

## **India-Singapore Relations**

The close ties between India and Singapore have a history rooted in strong commercial, cultural and people-to-people links across a millennium. The more modern relationship is attributed to Sir Stamford Raffles who, in 1819, established a trading station in Singapore which later became a crown colony. India was one of the first countries to recognize Singapore in 1965.

### **Political relations**

Following the conclusion of Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) of 2005, this robust relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership in 2015 during the visit of PM Modi and on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. India and Singapore added new momentum and direction in their Strategic Partnership in 2018, anchored in the Official visit of PM Modi to Singapore from 31 May to 2 June and his second visit on 14-15 November for attending the ASEAN-India and other multilateral summits. Prime Minister of Singapore Mr. Lee Hsien Loong also visited India on 25-26 January 2018 to participate in the Republic Day Celebrations in New Delhi and co-chair the ASEAN India Commemorative Summit (AICS) 2018.

PM Lee and Emeritus Senior Minister (ESM) Goh Chok Tong extended congratulations in their letters to PM Modi on his election victory on 23 May 2019. Both PMs met on the sidelines of G-20 Summit in Osaka in June 2019. PM Lee was invited by PM Modi to speak at a special event at UN in New York on 24 September 2019 to celebrate 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

**Exchange of Visits** - PM Modi Official Visit in May-June 2018 witnessed over 35 concrete outcomes in the areas of defence, trade & economic, logistics and infrastructure, skills development, public administration, urban – rural development. PM Modi became the first Indian PM to deliver keynote address at the annual Shangri La Dialogue. In a historic visit to Changi Naval Base, PM boarded a Singapore and an Indian naval ship.

PM Modi became the first Head of Government to deliver the keynote address at the Singapore Fintech Festival- world's largest Fintech event when he visited in November 2018. He also launched a global digital platform, APIX, to connect fintech companies and banks.

PM Modi had earlier visited Singapore twice in 2015. In March to attend the State Funeral of Founder of Singapore and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew and an Official visit in November 2015. PM Lee had visited earlier in October 2016, July and December 2012 and June 2005.

There were 11 Ministerial level visits from Central Government and 9 visits from 7 States in 2018. From Singapore, there were 13 visits by 9 Ministers in 2018 for various meetings, seminars and events in New Delhi as well as in the states. A large number of delegations comprising MPs, Secretaries and senior officials from India also visit or transit through Singapore.

This year, then MoS for Home Affairs Shri Kiren Rijiju visited Singapore in January, External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar; MoS (I/C) for Housing and Urban Affairs ,

Civil Aviation and MoS, Commerce & industry Shri Hardeep Singh Puri visited in September. State delegations from Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand have visited so far.

This year, Minister for Communications and Information & Minister-in-Charge of Trade Relations, S. Iswaran visited in January & June; Senior MoS for Defence and Foreign Affairs, Dr. Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman; MoS for Foreign Affairs and Manpower Mr. Sam Tan in January, Home Affairs and Law Minister Mr. K Shanmugam and Senior MoS for Health and Law Mr. Edwin Tong in August and Education Minister Mr. Ong Ye Kung visited in June and September 2019.

**Framework of the Bilateral Relationship** - India-Singapore relations are based on shared values and approaches, economic opportunities and convergence of interests on key issues. Political engagement is regular. Defence relations are particularly strong. Economic and technological ties are extensive and growing. Cultural and human links are very vibrant. There are more than 20 regular bilateral mechanisms, dialogues and exercises and a number of inter-Governmental Agreements facilitating defence, political, commercial and people-to-people exchanges. There is great convergence on a broad range of international issues and both are members of a number of forums, including EAS, G20, Commonwealth, IORA, ADMM+ and IONS.

**Defence and Security Cooperation** - In the area of defence, India and Singapore have a longstanding and comprehensive partnership, which includes, Annual Ministerial and Secretary level dialogues; Staff level talks between three wings of Armed forces; training of Singapore Army and Air force in India every year; annual exercises including India's longest uninterrupted naval exercise with any other country; Navy and Coast Guard ship visits. Singapore's participates in IONS and multilateral Exercise MILAN by Indian Navy. The inaugural Trilateral Maritime Exercise between India, Singapore and Thailand was held in September.

India and Singapore also share similar concerns about the challenges posed by terrorism and extremism and have found it mutually beneficial to evolve a broad framework of security cooperation including cyber security, combating drug trafficking.

### **Trade, Economic and Development Cooperation**

Five areas of cooperation were agreed in August 2014 at the beginning of the first term of PM Modi led Government - (i) Scale up Trade & Investment; (ii) Speed up Connectivity; (iii) Smart Cities & Urban Rejuvenation; (iv) Skill development; and (v) State focus. In 2018, FinTech & Innovation was recognized as the new driver of bilateral relationship. In the second term of PM Modi led Government, Mission organised region's first international business & innovation summit on India on 09-10 September 2019, titled "India- Singapore : the Next Phase."

**Scale up Trade & Investment:** About 9000 Indian companies are registered in Singapore. More than 440 companies from Singapore are registered in India. The India-Singapore CEO Forum was launched in November 2018. Singapore is India's largest trade partner among ASEAN countries. Bilateral trade expanded after the conclusion of CECA from US\$ 6.7 billion in FY 2004-05 to US\$ 27.85 billion in 2018-19. Our imports from Singapore in FY 18-19 were US\$ 16.28 billion and exports from India US\$ 11.57 billion. Total FDI from Singapore into India was US\$ 82.99 billion (till March 2019) which was 20% of total FDI inflow. Singapore has emerged as largest source of FDI

into India with US\$ 16.23 billion in FY 2018 –2019. More than 80 % of listed offshore bonds by Indian issuers are listed on Singapore Stock Exchange (SGX) including several high profile *Masala* Bonds. Singapore-based investors have AUM valued at over US\$ 100 billion in India. Temasek Holding, a Singapore Government Fund, has invested in National Infrastructure Investment Fund of India. The outward Indian FDI to Singapore was US\$ 66.22 billion (till July 2019), making Singapore one of the top destinations for Indian investments. FDI during FY 2018-19 was US\$ 4.491 billion.

**Speed up connectivity:** Singapore is directly connected to 18 Indian cities by 8 airlines. There are at present more than 500 weekly flights both ways. In 2018, about 1.27 million Indian tourists visited Singapore, making India the third largest source in tourism for Singapore.

**Smart cities:** Singapore companies are working on a number of projects in various states of India including Amaravati, new capital city of Andhra Pradesh and master planning of Pune Metropolitan Region. There is also cooperation in capacity building in urban planning sector.

**Skill development:** Singapore is working with the Central and state Governments as well as Government organisations to establish skill development centres in various sectors. 3 international level skill centres have been established in New Delhi , Udaipur and Guwahati.

**State focus:** State governments are working with Singapore in the Smart Cities & Urban Rejuvenation as well as Skills Development initiatives. Singapore has established Joint Committees with Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. There are regular visits of state delegations to Singapore and vice-versa.

**FinTech & Innovation:** G-2-G interaction on FinTech is institutionalised through JWG on Fintech. APIX – a Singapore initiated global digital platform connect Indian fintech companies and banks with ASEAN. Singapore witnessed first international launch of India’s financial products in PM Modi’s November 2018 visit. There is ongoing cooperation between leading Indian and Singaporean institutions in Innovation. In 2018, Mission launched a startup engagement platform, India-Singapore Entrepreneurship Bridge (InSprenneur), which had three well attended conferences in January, May 2018 and September 2019.

**Science & Technology Cooperation** - ISRO has so far launched 9 of Singapore’s satellites. There is ongoing collaboration including R & D between Government institutions, universities, private sector in the area including Industry 4.0. , AI, machine learning, big data analytics, cybersecurity, mobility, smart energy and space.

### **Cultural Cooperation**

Cultural exchanges including performing arts, theatre, museum exchanges, languages, youth exchanges are sustained through support of Government institutions of both sides and through a number of cultural societies of Indian diaspora. As an innovative mechanism for promoting Indian handicrafts, PM unveiled a platform to bring Indian artisans to Singapore on a regular basis.

The 5<sup>th</sup> International Day of Yoga was celebrated in June 2019 through 200 yoga sessions. Mahatma Gandhi’s 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary celebrations were launched with

a projection of Gandhiji's video on the world's largest HD video screen at Suntec Convention Centre. Ahead of the celebrations, PM unveiled a plaque at the site of the immersion of a portion of Gandhiji's ashes in Singapore in 1948. Singapore is also home to many track2 1.5 and track 2 initiatives including Hindustan Times (HT)-MINT Asia Leadership Summit and India- Singapore Dialogue.

## **Indian Community**

Ethnic Indians constitute about 9.1 % or around 3.5 lakhs of the resident population of 3.9 million in Singapore. In addition, among the 1.6 million foreigners residing in Singapore, about 21 % or around 3.5 lakhs are Indian expatriates holding Indian passports, mostly serving in financial services, IT, students, construction and marine sectors. Singapore has the highest concentration of IIT and IIM alumni in any one city outside India. There are about 1.5 lakh Indian migrant workers in Singapore. Singapore, however does not feature in the ECR category. Tamil is one of the four official languages of Singapore. Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Bengali and Punjabi are also taught in schools.

**ASEAN-India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)** was held at iconic marina Bay Sands Convention Centre in January 2018 with the theme, "Ancient Route, New Journey." It featured 16 thematic sessions covering business, technology, connectivity to culture, youth and diaspora with an average of 3000 participants at any given time at the venue. In addition, there were many parallel festival and conference as well as literary competitions and technological grand challenges in the run up.

## **Useful Resources**

More details on [bilateral relations](#) on [Website](#) , [Facebook](#) ; [Twitter](#) and Fortnightly E-Newsletter '[India Focus](#)':

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