

**Embassy of India
Guatemala**

PRESS RELEASE

**Visit of Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture, Smt.
Meenakshi Lekhi to Guatemala**

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Guatemala, Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State (MOS) for Culture, Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi visited Guatemala from 15-17 January 2023. During the visit, MOS met with the Acting President of Guatemala, H.E. Mr Guillermo Castillo Reyes, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, H.E. Mr. Mario Bucaro, Minister of Culture of Guatemala, H.E. Mr. Felipe Aguilar, Minister of Health, H.E. Dr. Francisco José Coma Martín and Minister of Energy and Mines, H.E. Mr. Alberto Pimentel Mata.

2. During the meeting with Hon'ble Acting President, MOS discussed cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology, Women Empowerment and Capacity Building in the interiors of Guatemala. In the meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs, both sides reviewed the entire bilateral relations which spans to political, economic, cultural and developmental cooperation areas and decided that the next Foreign Office Consultations would be held on a mutually convenient date in New Delhi. MOS handed over a symbolic key to the Foreign Minister for the donation of ten pickup trucks by the Government of India to the Government of Guatemala. To mark the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relationship, both Ministers inaugurated the bust of Mahatma Gandhi Ji at the premises of the Foreign Ministry.

3. MOS and Culture Minister Mr. Aguilar discussed growing cultural relations and the visit to India by a Guatemalan cultural troupe- *Paabank*. Culture Minister thanked the Government of India for the donation of the pick-up trucks to the Ministry of Culture. Energy and Mines Minister and MOS discussed possible areas of cooperation especially related to solar energy, International Solar Alliance and technical cooperation in the areas of mining. During the meeting with Minister of Health, both sides discussed growing bilateral cooperation in healthcare especially related to holistic healthcare and Ayurveda and donation of essential medicines by India.

4. On 15 January 2023, MOS inaugurated the warehouse of Indian companies in Technopark, Escuintla which will help in reducing the delivery times resulting in increase in Indian exports to Central America, in the presence of Vice Minister of Economy. On 16 January, MOS participated in a Business dinner hosted by the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial and Financial Associations (CACIF) in the presence of top Guatemalan business leaders.

5. Under Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (India@75 celebrations), MOS inaugurated the Indian Film Festival in the world heritage city of Antigua on 15 January. On the same day, Minister also participated in the Yoga Festival in Antigua, wherein she lauded yoga enthusiasts, particularly women & children, for their participation in the largest yoga event organized in Guatemala city in November 2022. To mark the 50th anniversary, MOS delivered talks on '50 Years of India-Guatemala Relations' at the University del Valle (UVG) in Guatemala City, on 16 January. MOS virtually inaugurated the Mahatma Gandhi Ji bust in the eastern Guatemalan City of Livingstone where around 80 families of Indian origin people reside, who traveled to Guatemala from Belize in the middle of nineteenth century.

6. On 17 January, the MOS visited the world heritage site of Tikal, Peten famous for iconic ruins of temples and palaces of ancient Mayan civilization, at the invitation of the Government of Guatemala and participated in a tree plantation drive to celebrate the 50 years of friendship between two countries. MoS also interacted with the members of the Indian Community in Guatemala during her visit and briefed them about the drastic socio-economic development in India under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi Ji.

7. India shares close, warm and friendly relations with Guatemala which are cemented by mutual trust and development partnership. In the recent past, India's engagement with Guatemala has intensified in various fields. Guatemala is India's largest trading partner in Central America with bilateral trade of US \$ 563 million in 2021-22. Guatemala is also a significant beneficiary of Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. The MOS also met with the Solar Mamas trained in Solar Engineering, under ITEC.

8. The visit of the Minister of State shows the importance India attaches to the

bilateral relations with Guatemala. The visit is expected to provide further momentum to our bilateral partnership and enhance the mutual goodwill among our people.

19 January 2022
Guatemala City