the last steps to sign an MOU with Invest India. With these commitments, the idea is that both country's businessmen can confidently interact and explore a path for commercial exchange. ExpoComer, one of the biggest commercial encounters in Latin America hosted in Panama is a great space for this purpose.

Q. Can you provide information on the Colon Free Trade Zone (CFZ) and its significance for Panama? Additionally, could you explain the benefits of the Free Trade Zone and the incentives offered to lure Indian companies? Lastly, how does Panama's position as a regional logistics and business center impact its trade connections with India?

The Colon Free Zone in Panama is a vital economic asset. It was established in 1948 to make the Panama Canal a logistics hub for transshipping goods. Today, it is a multi-modal logistics center that distributes goods to North and South America from Panama. With three ports, a railroad, an airport, and a highway, the zone takes advantage of Panama's strategic location in the center of the American continent. Indian companies can import goods tax-free and take advantage of the economic benefits of the zone. It's time to study these advantages and opportunities and work towards utilizing them.

Improved relations and recent agreements with CII and Panama Chambers have facilitated communication and cooperation in commercial matters. Panama now welcomes investors and our investment center is ready to explore more opportunities for collaboration.

Tourism on way to recovery in 2023

by Amit Mittal

The global tourism industry battered by several shocks in the past few years is recovering slowly. The pandemic and ensuing travel restrictions, the outbreak of war in Ukraine and high inflation are among the factors that have affected many travellers' plans.

While global tourist arrivals are expected to remain below 2019 levels by the end of the year, the tourism recovery appears well underway. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) expects 4.35 billion flight passengers in 2023, quite near to 4.54 billion recorded in 2019.

Tourism levels in Europe reached almost 80% of pre-pandemic figures in 2022. Meanwhile, the Americas and Africa recorded close to 65%. In contrast, in Asia and the Pacific, tourist arrivals were only 23% of 2019's levels last year, due to strict Covid-19 restrictions in the region.

Tourism is expected to reach 2019 levels this year in the Middle East and Europe, though tourism patterns in Europe are shifting. Given cost-of-living crises at home—compounded by higher costs for transportation, food and beverages and hotels when traveling—many European tourists are opting for domestic travel or turning towards the Western Balkans and Turkey as affordable vacation options.

China's opening from Covid-19 this year will benefit destinations in ASEAN; China represented the

world's largest sender of travellers in 2019. In that year, Chinese travellers took 155 million trips abroad, spending USD 130 billion. This demand was stifled under Covid-19 restrictions but is now bouncing back; one of China's biggest travel platforms saw international travel bookings jump by over 250per cent on the day after border restrictions ended. Favourite Chinese tourists destinations like Thailand and Hong Kong will particularly benefit. In Hong Kong, retail sales growth has averaged around 20 per cent so far this year thanks to the return of mainland shoppers, and is expected to average in double digits over 2023.

Tourist destinations will need to adapt to increased temperatures, adverse weather events and water shortages. In Europe weather poses the primary risk to tourism, as heat waves make summer travel in the region increasingly hostile, and droughts and floods become more common. The El Niño weather pattern increases climate-related risks in many locations, including hurricanes in the Pacific Ocean.

Extreme weather also may affect the airline industry due to flight cancellations and delays. While airlines are expected to return to profitability this year, labour shortages, demands for higher wages and high fuel costs remain burdens.





Breathing Life into Balance The Transformative Power of Yoga

Yogi Acharya S. Bains

Yoga, an ancient practice rooted in Indian philosophy, has become a significant milestone worldwide. It has transcended borders and cultures, becoming a global phenomenon that promotes physical health, mental well-being, and spiritual growth. The history of yoga dates back to over 5,000 years ago in India. Initially, it was a spiritual discipline focused on attaining peace and enlightenment. However, it evolved to include physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation practices over time.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, yoga began its journey to the West, with its teachings travelling to Europe and America. Yoga's popularity multiplied, and it became known for its physical benefits, such as improved flexibility, strength, and balance.

Today, yoga is practised worldwide, with an estimated 300 million practitioners. It has become a lifestyle for many, with yoga studios, retreats, and festivals popping up in cities and towns around the globe. The physical benefits of yoga are one of the main reasons for its global popularity.

Regular practice can improve flexibility, strength, and balance while also promoting better posture and reducing the risk of chronic conditions such as back pain, arthritis, and heart disease. Beyond physical health, yoga is known for promoting mental well-being. It can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, and the meditative aspects of yoga encourage mindfulness, helping practitioners stay present and focused.

This mindfulness can enhance overall quality of life and contribute to greater happiness. While yoga's physical and mental benefits are well-known, the spiritual dimension is also an essential aspect of the practice. Yoga encourages self-awareness and inner peace, which resonate with individuals seeking personal growth and self-improvement. This spiritual dimension has attracted many practitioners globally.

The global milestone of yoga is evident in its recognition by international bodies. In 2014 the United Nations declared June 21 as International Yoga Day, acknowledging yoga's universal appeal and benefits. This annual event sees millions of people worldwide practising yoga together, reflecting its global impact. In conclusion, yoga has become a significant milestone worldwide, transcending borders and cultures to become a global phenomenon that promotes physical health, mental well-being, and spiritual growth. Its ancient teachings and practices have impacted society, changing how people think about their bodies, minds, and spirits.

Yoga Industry

The yoga industry is rapidly expanding worldwide. As of 2022, the global yoga market was valued at USD 105.9 billion and is expected to reach USD 177.6 billion by 2028. This represents a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9% from 2023 to 2028.

In terms of revenue, North America has a significant market share due to the popularity of yoga practices and the increasing number of yoga studios in the United States. However, the Asia Pacific region, led by India, has a major share of the global yoga industry thanks to its rich yogic culture, traditional knowledge, and numerous yoga schools.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the offline yoga course segment held the majority of the industry share. However, due to the pandemic, which has forced people to stay at home and exercise, the online yoga course segment is expected to grow at the fastest CAGR during the forecast period.

Apart from classes and courses, the yoga industry also includes retreats, clothing, mats, blocks, and other accessories. With these elements taken into account, the global yoga market is worth well over \$130 billion. Whether you're a practitioner looking to start your own studio or an entrepreneur seeking

an investment opportunity, the yoga business offers promising prospects globally.

Impact on immunity & mental health

1. **Improved Cognitive Skills:** Practicing yoga can help develop new connections in the brain, leading to better cognitive skills such as learning and memory. It strengthens parts of the brain that play a crucial role in memory, attention, awareness, thought, and language.
2. **Reduced Anxiety and Depression:** Yoga's emphasis on breathing practices and meditation helps calm and center the mind, reducing anxiety and depression.
3. **Mood Enhancement:** Yoga can boost your mood by lowering levels of stress hormones, increasing the production of feel-good chemicals known as endorphins, and bringing more oxygenated blood to your brain.
4. **Stress Reduction:** Yoga can help reduce stress. The tightening and relaxing of muscles during yoga can reduce tension.
5. **Improved Sleep:** Research suggests that yoga can improve sleep, especially for older adults.
6. **Enhanced Social Life:** Attending in-person yoga classes can provide social interaction, which can positively affect both mental and physical health.
7. **Help with PTSD:** Small studies have found that yoga can help with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Yoga is a practice that can bring about numerous benefits for both the body and mind. In particular, there are certain yoga exercises that have been shown to boost immunity and promote mental health. Here are some of the most effective yoga poses for these purposes:

1. **Surya Namaskar A:** This sequence is also known as Sun Salutation and is an excellent way to stimulate the immune system and cultivate vibrant health. It consists of several yoga poses, including Tadasana (Mountain Pose), Urdhva Hastasana (Upward Salute), Uttanasana (Standing Forward Bend), Ardha Uttanasana (Half Standing Forward Bend), Ashtanga Namaskar (Eight-Pointed Bow Pose), Bhujangasana (Cobra Pose), and Adho Mukha Svanasana (Downward-Facing Dog Pose). Practicing Surya Namaskar A regularly can help to improve circulation, increase flexibility, and boost the immune system.

2. **Pranayama:** This is a basic yoga pose that involves deep breathing exercises. Pranayama has been shown to alleviate stress hormones, smoothens the heart rate, and benefits immunity. Some of the most popular types of pranayama include Suryabhedan Pranayam, Chandrabhedan Pranayam, and Anulom Vilom Pranayama. Practicing pranayama regularly can help to improve lung function, reduce anxiety, and boost immunity.

3. **Core-Strengthening Asanas:** These yoga poses are designed to strengthen the muscles of the core, which is important for overall body stability and enhanced immunity. Some of the most effective core-strengthening asanas include Plank, Boat Pose, and Bridge Pose. Practicing these poses regularly can help to improve posture, increase core strength, and boost immunity.

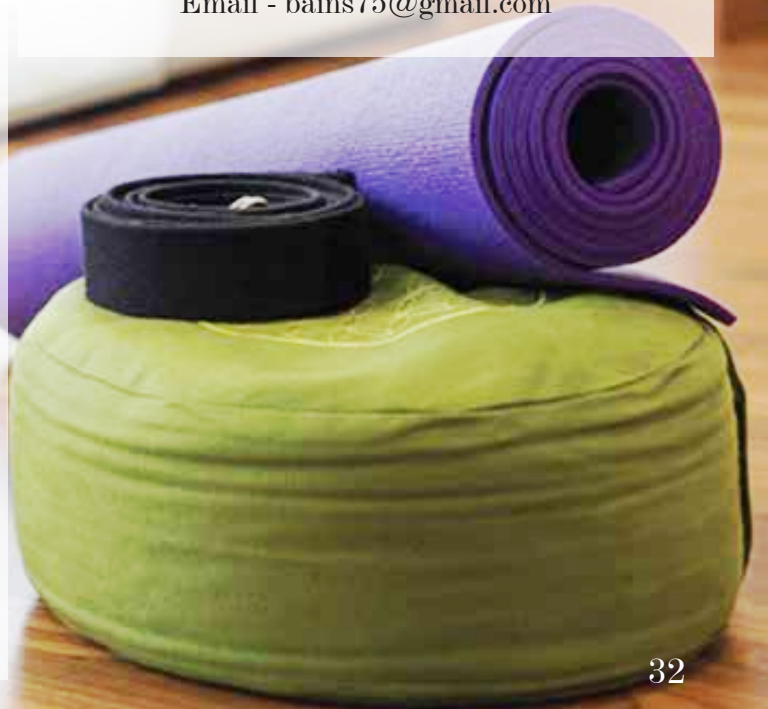
4. **Meditation:** This is a practice that involves focusing the mind on a particular object, thought, or activity to achieve a mentally clear and emotionally calm state. Practicing meditation regularly can help to reduce activity in the limbic system—the part of the brain dedicated to emotions. As your emotional reactivity diminishes, you have a more tempered response when faced with stressful situations. This can help to reduce anxiety, improve mood, and boost immunity.

By incorporating these yoga exercises into your daily routine, you can improve your overall health and wellness, boost your immune system, and promote mental clarity and emotional well-being.

For more details /hiring Yoga Instructor:

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BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES Across the Globe

Opportunities in Bolivia

The company that creates a transportation system (micro-mobility vehicles) based on solar energy and electric cars under an innovative model that allows operations to start in different cities of Latin America in a very scalable way and, with the use of technology, the sector achieves mass transport of citizens.

Excellent business projections for the next 36 months. The investment will be used for the infrastructure of the vehicle plant, The purchase of material stock necessary for mass production and Manufacture lithium batteries.



Opportunities in Chile



SALE OF PHOTOVOLTAIC ENERGY PROJECT IN CHILE

Sale of 100% of the company

100MW solar plant project located in the Atacama region, dedicated to supplying energy to the national electrical system. Consists of 170,000 solar panels. The plant has a lifespan of 35 years. Positive connection feasibility.

Opportunities in Mexico

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First investment fund with a focus on avocado farmlands. (65% avocado gardens - 35% other crops).

Investment in small and medium-sized gardens which maximize financial returns along with a positive impact from an environmental and social perspective.



Opportunities in Peru

HOTEL FOR SALE IN IQUITOS

Sale of 100% of the assets

Midscale category hotel (90 rooms), located in front of the emblematic Plaza 28 de Julio, in route to the airport and the different jungle lodges.

It will be operated by an internationally renowned hotel chain.

The hotel is already built and in the finishing process (it is 6 to 8 months away from going on the market).

The closing of the project is pending, which consists of the following activities: complete with the facilities, acquire the equipment and finishes, as well as the implementation of the hotel.



SALE OF HYDROELECTRIC POWER PLANT IN AYACUCHO

Hydroelectric power plant with a capacity of 4.6MW.

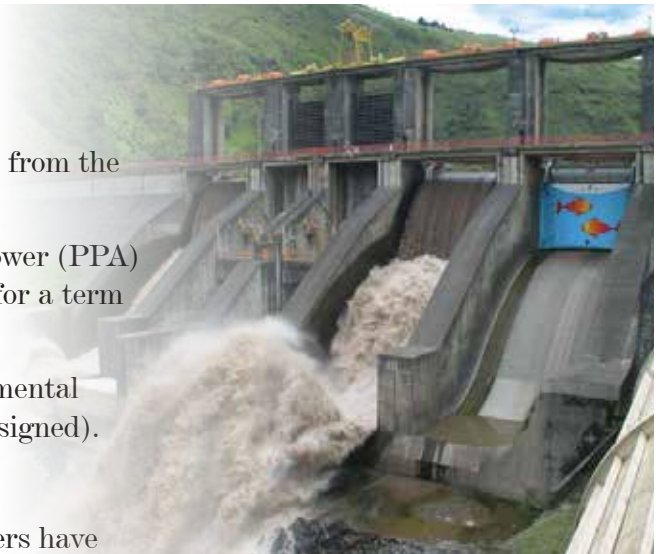
Interconnection point to the National Grid 250 meters from the powerhouse.

Commercial agreement for the sale of energy/future power (PPA) with the electricity distribution company of Ayacucho for a term of 7 years.

Generation concession signed and registered, Environmental Impact Study approved and Social License (easement signed).

Estimated work execution time is 400 days.

Currently, all electromechanical and civil works suppliers have been assigned.



SEARCH FOR FINANCING FOR HOTEL AND GASTRONOMIC PROJECTS

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