INDIA – SINGAPORE BILATERAL RELATIONS

POLITICAL

India and Singapore have a close bilateral relationship based on convergence of economic and political interests. The process of economic reforms in India since the early 1990s created a strong basis for cooperation with Singapore, opening up possibilities for significant presence in each others’ economies. For India, Singapore has also played an important role in reconnecting us to the countries of South East Asia since the inception of our Look East Policy in the early 1990s. As pluralistic societies, the two countries share similar concern about the challenges posed by terrorism and religious extremism and have therefore found it mutually beneficial to evolve a broad framework of security cooperation.

Singapore, led by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, took a major interest in India’s economic reforms in the 1990s. He visited India in 1994 as the Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations. A reciprocal visit by PM Shri Narasimha Rao took place in September 1994. Continued high level interactions, including the visit of PM Vajpayee in 2002, culminated with the signing of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in June 2005 during the visit of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to India. Goh Chok Tong was awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 2004.

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh paid an official visit to Singapore in November 2011. PM unveiled a bust and commemorative marker of Jawaharlal Nehru jointly with ESM Goh Chok Tong at a prominent location in Singapore. Immediately prior to the visit two MOUs were signed: Cooperation in the field of Personnel Management and Public Administration and an Executive Program under the CEP for the period 2011-14. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong paid a State Visit to India in July 2012. During the visit, the two sides renewed the Bilateral Agreement for the Conduct of Joint Military Training and Exercises in India and two MOUs were signed: MOU on Cooperation in the field of “Vocational Education and Skill Development”; and MOU on Cooperation in the Field of Vocational Education and Skills Development for Setting up of Green Field World-Class Skills Development Centre at Delhi. Prime Minister Lee also visited New Delhi in December 2012 to attend the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit.

Framework of the Relationship: Agreements concluded between India and Singapore reflects the breadth of cooperation between the two Governments,
economies and civil societies in either country. Key agreements include the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, CECA (2005); Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, DTAA (1994); Bilateral Air Services Agreement (1968); the Defence Cooperation Agreement (2003); MOU on Foreign Office Consultations (1994); and Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (2005). There have been regular Foreign Office Consultations since 1999. The Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) is at the apex of the expanded bilateral dialogue architecture at Governmental level and is chaired at the level of External Affairs Minister. The India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue, constituted in 2007, is meant to promote exchanges at a Track- II level and is led by the CII on our side and the Institute of South Asian Studies on the Singapore side.

**ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL**

Singapore is India’s largest trade and investment partner in ASEAN. Economic and commercial ties have expanded significantly, particularly after the conclusion of the CECA in 2005. Bilateral trade registered a turnover of the order of US$25 billion in 2011-12 and reached US$11.7 billion in 2012-13(Apr-Oct). Singapore has become a preferred centre of operations for Indian companies active in the Asia Pacific region. Combined with a good enabling environment, strong air connectivity and the presence of a large Indian community, Singapore has emerged as a key offshore logistic and financial hub for many Indian corporate/houses. There are estimated to be about 4000 registered “Indian” companies in Singapore. Nine Indian banks operate in the country – Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, UCO Bank, Indian Bank, Axis Bank, and State Bank of India, ICICI, EXIM Bank and Bank of Baroda.

**Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA):** Concluded in June 2005, the CECA with Singapore was the first such agreement to be signed by India with any country. It integrates agreements on trade in goods and services, investment protection, and economic cooperation in fields like education, intellectual property and science & technology. It also provides Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) that eliminates duplicative testing and certification of products in sectors where there are mandatory technical requirements. The implementation of CECA is to be periodically reviewed by the two Governments and the closure of the 1st Review was announced on 1 October 2007. The 2nd Review was formally launched in May 2010 and is expected to conclude in the first quarter of 2013.
**Bilateral Investments:** Since the early 1990s, Singaporean companies have been active in India’s equity market as FIIs, and the trend has gathered momentum in recent years. There are around 80 FIIs from Singapore which are registered with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI). Singapore has also emerged as one of the largest source of FDI inflow into India amounting to US $ 18.4 billion during the period April 2000 to October 2012, accounting for 9.91% of total FDI inflows. As per RBI statistics, cumulative outward Indian FDI into Singapore was US$23.42 billion at the end of January 2012.

**CUTURAL COOPERATION**

Given the large and diverse Indian community in Singapore, cultural activities receive considerable support from the Singapore Government and community organizations. A number of cultural societies (i.e., Temple of Fine Arts, Singapore Indian Fine Arts Society, Nrityalaya, Kalamandir), promote Indian classical dance and arts. The local ethos is supportive of its constituent communities expressing their cultural creativity and Deepawali is regarded as the premier Indian cultural celebration, on par with the Chinese New Year and the Malay Hari Raya. To promote inter-governmental cooperation in culture a MOU for Cooperation in the fields of Arts, Archives and Heritage was concluded in 1993 and an Executive Program for the period 2011-14 was signed in November 2011.

**CONSULAR**


**INDIAN COMMUNITY**

The ethnic Indians constitute about 9.2 % of the total population of 5.1 million, including permanent residents. Tamil is one of the four official languages of Singapore. The growth of the community has also led to the establishment of educational institutions including the Global Indian International School, Delhi Public School, National Public School, Yuvah Bharati International School, DAV School and S.P. Jain Centre of Management.

January 2013