

U.S., GUATEMALA SIGN ASYLUM DEAL

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

President Donald Trump, acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, seated right, and Guatemalan Interior Minister Enrique Degenhart in Washington on Friday. APCarolyn Kaster

President Donald Trump announced on Friday that a “landmark” asylum agreement has been reached with Guatemala, as the United States ratchets up pressure on its southern neighbours to stem the flow of migrants towards its border.

The White House said Guatemala would now be considered a “safe third country,” meaning that U.S.-bound migrants who enter Guatemala would be required to seek asylum there instead. Mr. Trump said the deal will “provide safety to legitimate asylum seekers and stop asylum fraud” in the region.

The asylum agreement with Guatemala comes days after Mr. Trump threatened tough retaliation against the small Central American country if it did not sign on to an asylum deal.

Friday’s agreement, signed in the Oval Office by Guatemala’s Interior Minister, Enrique Degenhart, and U.S. Acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan, would apply to Salvadoran or Honduran migrants passing through Guatemala towards the United States.

Their asylum claims should now be filed in Guatemala, Mr. McAleenan said.

If Central American migrants instead “make a journey all the way to the U.S. border, they would be removable back to Guatemala if they want to seek asylum,” he noted. The deal is expected to be up and running in August, Mr. McAleenan said.

It was not immediately clear how the agreement signed on Friday would jibe with a provision of Guatemala’s Constitutional Court, which recently blocked the idea of a deal making Guatemala a “safe third country” for asylum requests.

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