

As on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2018

## India-Suriname Relations

### Political

India enjoys close, warm and friendly relations with Suriname, reinforced by cultural and people to people contact bridged by Indian Diaspora's arrival dating back to 145 years. Over 2,37,000 Persons of Indian origin hailing from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and some 50 Sindhi families living in Suriname contribute significantly to economy, civil service, technocrats and composite cultural milieu of Suriname .

Several high level visits have been exchanged since establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Suriname..

The Vice President of Suriname H.E Ashwin Adhin, during his private visit to India in March 2016, called on the Hon'ble Prime Minister on March 11, 2016 and discussed bilateral issues including issues of mutual interest. In January 2017, VP Adhin was invited as the special guest in the Youth Pravasi Bharitya Divas ,held in Bengaluru during January 06-09, 2017. During his visit he met Prime Minister on January 08 2017 on the sidelines of PBD Conference and held meetings with the Ministers of AYUSH and the Road Transport and Shipping. Besides those high profile meetings, he also met business entities to explore business opportunities and collaboration in the areas of Ayurveda, medicinal plants and contract farming. Minister of State, Gen(Retd) V.K.Singh visited Paramaribo on April 28,2017 in connection with sixth Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) and Suriname and held high profile bilateral meetings with the President, Vice President and Foreign Minister.

Finance Minister of Suriname Gillmore Hoefdraad visited Mumbai from September 19-21, 2017 on a working visit. During his visit he met the representatives of various chambers of commerce and potential investors and briefed them about the business potential in Suriname in the areas of Oil & Gas, Mining, Gold, Solar Energy and Bauxite. VP Adhin visited Delhi in March 2018 to participate in ISA Founding Conference and held bilateral talks with Prime Minister on March 11, 2018

President of India paid a state visit to Suriname from June 19-21, 2018 on the invitation of the President of Suriname with a high level delegation comprising Mr Vishnu Deo Sai, Minister of State for Steel. Five MOUs were signed in the areas of Centre for IT Excellence, Cooperation between the electoral authorities, National Archives, Cooperation between diplomatic Institutes and Remunerative employment of dependents of the diplomatic personnel of the two countries. The two LOC agreement on EBS transmission line for US\$ 27.5 and maintenance of Chetak helicopters for US\$ 3.5 million were signed during the visit. An LOC of US\$ 20 million for ISA projects towards rural electrification of the villages of Suriname was also announced. President of India has extended an invitation to the President of the Republic of Suriname to visit India which has already been accepted.

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu met with Vice President of Suriname Ashwin Adhin on September 09, 2018 on the margins of World Hindu Congress in Chicago and discussed bilateral relations including, trade, investment, developmental cooperation and people to people contacts between the two countries. EAM held a bilateral meeting with Ms Yldiz Pollack Beighle, Foreign Minister of Suriname on the sidelines of 73<sup>rd</sup> UNGA in New York on September 26, 2018.

Agriculture Minister of Suriname Mr Lekhran Soredjan held a bilateral meeting with his Indian counterpart Shri Radha Mohan Singh on October 04, 2018 in New Delhi on the side-lines of ISA Conference. The agenda of cooperation in the field of agriculture, support on rice development research and the first meeting of JWG 2017-21 were prominently figured in the talks.

An Agreement to set up a Joint Commission was signed in September 1992 and six JCMs have been held so far. During 6<sup>th</sup> JCM in Paramaribo in April, 2017, India announced US\$ 30 million as line of Credit to Suriname. Three MoUs were signed in the areas of Visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, official and service passports; Work Plan of Joint Working Group (JWG) on Agriculture for 2017-21; and, Suriname Bureau of Standards and the Indian Bureau of Standards. Cooperation in the areas of setting-up of AYUSH Chair, an ICT Centre of excellence in Suriname and Election authorities of both countries are under active consideration of the both governments.

Two small grants projects for Community development and women entrepreneurship were announced during the visit of the President of India namely Craft Market place at Paramaribo for US\$ 1,75,602 and every student a computer for US\$ 1,09,800. The first lady of India donated US\$ 10000 to Mytyl School as charity. Govt of India provided a cash assistance of US \$ 50000/- to the Government of Suriname for flood victims of the interiors in June, 2018.

India had earlier provided four Credit lines worth US\$ 57 million to Suriname to set up water pumps, power transmission lines, Crash Fire Tenders and coastal equipment.

General (Dr) V.K. Singh handed over a cheque of US\$150,000 to the Government of Suriname as humanitarian assistance for the rehabilitation of the victims of flooding in Surinam in April, 2017. A grant of US\$ 29988/- has been provided to the Surinamese government for school going children community development project in August, 2017

In 2015, Under Grant in Aid for LAC, the Ministry of External Affairs sanctioned a grant of US\$ 3,11, 567.21 for upgrading of the 's Lands Hospital morgue in Paramaribo. Also a sum of US\$ 1,69,400/- was sanctioned as an assistance to the Institute for Natural Resources and Engineering Studies (NATIN) of Suriname.

Exim Bank of India has provided a loan of US\$ 8.4 million to the Ministry of Agriculture, Suriname for rehabilitation of pumping station of Wageningen, under Buyers Credit programme in August, 2017.

Suriname introduced visa liberalization policy for Indians and “visa on arrival” facility extended to Indian Nationals with effect from 01<sup>st</sup> March, 2016.

## **Economy**

Trade and economic links between India and Suriname are modest. Indian export to Suriname consists of boilers, machinery, iron & steel, electrical machinery & equipment, sound recorders, pharmaceutical products, textiles, vehicles, coffee, tea and spices, rubber, paper, tobacco, organic chemicals, furniture, carpets, ceramic products, footwear and printed books; Indian import consists of wood, aluminium and electrical machinery

### **Exports to India**

2015 -16	US\$ 43.33 million
2016-17	US\$ 45.92 million
2017-18	US\$ 92.76 million

### **Imports from India**

2015-16	US\$ 12.86 million
2016-17	US\$ 10.59 million
2017-18	US\$ 17.38 million

A four member pharmaceutical delegation from Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizers led by Shri Sudhansh Pant, Joint Secretary visited Suriname from April 07-10, 2015 to explore possibilities of future cooperation in Pharma sector. A draft MOU on cooperation on health and medicine is under active consideration of the Surinamese side. Another MoU on Medicinal Plants is under active consideration of the Government of Suriname.

As a follow up to the Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the field of agriculture which was signed in 2003, the first ever Joint Working Group of Experts from both sides met in New Delhi on July 28, 2014. The agreement for revised draft work plan for the years 2017-2021 has been signed during the sixth JCM and the first JWG meeting is likely to be held shortly.

The MOU between newly founded trade body of Suriname i.e Suriname India Chamber of Commerce(SICCI) and Industry and the CII was signed by CII in the presence of Surinamese Ambassador in Delhi. It is hoped that the MOU will help pave the way for strengthening B2B ties between the two countries.

## **ITEC**

Under ITEC programme the slots reserved for Suriname are 50 during the year 2018-19. There is lot of interest in training programmes in rural development, banking, ICT, mass media, solar energy etc.

## **Culture And Education**

Indian Cultural Centre in Suriname was opened in 1978 and very actively pursues soft-power diplomacy initiatives and the whole gamut of ICCR's outreach including , Hindi language, Kathak, Yoga and classical music. India provided yearly grants worth US 29500/- for promotion of Hindi in Suriname in the years 2016, 2017 and 2018; as approximately 80 voluntary Hindi schools are functioning in different district of Suriname. One Surinamese student is currently learning Hindi in the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan in Agra. Surinamese students have also shown keen interest in various scholarship schemes of ICCR and currently one student is studying BAMS course in India under AYUSH scholarship.

Three Indian musical/dance groups from ICCR visited Suriname in the year 2016. On the occasion of Holi, a six member music troupe led by noted Bhakti singer Rajesh Pandey visited Suriname in March, 2016 whereas the other 12 member troupe led by Bhola Pandey visited in July 2016 during post Eid celebrations. A 12 member Bhangra Group performed in Suriname on November 26& 27 on the occasion of Deepavli and Independence Day of Suriname.

Noted academician and historian from Suriname Prof Mauris S. Hassankhan attended the PBD panel discussion on the topic "Documenting History of migration and achievements of Diaspora in Girmitiaya countries" held on August 23, 2016 in New Delhi. Mr Dew Sharman, MP participated in the PBD Panel discussion on "Role of Indian diaspora community organization" in New Delhi on November 12.

A two member NAI delegation led by the Director General of National Archives of India visited Suriname from June 19-23, 2018 under the provision of existing MOU on bilateral cooperation in the field of culture and mounted an exhibition on Indentured labour in Paramaribo in collaboration with the Govt of Suriname . The MOU extending cooperation between the National Archives for another five years was signed during the visit of the President of India.

Suriname has made substantial progress in the AYUSH cooperation with India. Suriname celebrated National Ayurveda Day on October 16, which was inaugurated by the Acting President Ashwin Adhin. On November 10, a Congress on "Traditional system of Medicines" was organised in Paramaribo with the collaboration of the Government of India. Dr B.R.Patel, AYUSH expert from India was the keynote speaker in the Congress. Dr A.Raghu, Joint Advisor visited Paramaribo from December 02-04, 2018 to participate in the National Ayurveda Day in Suriname and participated in various workshops and meetings to promote Ayurveda and AYUSH cooperation with Suriname.

Dr Riad Nur Mohamed, Member of Parliament from Suriname participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> ICWA-LAC Conference in Brasilia on May 18, 2018

Nine PIO Members of Parliament from Suriname across the party lines participated in the first PIO Parliamentarian Conference held in New Delhi on January 09, 2018.

A four member musical group led by Radhika Chopra was sponsored by ICCR to Suriname during the period May 27-June 07, 2018 to participate in the 145<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Indian arrival in Suriname.

OIA.II Division sponsored five scholars from India to participate in the Conference on Legacy of Slavery and Indentured Labour in Paramaribo from June 18-23. 2018.

CK Arts of India and Ms Nisha Madaran, a SVCC disciple, who sang "Vaishnav Jan song, signed a contract in December, 2018 for singing a song for a Bollywood movie.

### **CONSULAR ISSUES**

The electronic travel authorisation system (eTVA) for Suriname has been implemented, which has reduced the number of visa applications. As of December, 2018, Mission has issued 1131 OCI Cards so far. In addition, Mission has converted 359 PIO cards into OCIs out of 686 PIO cards issued.

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## **India-Barbados Bilateral**

Barbados and India enjoy close and cordial relations and interact actively in the UN, Commonwealth and NAM. Barbados has supported India's successful candidacies in the elections to International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Tribunal of the Laws of the Seas (ITLOS) and Executive Board of UNESCO and International Maritime Organizations (IMO). Barbados supported India's candidature for Non-Permanent seat at UNSC and has also committed support for India's bid for Permanent Membership of UNSC.

### **Visits**

Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Digvijay Singh paid a bilateral visit to Barbados from 15-17 June 2003. During the visit, he called upon Ms. Mia Mottley, Deputy Prime Minister and Attorney General and also had bilateral discussions with Ms. Billie Miller, Senior Minister and Foreign Minister.

Finance Minister of India, Shri P. Chidambaram, visited Barbados to attend the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meeting in September, 2005.

Mr R. Swaminathan, Special Secretary visited Barbados from April 28-May 01, 2015 to hold the first ever Foreign Office Consultations(FOC) with his counterpart Ms Simone Rudder, Permanent Secretary. EAM Mrs. Sushma Swaraj met Senator Hon'ble Ms. Maxine McClean, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados on the sidelines of 3<sup>rd</sup> India-CARICOM meeting held in New York on September 19, 2017. Shri Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce and Industry with Mr. Donville Inniss, Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development of Barbados on October 30, 2017 in Havana.

Shri Shri P.P. Chaudhary Minister of State Law & Justice and Corporate Affairs visited Barbados from April 25-28, 2018 under MEA's innovative outreach programme and met the then Prime Minister Freundel Stuart during a community reception on April 26, 2018. He held extensive bilateral discussions with Mr. Adriell D. Brathwaite Q.C, Attorney General & Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Donville Inniss, Minister of Industry, International Business Commerce & Small Business Development, Ms. Maxine Mc Clean, Minister of Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade and Mr. Dacosta Jones J.P, Minister of Education, Science, Technology & Innovation. The entire gamut of bilateral relations between the two countries was reviewed during the meetings.

### **Bilateral cooperation**

Barbadian government has expressed interest in pursuing cooperation with India in the field of information technology, cotton cultivation and textile industry, film industry, academic exchanges, cultural cooperation etc. Given the size of this country, it enjoys relatively high prosperity owing to its flourishing tourism industry.

An MOU between Federation of Indian Export Organization (FIEO) and Barbados Chamber of Commerce was signed on trade cooperation.

## **MOU signed**

India and Barbados have signed Air Services Agreement on October 6, 2015, for facilitation of travel arrangements for the citizens and the possibility of direct air connectivity and chartered flight operations between the two countries. The agreement allows, inter alia, full fifth freedom rights including weekly operations of seven air services to each country. M/s Jet Airways from India has been designated to operate between India and Barbados on agreed services.

## **ITEC Programme**

In order to promote technical cooperation between the two countries, India is providing 05 scholarships under ITEC to Barbados during 2018-19. There is a request from Barbados for some scholarships for its students to study in higher educational institutes in India

## **Trade**

### **Exports to Barbados**

2014-15	US\$ 10.10 million
2015-16	US \$ 10.50 million
2016-17	US\$ 12.39 million
2017-18	US \$ 12.74 million

Indian exports include vehicles, pharmaceuticals, textiles, iron & steel, organic chemicals, etc.

### **Imports from Barbados**

2014-15	US \$ 0.17 million
2015-16	US \$ 0.17 million
2016-17	US \$ 0.18 million
2017-18	US \$ 0.20 million

Indian imports include electrical machinery, optical photography cinematographic equipment.

## **Indian Community**

Approximately 3000 people of Indian origin have settled in Barbados and most of them have since acquired local nationality. Over 2000 of them are from Surat district of Gujrat known as "Suratis". There are also 130 Sindhi families mainly engaged in Business and 150 professionals engaged in the field of Education and Medicine, Financial Services & IT. Barbados has been included in the list of eTV for 113 countries, whose nationals can avail visa on arrival.

## **India-St. Lucia Bilateral Relations**

St. Lucia and India enjoy cordial relations and interact actively in the U.N., Commonwealth and NAM. However, direct bilateral, political and economic contacts have remained limited. As the population of St. Lucia is very small (approximately 1,86,000 as per the latest census), the scope for bilateral interaction is limited.

St. Lucia is an active Commonwealth member and is also a member state of regional groups such as CARICOM, Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

### **High level Visits/Meeting**

St Lucian Prime Minister Allen Chastanet held a bilateral meeting with PM Modi on April 19, 2018 on the sidelines of CHOGM summit and discussed the bilateral relations between the two countries and areas of mutual interests.

Dr Kenny Anthony, the then Prime Minister of St Lucia met Indian Prime Minister on September 25, 2015 in New York on the sidelines of UNGA meeting. The two leaders held talks on developing bilateral relations between the two countries.

Minister of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship(IC), Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy visited St Lucia from October 03-06, 2016 as part of the outreach initiatives of the Government of India where Ministerial level visits have not taken place in recent years.

The visit of the Hon'ble Minister was historical from the bilateral relations perspective of the two nations. It generated huge interest among local business sectors, Indian diaspora, NRIs and various social organizations. Apart from his two official meetings with the St Lucian Ministers namely Hon'ble Ms Sarah Beaubrun Flood, Minister of External Affairs and Senator Hon'ble Hermanglid Francis, Minister for Home Affairs, Justice and National Security, the Hon'ble Minister interacted with other important Ministers including Mr Guy Joseph, the Acting Prime Minister of St Lucia, Minister of Commerce, Industrialists, Diaspora Associations, Academicians and senior St Lucian government officials.

### **Bilateral/Multilateral Cooperation**

St Lucia supported India's successful candidacies in the elections to International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Tribunal of the Laws of the Seas (ITLOS) and Executive Board of UNESCO and International Maritime Organizations (IMO).

The Government of St. Lucia has expressed interest in signing a bilateral agreement with India in the fields of Information Technology, Education, Culture, Sports and Technical Cooperation.



During the devastation caused by Hurricane Maria to Dominica in 2017, NRIs/PIOs, including students were evacuated to St. Lucia. The St. Lucian Ministry of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation extended full cooperation to the evacuees.

India supported St Lucia with a cash donation of US\$500,000/- towards assistance in recovery and rehabilitation following flash floods in December, 2013. Earlier, in December, 2010, India had made a cash donation of US\$500,000/- towards recovery and rehabilitation following Hurricane Tomas.

### **Agreements to be signed**

Negotiations underway with the Government of Saint Lucia on signing an agreement for the Exchange of Information and Assistance in the Collection of Taxes.

### **ITEC Programme**

In order to promote technical cooperation between the two countries, India is providing 15 scholarships slots to St. Lucia under ITEC during 2018-19 which are likely to be utilized.

### **Trade**

#### **Exports to Saint Lucia**

2014-15	US\$ 2.13 million
2015-16	US\$ 2.67 million
2016-17	US \$ 4.33 million
2017-18	US\$ 4.06 million

Indian exports include Iron & steel, vehicles, pharmaceuticals and textiles.

#### **Imports from Saint Lucia**

2014-15	US\$ 0.14 million
2015-16	US\$ 0.45 million
2016-17	US \$ 0.24 million
2017-18	US\$ 0.32 million

Indian imports include iron & steel and aluminium scrap & organic chemicals. There is a branch of New India Assurance Company (T&T) Ltd. in St. Lucia which is doing reasonably good business. There is no other Indian public/private sector company operating in St. Lucia at present. Most of the Sindhi businessmen have taken up the citizenship of St. Lucia to avoid visa problems. Similarly, most of the medical doctors and other professionals have also acquired St. Lucian citizenship to avoid work permit problems.

### **Indian Community /Culture**

There are a number of Indian doctors and other professionals in St. Lucia working in Government and private sector. There are a few Sindhi businessmen who are in imports, trading and duty free shops. The total number of such Indians will be around 300 (including families). There are several offshore campuses of medical colleges in St. Lucia where most of the faculty members and students are either American/Canadian nationals of Indian origin or Indian nationals from South India. Students study for four to six years in these medical colleges and later go to the United States/India to complete their clinical experience for the MBBS degree.

There are about 5000 persons of Indian origin who came to St. Lucia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as indentured labour. However, most of these PIOs have assimilated into the local population and few of them maintain their identity. Most of them have changed their religion and names and are not in touch with India or Indian culture.

At the invitation of the President, Indian Cultural Forum (ICF), St Lucia, the Embassy of the India, Paramaribo sent multi-talented teacher along with Director, ICC, to participate at the 'Namaste St Lucia' annual event to celebrate Indian culture on 15th October, 2017. Ms Fortuna Belrose, Minister, Culture attended the event.

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## **India-Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

India and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines enjoy close and cordial relations at many international fora. SVG has supported India's successful candidacies in the elections to International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Tribunal of the Laws of the Seas (ITLOS) and Executive Board of UNESCO and International Maritime Organizations (IMO)

Dr Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines met Indian Prime Minister on September 24, 2015 in New York on the sidelines of UNGA meeting. The two leaders held talks on developing bilateral relations between the two countries and expressed satisfaction at the traditional close and cordial links that exist between India and SVG. Indian PM has extended an invitation to PM Ralph Gonsalves to visit India, which has been accepted and dates of the visit is to be finalized.

Shri P.P. Chaudhary Minister of State Law & Justice and Corporate Affairs visited St. Vincent and the Grenadines from April 22-24, 2018 under MEA's innovative outreach programme and held bilateral talks with PM Dr Ralph Gonsalves. The entire gamut of bilateral relations between the two countries was reviewed during the meeting. He also met Mrs. Sandy Peters-Philips, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs during his visit and held active interactions with the members of SVG Indian Heritage Foundation

On 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2007, Mr. Vayalar Ravi, the then Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, attended the first ever celebrations of Indian Arrival Day organized by SVG Indian Heritage Foundation. During his one day visit to St. Vincent, MOIA also had a meeting with Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

India handed over a cash donation of US\$500,000/- towards assistance in recovery and rehabilitation following flash floods in December, 2013. Earlier, in December, 2010, India had made a cash donation of US\$500,000/- towards recovery and rehabilitation following Hurricane Tomas.

SVG and India actively cooperate on various multilateral fora. SVG has been supporting India's candidature on various multilateral platforms including elections of different bodies under UN, including the recently held ICJ elections.

Under ITEC Programme 5 scholarships have been allotted for 2018-19.

Bilateral trade between India and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

### **Exports to and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

2014-15	US\$0.76 million
2015-16	US\$ 0.55 million

2016-17	US \$ 0.78million
2017-18	US\$ 0.68 million

Indian exports include textiles ,Iron & Steel and papers.

### **Indian Community**

There are about 3000 persons of Indian origin who came to SVG in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as indentured labourers. Most of them have now got assimilated in the mainstream local society and they have set up a Saint Vincent and Grenadines Indian Heritage Foundation. Due to the efforts of the Foundation, 01<sup>st</sup> June has been declared as Indian Arrival Day in Saint Vincent whereas 7<sup>th</sup> October has been declared as Indian Heritage day. There are about 50 NRIs including medical students.

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**Useful resources:**

**Embassy website:**

<https://www.indembassysuriname.gov.in/>

**Embassy Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInSuriname?fref=ts>

**Embassy Twitter**

@IndEmbSur

**SVCC/ICC website**

<http://iccsur.org>

**ICC Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/svccsuriname>

**India Digest Publication:**

<http://issuu.com/nmuz>

