

## India – Fiji Bilateral Relations

### Background

India's links with Fiji commenced in 1879 when Indian laborers were brought here under indenture system to work on sugarcane plantations. Between 1879 and 1916 around 60,553 Indians were brought to Fiji. Beginning with early 20th century, Indian traders and others also started arriving in Fiji. In 1920, the indenture system was abolished. Prior to Fiji's independence in 1970, India had a Commissioner since 1948 who was later upgraded to High Commissioner after independence.

### High-Level Exchanges

**FIPIC-I:** The Forum for India-Pacific Island Countries was inaugurated on 19 November 2014 at Suva. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India also hosted the First Summit of the Forum in Suva (Fiji) during his historic visit to Fiji on 19 November 2014. The Forum saw participation of 14 Pacific Island Countries. India announced various development assistance initiatives during the Summit and other cooperation projects in various fields including, Climate Change, trade, economy, telemedicine and tele-education, IT, Grants for community development projects, human resource development and deputation of experts from India, etc.

**FIPIC-II:** As a follow-up of the historic first FIPIC Summit in 2014, India organized the second FIPIC at Jaipur on 21 August 2015, which was hosted by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Building upon the success of the first FIPIC, India announced major initiatives to boost cooperation with the 14 Pacific Island countries. Fijian delegation, led by Prime Minister Hon'ble Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama, attended the Forum.

**Interaction with PSIDS at New York:** On 24 September 2019, on the sidelines of the UNGA, Prime Minister of India Hon. Narendra Modi held an interaction, first of its kind, with the leaders of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). This high-level exchange will be followed up with the third Summit meeting of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC), which is scheduled to be held in the first half of 2020. Dr. S. Jaishankar, Hon. External Affairs Minister of India also held a bilateral meeting with Hon. Inia Seruiratu, Minister of Defence, National Security and Foreign Affairs of Republic of Fiji on the margins of the UNGA on 24 September 2019 at New York.

**India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPISDC):** Government of India organized the India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPISDC) which was held at Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva, Fiji on 25-26 May 2017. Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. (Dr.) V.K.Singh (Retd.) hosted the event. The Conference saw the participation of several high profile leaders from the 14 Pacific Island Countries. India signed MoUs for setting up of Centers of Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) with Fiji, Cook Islands, Nauru, Samoa and Niue. India and Fiji also signed three MOUs for 'Co-operation in Youth Development', 'Cooperation between Broadcasting Agencies', 'Cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy'. Prasar Bharati of India also gifted programmatic content on India for telecast to all the Pacific Island Countries. India had provided US\$ 1mn. towards Climate Change assistance to Fiji's COP23 Presidency.

### **Visit of Prime Minister of India to Fiji**

The visit by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, to Fiji on 19 November 2014 was a watershed moment not only for India-Fiji relations but also for India's relations with all the Pacific Island Countries. During the visit three MoUs were signed with Fiji: (i) MoU for Extending a Line of Credit for Establishing a Co-Generation Plant in Fiji, (ii) MoU on Cooperation in the field of training of diplomats, and (iii) MoU on the Earmarking of Land for their Diplomatic Missions in the respective Capitals.

**Visit of Hon. Prime Minister of Fiji to India for ISA Founding Conference :** Fiji has become one of the first Founding Members of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) – a joint initiative of the Governments of India and France to promote solar energy. PM Bainimarama participated in the Founding Conference of the ISA held in New Delhi on 11 March 2018.

### Development Partnership Assistance

Government of India is a committed development partner of Fiji. Indian assistance extends to sectors such as capacity building through human resource development and training under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programmes. Every year, many ITEC slots are made available to Fijian nationals. Many others benefit from training opportunities and for pursuing higher education in India every year under various scholarships offered by Ministry of AYUSH of India as well as by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR).

India also provides Humanitarian and Disaster Relief assistance from time to time whenever the need arises. One such example in recent past was in February 2016 when Tropical Cyclone Winston struck Fiji. India supplied a plane-load of relief assistance

which arrived in Fiji within a week of the Cyclone striking in Fiji. As follow-up assistance, India sponsored renovation of twenty schools in Fiji under Government of Fiji's Adopt a School Programme. India also gifted five tons of vegetable seeds and contributed US\$ 1 million to the Fijian Prime Minister's Relief Fund.

India has also been supporting the Fijian SME Sector through grant assistance and the Fijian Sugar Industry through direct financial assistance and also through training programmes. India has extended cooperation for Fijian General Elections of 2014 and 2018.

**Establishment of Mahatma Gandhi Centre of Excellence in IT:** Government of India has established a Centre of Excellence in IT at Fiji National University. The project has been implemented by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) under an MoU signed between the Governments of India and Fiji.

### **Commercial and Economic Relations**

Trade statistics apparently do not project realistically the trade happening through third countries/places such as Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, etc. The bilateral trade figures of the last three financial years (1 April-31 March) are as under:

Year	Exports to India	Import from India	Balance of Trade
2016-17	0.60	52.70	42.92
2017-18	0.49	54.24	53.75
2018-19	0.71	60.80	60.09

(Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India) in US\$ Millions

### **Indian Diaspora**

The number of Indians living in Fiji is about 1400, mostly engaged in services like IT, management, finance, banking, educational, medical, hotel industry etc. As for the persons of Indian descent in Fiji, the journey of Girmity (contract for indentured labourers) started in Fiji in 1879 and ended in 1920. Indian origin population constitutes roughly one-third of the total population of 884,887 (Census - Sept 2017). Fiji Hindi is widely spoken.

**First Regional Hindi Conference:** The first-ever Regional Hindi Conference was held at Suva on 25 January 2020 in collaboration with Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts, Government of Fiji. The Conference was attended by Fijian, Indian as well as regional Hindi experts. The Conference also, for the first time in Fiji, attracted the largest ever gathering of Hindi teachers in Fiji. The next World Hindi Conference is also proposed to be held in Fiji in 2021.

**Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) / Pravasi Bhartiya Samman (PBS):** PBS awardees from Fiji are: (i) Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, former PM (2004); (ii) Golfer Mr. Vijay Singh (2005); (iii) Late Sir Moti Tika Ram, former Supreme Court Judge (2007), (iv) Mr. Y.P. Reddy, Reddy Group Chairman and Chairman, (v) Girmity Council (2010), (vi) RamKrishna Mission (2014) (viii) Mr Vinod Patel, businessman got award for social service in (2017).

**Know India Programmes (KIP):** During the last three years, 148 Indo-Fijians have visited India in KIP.

**Public Sector Undertakings of India in Fiji:** Four Government of India undertakings, viz, New India Assurance Company Ltd. (since 1954), Life Insurance Corporation of India (since 1956), Bank of Baroda (since 1961), are functioning in Fiji; Water and Power Consultancy Services Ltd (Since 2015).

### **Cultural Relations**

#### **Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre**

An Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) in Fiji was established by GOI in 1972 (which was first ever such centre abroad). It has been renamed as 'Swami Vivekanand Cultural Centre (SVCC) in May 2018. SVCC provides classes in seven streams: Indian classical music (Karnataki, Tabla, Harmonium) and dance (Bharatnatyam, Kathak), Hindi language and Yoga. SVCC regularly organizes cultural evenings, exhibitions, film shows, workshops and discussions.

**Namaste Pacifika- Festival of India:** To mark the 70th anniversary of India's Independence, High Commission of India organized a six-month long Festival of India named, 'Namaste Pacifika' from October 2017 to March 2018.

**International Day of Yoga:** Since its inaugural event in 2015, the International Day of Yoga is celebrated with much enthusiasm and fervour every year in Fiji with participation from all walks of life and the event has been honoured by the presence of some of the highest authorities of the country, including His Excellency the President of the Republic.

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