

*Ambassador of Peru to India talks about the relations between India and Peru, the two areas of the world that have been separated by history, but are today coming together not only for mutual interest but also for the discovery of their cultural similarities and the sharing of their differences.*

Mr Carlos Rafael Polo Castaneda, Ambassador of Peru to India and Dr Óscar Pujol, Director of the Instituto Cervantes in New Delhi, on Thursday, held a digital conversation where they discussed the background of diplomatic relations between India and Peru, the present state, the future expectations and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a seasoned diplomat, Ambassador Polo painted a rich tapestry of relations between the two areas of the world that have been separated by history but are today coming together not only for mutual interest but also for the discovery of their cultural similarities and the sharing of their differences.

Expanding beyond political exchanges, ties between the two countries cover a wide range of areas, which include trade, cooperation, culture, science and technology, defence, among others.



## **Diplomatic Relations**

Ambassador Polo made the audience aware of the fact that India and Peru formally started off diplomatic relations in 1963. India and Peru have enjoyed 57 years of successful diplomatic relations. India and Peru share a long history, which started after the arrival of the Amazonas Frigate to the coast of Kolkata in 1857. Even before the beginning of formal relations, Peru opened its first Consular office in Kolkata in 1897.

He explained how the two countries cooperate closely in multilateral platforms. He mentioned that Peru supports India's aspiration for permanent membership in a reformed and expanded United Nations Security Council. Both are partners in many issues of the global agenda and champion a number of common causes.

Peru is a founding member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). After the inaugural ISA meet in October 2018, countries welcomed Peru's proposal to host the next major event - "ISA-Peru LAC Renewable Energy Meet and Expo - SUNWORLD 2019" in November 2019.

India and Peru have a long history of high-level visits. In 2018, Peru received the official visit of the Vice President of India, Venkaiah Naidu. Both countries signed Agreement on new and renewable energy. Peru is the Vice-President of the Latin America and Caribbean Region of International Solar Alliance (ISA). During his visit, organized on the occasion of the 55 anniversary of Indo-Peruvian diplomatic relations, Vice President Naidu held extensive talks with the top leadership of Peru, where he stressed the need to assess the achievements made so far and to chart out a clear course of action to realise the full potential of the bilateral relationship.

India has expressed its desire to engage more closely with the Pacific Alliance, of which Peru is a member, particularly with respect to trade facilitation, investment, and to examine prospects of Alliance-wide arrangements.

## **Economic Relations**

A bilateral trade agreement covering trade in goods, services and investment is currently under negotiation. Trade between India and Peru is growing, with trade crossing the US \$1 billion marks in 2011-12 and the US\$3 billion mark in 2017-18. During 2018-19, the total trade was the US \$ 3.126 billion.

Trade and investment relations were one of the key topics of discussion during the visit of Indian Vice President Venkaiah Naidu to Peru in May 2018.

Ambassador Polo highlighted a significant increase in bilateral trade between the two countries. Peru now represents the 4th largest export as well as an import destination for India in Latin America. According to Peruvian data, the two-way trade in the 2018 calendar year crossed US\$3,373 million with India's exports at US\$902 million and imports over US\$2,471 million during which India had emerged as the 3rd largest export destination, 13th largest source of imports and 5th largest trading partner of Peru. India's main exports to Peru include automobiles, motorcycles and three-wheelers, towers of iron and steel, polyester and cotton yarns, pharmaceuticals, plastic products, rubber, pipes for oil and gas industry, iron and steel products, tyres, pipes etc. Main imports from Peru are gold, copper, synthetic filaments, phosphates of calcium, fresh grapes, fish flour, etc. Few Indian companies have also started investing in the mining sector in Peru.

Ambassador Polo termed Peru as a "mining country" and explained the significant contribution of export of Gold, Copper and Zinc from Peru to India in increasing the trade figures in recent years.

## **COVID-19 crisis**

Home to 32 million people, Peru jumped past 300,000 confirmed cases of Covid-19, the fifth-highest in the world. Peru is slowly reopening its battered economy. It locked down in March against the virus. It has [registered](#) more than 10,000 pandemic-related deaths.

Overall, its economic activity fell 40.49% in April compared to the same time last year, according to the government's statistics.

Ambassador Polo said that World Bank has predicted that Peru, along with other commodity-exporting countries will continue to be affected by the disruption of supply-chains in the USA and China, the two big trading partners of Peru. He also talked about the impact of lockdown on education as schools and Universities remain closed due to lockdown measures.

Happy to return Home. A group of Indian nationals stranded in Peru left for India this afternoon. They will take a connecting Air India flight under Vande Bharat Mission from Amsterdam. Embassy thanks all, who made this possible.

[@MEAIndia @IndianDiplomacy pic.twitter.com/Q7xcOyQxp](#)

— India in Peru & Bolivia (@eoilima) [June 16, 2020](#)

Indian nationals stranded in Peru evacuated under Vande Bharat Mission

## Cultural Relations

Ambassador Polo was glad when asked about the cultural relations between the two areas of the world, that are as a mystic and spiritual as they are modern; their ancient traditions being perfectly blended into the everyday life of their citizens.

Peru stands out as a country bearing strong cultural resemblances to India. Both are cradles of civilisation, the earlier having seen the rise of the Norte Chico civilisation and the ancient city of Caral, the oldest in the Americas; while the latter saw the early settlement of Mehrgarh give rise to the Indus Valley Civilisation.

He appreciated the work of Professor Shyama Prasad Ganguly as it enlightened everyone on how the famous Indian poet and Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore was quite inspired by indigenous art of Peru. Also, the poetry of César Vallejo in Peru inspired a movement of Indian anti-imperialist writers and poets in the 1940s.

India-Peru cultural relations are growing. Indian culture is very appreciated. Ambassador Polo said that in Peru, people know about Bollywood, Indian Music, celebrate the struggle of Mahatma Gandhi, practice Yoga, know about Indian clothes, admire the religions in India and some are even learning Indian languages. Two-year long celebrations of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi were commenced in Peru on 2 October 2018 with a function at Mariscal Castilla Park, Lince.

Yoga session for officers at Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.  
[pic.twitter.com/Qu6poIJRT4](#)

— India in Peru & Bolivia (@eoilima) [March 10, 2020](#)

The Centro Cultural India (India Cultural Centre) at the Embassy of India in Lima sponsors a number of regular activities such as dance and yoga classes, as well as Ayurveda workshops. The opening of the Art Gallery of the Embassy of Peru in India has further

facilitated cultural interactions amongst Indian nationals interested in the traditions and art of Peru.

He also talked about how Peru is working on preserving indigenous languages like Quechua in Peru.

Dr Óscar commented that the discussions held by his institute aim at the Spanish speaking countries, but the Spanish language is like an umbrella and not an oppressive language, where many indigenous languages like Quechua and Aymara continue to flourish along with Spanish. He concluded by mentioning the three developments have greatly spurred an unprecedented development in Peru-India cultural relations: the Centro Cultural India (India Cultural Centre) at the Embassy of India in Peru, the re-launch of the Indo-Peruvian Friendship Association (INPEFA) and the opening of the Art Gallery of the Embassy of Peru in India.



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