

Vice President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu will be paying a visit to Paraguay from 5-7 March 2019 and to the Republic of Costa Rica from 7-9 March 2019. This is the first high-level visit from India to both countries.

Vice President will be accompanied by a high-level delegation including Minister of State for Tourism K.J. Alphons, Members of Parliament and senior officials from the Government of India.

## **Paraguay**

While the then President Fernando Lugo of Paraguay had visited India in May 2012, this is the first-ever VVIP visit from India to Paraguay. Ministerial and other level exchanges have taken place from time to time. Vice President will meet with President of the Republic of Paraguay, Mario Abdo Benítez, Vice President, Hugo Velázquez, and President of the National Congress (Senate), Silvio Ovelar. VP will also address the India-Paraguay business forum and interact with the Indian diaspora in Paraguay.

India and Paraguay traditionally share warm and friendly ties. Trade is one of the main drivers of relationship between both the countries. Bilateral trade has increased almost ten-fold over the last ten years and reached USD 334 million in 2017-18 from USD 40 million in 2008-09. Main export items from India to Paraguay include iron and steel, plastics, chemicals, vehicles and auto parts; while Paraguay's exports to India are composed mainly of vegetable oil, oils and resinoids, and aluminum. Brand India in the automobile sector has a strong presence in Paraguay.

## **Costa Rica**

Visit of Vice President Naidu to the Republic of Costa Rica would be the first ever high-level visit from India. Former Second Vice President of Costa Rica Ana Helena Chacon Echeverria had visited India in October 2015. There have been other ministerial and other level exchanges between the two countries at periodic intervals.

Engagements of the Vice President in Costa Rica will include meetings with President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Carlos Alvarado Quesada, First Vice President, Epsy Campbell Barr as well as President of Congress Carolina Hidalgo Herrera. VP will address the prestigious University of Peace, established under the auspices of the United Nations with a specific

mandate of furthering the agenda of peace. He will deliver the keynote address at the India-Costa Rica business forum ;and meet with the Indian community in Costa Rica.

India and Costa Rica enjoy long-standing relations of friendship and cooperation, which are being strengthened by the growing commercial engagement between the two countries. Bilateral trade between India and Costa Rica is US\$ 200 million. Indian exports to Costa Rica total US\$ 133 million with auto, motorcycles and pharma figuring among top exports. Imports from Costa Rica are mainly teakwood. With a commitment to become a carbon-neutral country by 2021, Costa Rica has also joined the International Solar Alliance.

The visit of Vice President to the two countries is to advance India's outreach to the important countries in the region. This visit will provide an opportunity to provide impetus to our bilateral relations in trade and investment, ICT, renewable energy including hydel, education, healthcare, space and people to people linkages.

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