

PARAGUAY IS AN IMPORTANT PARTNER OF INDIA IN THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGION: VICE PRESIDENT

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Vice President's Secretariat

Paraguay is an important partner of India in the Latin American and Caribbean region: Vice President

There is a need for decisive action by international community against individuals and groups engaged in terrorist activities;

Calls on the President of the Democratic Republic of Paraguay;

Holds Delegation Level Talks with the Vice President of Paraguay;

Paraguayan leadership affirms its support to combat terrorism against the backdrop of the terror attack in Pulwama;

Applauds Paraguay's decision to join the International Solar Alliance soon;

Unveils a special commemorative postage stamp on Mahatma Gandhi;

Witnesses signing of Memorandum of Understanding;

Attends Indian Community Reception in Paraguay

Posted On: 07 MAR 2019 10:52AM by PIB Delhi

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has held high level talks with the leadership

of Paraguay, in Asuncion today, in a bid to extend India's outreach in the Latin American region and strengthen bilateral ties.

The Vice President who is on a two-day visit to the Latin American Country, is the highest-level representative of the Republic of India to visit Paraguay in the last 58 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries on 13 September 1961.

Shri Naidu is accompanied by a high-level delegation consisting of the Minister of State for Tourism (I/C), Shri Alphons Kannanthanam, the Member of Parliament, Shri Ram Kumar Kashyap and senior officials from the Government of India.

The Vice President called on the President of the Republic of Paraguay, Mr. Mario Abdo Benítez, the Vice President, Mr. Hugo Velázquez, and the President of the National Congress (Senate), Mr. Silvio Ovelar.

Both sides agreed that terrorism posed a grave threat to global peace and stability, stressing that there could be no justification for acts of terror on any grounds whatsoever. Outlining a common desire to take an uncompromising stand against terror, India and Paraguay have agreed to cooperate to deal with the menace of terror.

During the Delegation Level Talks, the Paraguayan leadership decried the brutal terrorist attack that took place in Pulwama. The leadership of Paraguay said that they were on the same page as India as far as the issue of terrorism is concerned and extended heartfelt condolences to those who had lost their loved ones in the Pulwama terror attack. They stated that India could always count on Paraguay's support in the fight against terrorism and in voicing India's concerns on terrorism in the international fora.

Shri Naidu, during his interactions, particularly emphasized the scourge of cross border terrorism in India and stressed upon the need to take strong measures against terrorists, terror organizations, their networks and all those who encourage, support, finance and provide safe haven to terrorists and terror groups.

Paraguay's leadership affirmed its support for a UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism proposed by India. Furthermore, Paraguay assured that they would support India's candidature to various UN and other multilateral bodies including the permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council.

The Vice President emphasized that Paraguay was an important partner of India in the Latin American and Caribbean region and said that the bilateral relations between the two nations have been showing an upward trend. He opined that India and Paraguay shared common values, interests, aspirations and promising futures.

Observing that there was a feeling of mutual admiration and appreciation among the people of the two nations for each other, Shri Naidu underscored the deep faith in democracy that both nations held.

Talks were held in a warm and cordial atmosphere when the two sides discussed bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

The Indian and Paraguayan dignitaries noted with satisfaction the strengthening of the bilateral relations over the years and the bilateral trade has increased almost ten-fold over the last ten years. They agreed that there is an ever-greater scope to increase trade volume and diversify the trade basket.

Shri Naidu applauded Paraguay's decision to join the International Solar Alliance soon, an initiative by India and France, aimed at combating the threats of climate change and global warming.

The Vice President urged the Paraguayan leadership to explore new areas of collaboration including agriculture, hydroelectric and solar energy, health, pharmaceuticals, traditional medicine, Information and Communication Technology, agriculture machinery and biotechnology. Both sides agreed to facilitate promotion of exchanges between academics and universities and also between travel professionals and stakeholders in tourism.

Shri Naidu urged Paraguay to facilitate the convening of the next round of expert level discussions between MERCOSUR and India to take forward the shared agenda of the expansion of the Preferential Trade Agreement.

Narrating the fascinating story of growth and development that India was witnessing, the Vice President said that India was seeing a steady GDP growth rate of 7.5%, which made it the sixth largest economy in the world. 'India today has emerged as a major global business destination', he added.

The Vice President also applauded Paraguay's sustained growth rate in times of economic

difficulties around the world.

Shri Naidu underlined the tremendous opportunities that India had, ranging from its huge market with a middle class of 300-350 million people to dynamic and investigative press and media to independent judiciary, and evolved corporate laws and business practices.

Paraguay joined India in remembering the contributions of Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary of the Mahatma. Shri Naidu along with the Vice President of Paraguay, Mr. Hugo Velazquez jointly unveiled a special commemorative postage stamp on Mahatma Gandhi. Shri Naidu requested the leadership of Paraguay to collaborate to install a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at a prominent location in Asuncion.

The Vice President also witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Diplomatic and Consular Academy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Paraguay and the Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of External Affairs of the Republic of India. Decision was made to task experts from both nations to finalize pending agreements including Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, Bilateral Investment Treaty and for Extradition and Mutual Legal Assistance.

Shri Naidu also attended the Indian Community Reception in Paraguay. He said that the continued interest in India in Paraguay is due to the Indian diaspora. 'Each member of the Indian Diaspora is a cultural Ambassador', he observed.

The Vice President opined that there is a new dynamism in India's diaspora policy & outreach and added that there is a much greater connect today between India & the Indian diaspora than ever before. Shri Naidu said that the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra in Delhi and our Embassies are available round the clock to our people in need. He also spoke about the zeal with which India celebrated the recent Pravasi Bharatiya Divas at Varanasi.

Shri Naidu complemented the achievements of the Indian diaspora in Paraguay and expressed hope that, through the diaspora, the ties between the two countries would be further strengthened. He expressed hope that the endeavors of Indian diaspora would be a constant source of satisfaction and pride for the country.

The Vice President thanked the people and the Government of Paraguay for their hospitality and warmth during his visit.

The Vice President underscored the importance of strengthening Parliamentary linkages and invited President of Paraguay, Mr. Abdo Benítez to visit India at a mutually convenient time.

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(Release ID: 1567725) Visitor Counter : 486

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