

India – Tonga Relations

Tonga and India have traditionally enjoyed a close relationship. Late King Tupou IV and Queen paid state visits to India in 1971 and 1976. Indian Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Tonga in 1981. Several Tongans, including members of the Royal family, are regularly trained in India in defence and other courses under the ITEC programme. Many Indian experts were also deputed to Tonga. In July 1972, the Late Prince Tu'ipelehake became the first Tongan to attend the Indian Military Academy in India.

The interaction between India and Tonga has gradually increased since the reopening of High Commission of India, Suva in 1999. The then Tongan PM/Foreign Minister visited India in May 2002 and had called on PM, EAM and Agriculture Minister.

EAM's Special Envoy on UN reforms visited Tonga in August 2005. Indian Naval Ship – INS 'Tabar' paid a goodwill visit to Tonga in July 2006. A reception held on board was attended by PM, Cabinet Ministers, diplomatic corps, senior officers and members of the Indian community. A large number of Tongans visited the ship. The CO and DA in Canberra called on the Crown Prince.

MOS (EA) led the Indian delegation for the Post Forum Dialogue Partners' Meeting in Tonga on October 18-19, 2007. MOS (EA) paid a courtesy call on late King George Tupou V.

Late King George Tuopou V visited India on a private visit from 11th to 30th September, 2009.

Tonga has been provided 5 training slots per year under ITEC programme. The number of persons who availed of civil training in 2012-13 was 4, and in 2014-15, 10 slots were utilized. 15 slots have been allotted for 2015-16. Tongan Defence Service personnel who availed of defence training in various training institutions in India were 7 during 2011-12, 4 during 2012-13 and 10 during 2013-14. Two experts from Tonga had attended the TERI Workshop on Sustainable Development in March 2007 in Suva. Two 'grandmothers' attended a training course to become 'solar engineers' at the Barefoot College, Tilonia.

GOI had provided a grant-aid of US\$ 100,000/- each in 2007 to Tonga for construction of access road from Wharf to Hunga village and up-gradation of jetty in Hunga. GOI had also provided grant-aid of US\$ 3,00,000 for Tsunami Alert System in July 2014, US\$ 1,15,000 for Project Proposal "Upgrade to the Office of the Public Service Commission ICT Infrastructure" in October 2014, and US\$ 71,627/- for project titled 'Spectrum Monitoring Including Detection of Interference and Illegal Transmission', in September 2015.

On December 8, 2008, India donated 1,200 full uniform sets to Hon. Acting Minister of Defense, Tu'aTaumoepeau Tupou for the Tonga's military.

Ms. AlisiKelini Tuita, Executive Officer, Ministry of Education, Women's Welfare and Culture, visited India during 21-26 February 2010 and participated in the 10th Commonwealth India small business competitiveness development programme at

Jaipur. Dr. Amanki Fakakovi, Executive Board member of Tonga National Olympic Committee participated in Chef-de-Mission seminar held at New Delhi from 8-12 March, 2010. High Commissioner visited Tonga from 18-21 May to participate in events relating to passing of the Queen's Baton Relay (QBR) for the Commonwealth Games held in New Delhi in October 2010 through Tonga from 19-22 May 2010. Tonga won two bronze medals in boxing at the Games.

High Commissioner represented India at the funeral of late King George Tupou V on 27 March 2012.

Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha Smt. Meira Kumar visited Tonga from 17-20 April 2012 to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly Mid-Year Executive Committee Meeting. Hon'ble Speakers of the Legislative Assemblies of Nagaland, Shri Kiyaniie Peseyie and Rajasthan, Shri Dependra Singh Shekhawat also attended the meeting. Hon'ble Speaker launched the Kolomotu'a Solar Project on 19 April during her stay in Tonga.

A 5-member cultural troupe from the Indian Cultural Centre, Suva visited Tonga from 17-21 July 2012 to participate at the Heilala Festival.

Tongan delegation led by Mr. Ponepate Taunisila, Deputy Director, Ministry of Education and Training visited India in connection with the Second High Level Meeting (HLM) on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific, held in New Delhi on 23-25 October 2013.

Tongan delegation led by Prime Minister Lord Tu'ivakano attended the India-Forum for Pacific Island Countries (FIPIIC) Summit in Suva (Fiji) on 19 November 2014, hosted by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during his visit to Fiji. The announcements made by Hon'ble PM on 19 November 2014 with respect to Pacific countries (including Tonga) were the following: (i) Setting up of a Special Adaptation Fund of \$ 1 million, (ii) Development of Pan Pacific Islands Project for telemedicine and tele-education, (iii) Indian Visa on arrival for Pacific Island Countries – "Cook Islands, Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu, Republic of Nauru, Republic of Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Niue, Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Fiji and Papua New Guinea", (iv) Increase in Grant-in-Aid to Pacific Island Countries to \$ 200,000 annually to be rolled over to provide for a wider scope for our development cooperation, (v) Establishment of Trade Office for Pacific Island Forum countries in India, (vi) Providing complimentary space to Pacific Island Forum countries during exhibitions, organized by ITPO, (vii) Deputation of ITEC experts to Pacific Island countries, including in the areas of agriculture, healthcare and IT, (viii) Organizing Training to Diplomats from Pacific Island Countries, (ix) Starting a Distinguished Visitors Programme for Pacific Island Countries, (x) Holding of the next Summit Meeting of India and Pacific Island Leaders in India in 2015, (xi) Cooperation in the use of Space technology applications for improving the quality of life of people and communications, (xii) Explore possibilities of sharing data for monitoring climate change, disaster risk reduction and management and resource management, and (xiii) Undertake joint research in traditional medicine; developing healthcare facilities for the benefit of people in the region.

One diplomat from Tonga attended the training for diplomats of Pacific Island countries organised by the Foreign Service Institute held in Nadi, Fiji in May 2015.

International Day of Yoga was celebrated in Tonga on 21st June 2015.

High Commissioner of India, based in Fiji, attended the coronation of King Topou VI, on 4 July 2015.

A Tonga delegation led by Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests & Fisheries, visited India to attend 2nd Summit of Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) held at Jaipur on 21 August 2015.

Useful Resources:

High Commission of India, Suva website:

<http://www.indianhighcommissionfiji.org>

High Commission of India, Suva Facebook page:

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

Indian Cultural Centre, High Commission of India, Suva Facebook page:

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

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

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