

## **India-Jamaica relations**

### **Overview**

India and Jamaica have traditionally enjoyed cordial and friendly relations based on common linkages of history, Parliamentary democracy, membership of the Commonwealth, English language and the love of cricket. There also exists a cultural heritage bond as Indian nationals were brought to this region as indentured labour between 1845-1917. 70,000 strong Indian diaspora now constitutes around 3% of the Jamaican population. They have assimilated well in the Jamaican society – fondly described as ‘genetically embedded and integrated in the Jamaican society,’ by the former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr. Kenneth Baugh - and their contribution to the Jamaican economic and social development has been acknowledged and appreciated at the highest political level in Jamaica. Both India and Jamaica are members of NAM, G-77, G-15, WTO, WIPO, UN and its various subsidiary bodies. Both being developing countries, share similar concerns and common aspirations for their accelerated economic growth, eradication of poverty, improvement in the quality of life of their people, and promotion of equity. Both also have shared stakes in shaping the emerging architecture of various multilateral institutions to address the existing inequities, and for addressing major contemporary issues related to energy security, food security, climate change, and international terrorism, among others. Both have common interests in promotion of South-South Cooperation and synergizing efforts towards the common objective of securing a better deal for the developing world in the relevant multilateral fora to promote the development imperatives of the South without impacting on their policy space. Jamaica has consistently supported Indian candidatures in elections to various UN bodies and other multilateral organizations, and shared its concern at the continued Terrorist activities in several parts of India.

Convergence of views on various important contemporary issues, shared concerns and aspiration as developing countries and excellent cooperation at various multilateral fora has largely shaped and dominated the Indo-Jamaica bilateral relations. Jamaica’s quest to open a Resident Mission in New Delhi is awaiting improvement in its precarious financial position.

### **Political**

Late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Kingston in 1975, following which the decision to open a resident Indian Mission in Jamaica was taken. Jamaica’s Prime Minister Mr. Edward Seaga visited India to attend the Seventh NAM Conference in March 1983. Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Jamaica in February 1999 to attend the Ninth G-15 Summit in Montego Bay. The Jamaican Minister of Foreign Trade, Mr. Anthony Hylton paid a visit to India from

1-4 August, 2001. A delegation led by Dr. Phillip Paulwell, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Technology of Jamaica visited India from 16-20 October, 2001. Shri Digvijay Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs paid an official visit to Jamaica from 6-7 February, 2003 and discussed bilateral, regional and international matters of mutual interest with his counterpart Senator Delano Franklyn, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica. Other Ministerial visits were of Mr. Wykeham McNeille, Minister of State for Tourism and Culture to India in January 2007 for participation in centenary celebrations of Satyagraha, Shri Anand Sharma, MOS for External Affairs to Jamaica in February 2007, and Shri Vayalar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs to Jamaica in June 2007. Our Prime Minister had a brief meeting with the former Prime Minister Mr. Orette Bruce Golding of Jamaica on the sidelines of the UNGA on 25 Sept' 2008 in New York.

Four rounds of Foreign Office Level Consultations have been held so far. Two in Kingston in 2001 and 2005, and one in New Delhi in 2007. The Fourth round of Foreign Office Level Consultations was held in July 2011 in Kingston. During the fourth round of the FOC it was agreed to explore the possibilities of cooperation in Agriculture, Sports, development of Small Scale Industries in Jamaica; conclusion of bilateral agreements on protection and promotion of investments ; and avoidance of double taxation. It was also agreed to facilitate and encourage conclusion of MOUs between the National Small Industries of India and Jamaica Business Development Centre ( JBDC); and between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce ( FICCI) and the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce( JCC). It was also agreed to have a re-look at the drafts already exchanged earlier on a Extradition Treaty; and Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance

Jamaica has consistently supported Indian candidatures in elections to various UN bodies and other multilateral organizations. Jamaica has shared its concern at the continued terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India, and offered support to our draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. It continues to advocate a proper International mechanism to address the menace of terrorism. Jamaica strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and shared its outrage, sadness, sympathy, and solidarity with India. Jamaica supported Indian candidature for a Non-Permanent Seat on the UNSC for 2011-12. It has also indicated its support for our aspirations for Permanent Membership of the expanded UN Security Council, as and when it happens. While Jamaica is a member of the IPU and the CPA, they have, of late, not been attending these meetings including the CPA meeting hosted by India ,due to financial constraints.

### **Economic and Commercial**

Of late, the bilateral economic and commercial inter- action between India and Jamaica has been constrained inter-alia by Jamaica's deteriorating economy, infrastructural and structural weaknesses, small size of the economy ,

distances from India and preferential trade arrangements with the USA, EU and the Caribbean. During the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Civil Aviation negotiations Conference organised by IATA in Montego Bay in June-July 2010 India and Jamaica initiated discussion on an Agreement of Cooperation in Civil Aviation .An MOU between the Scientific Research Council of Jamaica and the CSIR on cooperation in the field of Food Research, and Technology was signed in January 2010 and is being operationalized. Following the fourth round of Foreign Office Level Consultations in July 2011 in Kingston , an MOU between The National Small Industries Corporation Ltd India ( NSIC) and The Jamaica Business Development Corporation ( JBDC) was signed in Kingston on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012 . The Central Bank of India, has agreed to work jointly with the Commonwealth Secretariat in the capacity building process of the Small Scale Business Association of Jamaica. India was elected as President of International Seabed Authority for the year 2010-2011 during the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the International Seabed Authority (ISBA ) held in Kingston ( Jamaica ) from 26 April to 7 May 2010.

India has extended assistance to Jamaica in the following fields:

- A Line of Credit (LOC) worth US\$ 7.5 million was extended by India for import of water pumps from India ( M/s Kirloskar Brothers Ltd ) in the year 2001
- India has set up an IT Centre under the ICT Capacity Development Project in Jamaica in February 2009 following the assurance given by the then MOS ( AS) in 2007. Under the agreement , India had provided the entire hardware, software, training modules and faculty of 3 deputed by the NIIT for a period of two years, which trained over a thousand Jamaicans in various modules of IT Skills. The programme came to an end in February 2011. The concluding ceremony was held on the 17 March 2011 and was addressed by the then Minister of Information Daryl Vaz, and the then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Marlene Malahoo Forte, High Commissioner and various senior officials
- An assistance of US\$ 200,000 in the form of medicines and medical supplies for the victims of Hurricane Ivan that struck the island in September 2004, was given by India .
- Government of India donated an amount of US\$300,000/- ( US Dollars Three Lakh ) in the month of August 2010, as humanitarian assistance for procurement of medicines and medical equipments for the Bustamante Hospital for Children in Kingston
- As a part of Indian Humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Nicole which lashed Jamaica in September – October 2010, the Government of India donated an amount of amount of US\$50,000/- ( US Dollars Fifty Thousand only ) in the month of December 2010 to the Government of Jamaica

- India offers 15 slots annually to Jamaica under the ITEC programme. So far, around 200 Jamaicans have been trained in various institutions in India

Major Items of India's exports to Jamaica are motor parts, textiles, cotton, readymade garments, industrial machinery, plastic and linoleum products, artificial jewellery, and pharmaceuticals products. Indian imports from Jamaica mainly consist of steel scrap and other miscellaneous products.

Relevant trade figures for the last few years are as follows.

**Value in US \$ Million**

	2010-11	2009-10	2008-2009	2007-08	2006-07
Exports to Jamaica	22.34	20.85	22.49	24.45	20.19
Imports from Jamaica	0.77	0.65	1.11	22.86	0.6
Total Trade	23.11	21.51	23.6	47.31	20.79
Total balance	21.57	20.2	21.38	1.59	19.59

(Source: Department of Commerce - Export Import Data Bank)

(A significant portion of Jamaican imports of products of Indian origin takes place from the US, Canada and the UK, on account of small volumes as well as existing trade networking in these countries, and is therefore not captured by the above statistics.)

No Indian trade exhibition has ever been held in Jamaica and vice versa. Investment from India in Jamaica is insignificant/non-existent. There is no Indian Bank or Trade Centre in Jamaica nor any direct air connection or shipping lines from India. Jamaica has neither any Resident Mission nor any trade representation in India. There are no bilateral agreements with Jamaica on protection of investments, avoidance of double taxation, narcotics and drug trafficking, extradition treaty or agreement on mutual legal assistance in civil/criminal matters.

## Culture

Institutional Cultural interaction is virtually non-existent, largely due to Jamaica's inability to fund such exchanges. The lack of enthusiasm and support for promotion of Indian cultural activities by the Indian Diaspora business community has restricted the Mission's ability to meet the local hospitality requirement for inviting ICCR cultural troupes on regular basis. Consequently the Mission has to harness the local talent and the limited resources to promote Indian culture by organizing various cultural programmes, symposia and seminars on important occasions

Friends of Indian Community' in Jamaica organized a 'Dance of India Festival' in September 2007. Two music teachers from the Indian cultural Centre Paramaribo visited Kingston and trained 70 students in classical music and tabla at the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts, Kingston in July 2007. A dance teacher from the Indian Culture Centre Suriname visited Jamaica for 2 weeks in 2008 and taught students at the Edna Manley College of Vision and performing Arts, Kingston. A five member dance troupe from a dance school "Nrityanjali" based in Suriname gave three performances in Jamaica in February 2012. An Indian Village Craft Fair was organized by the World Wide Events India in Jamaica in March /April 2012. There are four main Indian Associations in Kingston, and one each in Ocho Rios and Montego Bay. There are Hindu religious groups namely, 'Sanatan Dharma Mandir' and 'Prema Satsangh' "Shri Sathya Sai Baba Organisation" in Kingston.

An agreement on the establishment of a Chair on Indology/ Gandhian studies between the University of West Indies( UWI) and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations ( ICCR) is in the final stage of negotiation and the Chair is expected to be made operational by the commencement of the next academic year in August 2013.

Statue of Mahatma Gandhi depicting the famous "Dandi March" provided by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, was installed at the University of West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston, and unveiled by the High Commissioner on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2012. The unveiling event was attended by around 200 guests including the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister of Jamaica, Principal, Dean Faculty of Humanities, Professors of the University of West Indies, members of the Diplomatic community, academics, distinguished personalities from various walks of life and members of the Indian Diaspora. The event was widely covered by the media.

Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary was celebrated by the Mission on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011. It was a major event attended by over 350 invitees, comprising Ministers, VIPs, parliamentarians, academics, artists, corporate executives, social elite, prominent members of the Indian community,

among others. The programme included poetry recital from Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's compositions by noted litterateur Prof. Edward Baugh; a short presentation on Tagore's life by Dr. Petrine Archer, a renowned art critic and a Visiting Scholar in the Department of History of Art, Cornell University, and a small drama skit by Dr. Jean Small, a celebrated stage presenter in Jamaica., The cast included well-known stage actors. It was followed by a scintillating cultural performance by the visiting 11-member Priti Patel Dance Troupe from India, sent by the ICCR which staged Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's play 'Chitra'.

The Courtleigh Auditorium, the largest auditorium in Kingston, with a capacity of 400, was full to its capacity. The event was covered by the media. It was very well received and contributed to a better understanding of Indian heritage and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's contribution.

### **Sports Interaction**

A 25-member Indian Cricket Team led by Capt. M.S. Dhoni and officials played two ODI matches in Kingston in June 2009. Again in 2011 as a part of their itinerary for the Caribbean region the Indian Cricket Team played One ODI on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and One Test match from 20 to 24 June 2011 in Kingston ( Jamaica) .On both the occasions the team was warmly welcomed by the cricket lovers.

### **Indian Diaspora**

The Indian Diaspora, of about 70,000 whose forefathers came from India ( mainly from Eastern UP, Bihar, Basti, Deoria, Gorakhpur) as indentured labour from 1845-1917 constituting around 3 % of the Jamaican population, are proud of their Indian origin and have retained and nurtured their abiding interest in Indian culture, music, dance and history. They have assimilated and integrated themselves with the Jamaican mainstream, and are contributing to development and prosperity of Jamaica. The Indian Diaspora is genetically embedded in the Jamaican habitat. Every year 10<sup>th</sup> May is officially celebrated as the Indian Heritage day in Jamaica.

The duty free business in Jamaica is monopolized by the Sindhi community (about 250 families) , along with a major share of jewelry, electronics and household goods market. They have further brought another group of expatriate workers to work as office managers in their establishments. There is also a small floating and expanding group of expatriate skilled Indian professionals such as doctors, professors, chartered accountants, etc., who provide professional and specialist services of a very high order, and consequently are relatively better paid and much respected. Many Professors are teaching in the prestigious University of West Indies, Mona, Kingston, and among doctors many are attached to the government Hospitals.

An Indian Professor Dr. Ashok Kulkarni, on selection and invitation from India, was appointed as Vice President of the prestigious University of Technology in Kingston. This is a highly visible position. Two persons of Indian origin occupy highest judicial posts – Ms. Ingrid Mangatal is a Judge of the Supreme Court and Justice Mahadev Dukharan has been elevated from the Supreme Court to the Appellate Bench. Another Jamaican of Indian origin Mr. Kenneth S. Benjamin, who has acquired the Jamaican nationality was honoured with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award. A former President of the Indian Cultural Society, Mrs. Sipragie Maragh was decorated with the 4<sup>th</sup> highest civilian honour by the Jamaican Government in 2010.

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