

India-Jamaica Bilateral Relations

Overview

India and Jamaica have traditionally enjoyed cordial and friendly relations based on common linkages of history, Parliamentary democracy, membership of the Commonwealth nations, English language and the love of cricket. There also exists a cultural heritage bond as Indian nationals were brought to this Jamaica as indentured labour between 1845-1917. 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.

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. 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.

In June 2013, Shri Vayalar Ravi, Hon'ble Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs, again visited Jamaica on an invitation from the Government of Jamaica to participate in the 'Fifth Biennial Diaspora Conference' held from 16-19 June '13 at Montego Bay, Jamaica.

In February 2014, a delegation led by Hon. Anthony Hylton, Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce of Jamaica, visited India to attend the NASSCOM India Leadership Forum 2014, held in Mumbai from 12-14 February 2014.

A 3-member Indian delegation, led by MOS(VKS), visited Kingston on 17-19 February, 2015 and paid his second official visit to Jamaica on 29-30 April, 2017.

Jamaican Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Ms Kamina Johnson Smith paid first ever official visit by any Jamaican Foreign Affairs Ministers to India on 9-12 October 2017. During the visit, apart from her full-fledged bilateral delegation level meetings with EAM, also met Minister of Health and Tourism. She also visited Mumbai for business meetings.

The only mechanism between the two countries which exists for discussion at bilateral level is Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) meetings. Under this mechanism, so far 5 rounds of FOC meetings were held. Three rounds of meetings held in Kingston in 2001, 2005, 2011 and two in New Delhi in 2007 and in October 2017.

Economic and Commercial

The bilateral trade, economic and commercial interactions between the countries are growing despite a constraint of small size of the Jamaican economy, distance from India and preferential trade arrangements with the USA, EU and the Caribbean. The level of present bilateral trade is below its potential but there is huge potential exists. The bilateral trade has been increasing at a healthy rate, in 2011-12; the total trade was US \$ 28.28 million which has increased to US\$ 42 million in 2015-16 and US\$ 44.61 million in 2016-17. India's export has been increasing year on year and the balance of trade is heavily in favour of India. **During 2017-2018, total trade was US\$ 56.59 million, out of which US\$ 52.24 million was India's exports to Jamaica, therefore, the balance of trade is heavily in favour of India. During April-July 2018, total bilateral trade is US\$ 17.65 million, out of which, an amount of US\$ 16 million was India's exports to Jamaica.**

- ❖ 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 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 Ms. 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.
- ❖ Indian medicines worth about US\$ 1,50,000 have been gifted to the Jamaican government In December 2018.

- ❖ 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 equipment's 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 allocated 30 seats under ITEC for the year 2018-19 (in 2018, total slots offered was 25 but total seats utilised were 34) to Jamaica. So far, around 340 Jamaicans have been trained in various institutions in India.
- ❖ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 31st March 2014 between the Government of India and Government of Jamaica for providing Indian grant assistance of US\$ 2.1 million for installation of flood lights at the Sabina Park. The work has since been successfully completed and full payment has been made to the Jamaican side.

MOUs/Agreements:

- A Cultural Agreement was signed in March, 1996.
- An MOU for setting up of ICCR's Chair of Indology/Gandhian studies was signed in 2012 between ICCR and University of West Indies (UWI). **In pursuant to this MOU, a Chair was established for two years which ended in July 2017 and a fresh MOU has been signed and new Professor for the Chair has been appointed who is expected to join the WUI in Feb 2019.**
- An Agreement for Cooperation in the field of Civil Aviation between India and Jamaica was signed in December 2016 and ratification is pending from both sides.
- 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 operational.
- 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 28th February 2012.
- As of now, 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 signed.

Culture

- An agreement between India and Jamaica for cooperation in the field Culture was signed in 1996. In the absence of Institutional platform like Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP), cultural interaction is virtually non-existent. Further, the lack of enthusiasm and support from the Indian Diaspora (which is

considered to be small about 70000) for promotion of Indian cultural activities, has restricted the Mission's ability to meet the local hospitality requirement for inviting ICCR cultural troupes on regular basis. However, the Mission has been harnessing the local talent and with the limited resources available to promote Indian culture, Mission has been organizing few cultural programmes/workshops/symposia/seminars etc; on important occasions.

- (i) The Statue of Mahatma Gandhi depicting the famous "Dandi March" donated by ICCR was installed in July 2012 at the University of West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston.
- (ii) Another Statue of Mahatma Gandhi has also been installed in front of Kingston city Library.
- (iii) The first International Day of Yoga (IDY) was organised in National Indoor stadium in Kingston on June 21st 2015. The second International Day of Yoga was also organised in Kingston on 19th June, 2016. In both the events, large number of local Jamaicans participated so enthusiastically. The third IDY was organised at a famous city college auditorium in Kingston on 17th June 2017 in collaboration with Art of living foundation and Jamaican Yoga associations. Large number of Jamaicans have participated in the event. **The fourth IDY was organised in National Indoor stadium in Kingston on 23rd June 2018 in association with the Art of Living Foundation.**
- (iv) A professional Yoga-cum-hindi/sanskriti teacher has been deputed by ICCR since Jan 2018, and he has been actively promoting the practice of Yoga through his regular classes at several places including at Chancery premises.
- (v) There has been regular bilateral series takes place between India and West Indies cricket team. Some of the matches both ODI and test takes place in Kingston as well. This has made natural partner for cooperation between the two countries in sports.

Indian Community

There are four main Indian Associations in Jamaica which are active and they are based in Kingston, Ocho Rios and Montego Bay. Apart from the Indian Associations, there are Hindu religious groups namely, 'Sanatan Dharma Mandir'; 'Prema Satsangh'; and 'Shri Sathya Sai Baba Organisation' in Kingston.

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 well in the Jamaican society – fondly described as 'genetically embedded and integrated in the Jamaican society', and their contribution to the Jamaican economic and social development has been acknowledged and appreciated at the highest

political level in Jamaica.

The Indian Diaspora has further brought another group of expatriate worker 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 they are relatively better paid and much respected. Few of them are also teaching in the University of West Indies, Kingston, and among doctors, many of them are attached to the government Hospitals. Large number of Indians are also running business establishments and successfully carrying out their business. At present, it is estimated that the total Indian community holding Indian passport could be about 5000.

Consular

The consular work is relatively less and with the limited staff strength, this mission has managed very well. However, with the increasing number of Indians moving to Jamaica for employment and OCI card facility extended to Indian Diaspora with liberal documentation process, the rush for passports and OCI card has slowly increasing.

December 2018