

India-Tonga Bilateral Relations

Historical Background: 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, have received training in India in defence and other courses under ITEC programme. 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 the PM, EAM and Agriculture Minister. Defence Advisor based in High Commission of India, Canberra is accredited to Tonga.

High-Level Exchanges

FIPIC: 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. Tongan delegation led by Prime Minister Lord Tu'ivakano attended the Summit.

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. Tonga delegation led by Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests & Fisheries, attended the Forum.

FIPIC-III: 3rd FIPIC Summit organized in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on 22 May 2023, which was hosted by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and PNG's PM, Hon. James Marape. Tonga delegation led by Hon. Siaosi 'Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Tonga, attended the Summit.

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).

India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPISDC): Government of India organized the India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPISDC) at Suva, Fiji on 25-26 May 2017. Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. (Dr.) V.K.Singh (Retd.) hosted the event. Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests & Fisheries led the Tongan delegation to the Conference.

International Solar Alliance: Tonga has become one of the Founding Members of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) – a joint initiative of the Governments of India and France to promote solar energy. Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Agriculture visited New Delhi to attend the Founding Conference of ISA on 11 March 2018.

Other Important Visits/Exchanges:

- 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 Kiyaniilie Peseyie and Rajasthan, Shri Dendra Singh Shekhawat also attended the meeting. Hon'ble Speaker launched the Kolomotu'a Solar Project on 19 April during her stay in Tonga.
- Minister for Internal Affairs Hon Fe'ao Vakata, and Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Elsie Fukofuka, attended Distinguished Visitors Programme for Pacific Islands Countries, from 7-17 February 2016, in India.
- Shri Mansukh Lal Mandaviya, Hon. Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Chemicals and Fertilizers, visited Tonga on 25-26 April 2018.
- Hon. Poasi Mataele Tei, Minister for Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications attend the 2nd Assembly of the ISA in New Delhi on 31 October 2019.

Human Resources Development

Training slots are offered to Tonga under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme of the Government of India. Diplomats are also offered training at the Foreign Service Institute of India. The number of persons who availed of civil training since its introduction are 58 till date. More than 40 Tongan Defence Service personnel have availed of defence training in various training institutions in India since 2011.

Two experts from Tonga had attended the TERI Workshop on Sustainable Development in March 2007 in Suva. Four 'solar mamas' attended a training course at the Barefoot College, Tilonia.

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.

Mr. J. Somasekharan, Indian 'Coconut Development Expert' was on deputation to the Government of Tonga for a period of seven months from March-October 2017.

Indian Assistance:

- i. In 2007, GOI provided a grant-aid of US\$ 100,000/- for construction of access road from Wharf to Hunga village.
- ii. Another grant-aid of US\$ 100,000/- was approved in 2008 for up-gradation of jetty in Hunga.
- iii. 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.
- iv. In July 2014, GOI had also provided grant-aid of US\$ 300,000 for Tsunami Alert System.
- v. In October 2014, US\$ 115,000 was committed by GOI for Project Proposal "Upgrade to the Office of the Public Service Commission ICT Infrastructure"
- vi. In September 2015, US\$ 71,627/- was approved by GOI for project titled 'Spectrum Monitoring Including Detection of Interference and Illegal Transmission'.

Vii. In 2018, India gave US\$ 1 million as assistance for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction after Tropical Cyclone Gita. US\$500,000 was given as immediate cash assistance and the balance amount has been given through UNDP for renovation of export facility in Tonga.

viii. On 28 August 2020, Government of India approved funding US\$1,018,844 for support response to COVID-19 pandemic.

ix. On 25 January 2022 Government of India announced an immediate assistance package of USD 200,000 aftermath the 15 January volcanic eruption and tsunami in Kingdom of Tonga. A consignment of 272 packages of Disaster Relief Supplies which includes Family Ridge Tents (100), Blankets (1000), Solar Lamps (1000), Dignity Kits (200) and Tarpaulins (250) worth US\$ 40,000.00 was airlifted from India for the disaster affected people and reached Tonga on 23 May, 2022.

Cultural Relations

A 5-member cultural troupe from the Indian Cultural Centre, Suva visited Tonga from 17-21 July 2012 to participate at the Heilala Festival. Under the 'Namaste Pacifika', Indian Cultural Festival, Ministry of Culture sponsored 'Mrs. Meera Das' Odissi classical dance group performed in Tonga on 3 November 2017.

IDY in Tonga

Since its inaugural event in 2015 the **International Day of Yoga** is celebrated with great enthusiasm in Tonga with participation from high dignitaries. This year also on 24th June 2023, the 9th International Day of Yoga event was organised at the Tanoa International Hotel. More than 80 Yoga enthusiasts participated in the Yoga session. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu was the Chief Guest and Minister of Internal Affairs of Tonga, Lord Vaea was the guest of Honour.
