



Gujarat National Law University

Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

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**Distinguished Lecture Series: Address by His Excellency Ambassador (Retd.)
Mr. Rengaraj Viswanathan
Former Ambassador of India to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay
On
'Latin America and Indian Foreign Policy'**

Dear Sir/Madam,

GNLU organized the Ambassador Lecture Series on 13 July 2017 which was graced by His Excellency Ambassador (Retd.) Mr. Rengaraj Viswanathan, Former Ambassador of India to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. The title of the lecture was '**Latin America and Indian Foreign Policy**'.

Perhaps it was fitting that the ambassador to Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina would begin his address to the faculty and students of Gujarat National Law University by talking about how passionate he was about Latin America. Indeed, his appreciation and respect for a vibrant culture of living life to the fullest was implicit in the warmth with which he spoke of those countries.

HE Mr R. Viswanathan, the first Indian Consul General in Sao Paulo as well as the Head of the Ministry of External Affairs' Division on Latin America and the Caribbean, highlighted the similarities and differences between lawyers and diplomats. The contrasting but contextually successful beliefs in argument for the former, and agreement for the latter. It struck a chord of instant rapport with a room full of aspiring lawyers and law students – no doubt, a hallmark of a diplomat - setting the ground for an exposition of instances where there is a confluence of work and cooperation – in negotiations, treaty-making and as an alternative resort in international courts and tribunals.

During the lecture, he detailed a unique history of cooperation and trade that India, particularly Gujarat, and Latin America have shared. Beyond the framework of imports and exports, there has



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also been sharing of culture and values by people such as Harivardhan Shah who set up the Gandhi Peace Foundation to spread Gandhian ideals of non-violence in Medellin.

Overall, HE Mr Viswanathan emphasised the unrealised potential of soft diplomacy, especially with Latin American countries whose potential as allies have been underestimated due to their geographical distance. He then laid down a brief history of how India and Latin America have benefitted over decades through mutual trade of goods, services and ideas, including yoga and the IT industry which has overcome a traditional barrier of business – distance.

He hinted at the perfect complementarity between India and Latin America in terms of resources and trade opportunities. According to him, shifting oil imports from the Middle East to Latin American countries, such as Venezuela, could turn out to be a mutually lucrative opportunity. Latin America holds a vista of opportunities for collaboration with India in areas such as crude oil, pulses, and technology to boost agricultural productivity. There are immensely beneficial prospects of continuing relations with Latin America and he concluded by saying it is time for India and Latin America to take their romantic relationship a step further.

For any further queries, please contact Dr. William Nunes (wnunes@gnlu.ac.in) contact number - (8128650855)