

India-The Bahamas Relations

Overview

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas came under HCI, Kingston's concurrent accreditation in August 2004. Convergence of views on various important contemporary issues, shared concerns, aspirations, and excellent cooperation at various multilateral fora has largely shaped and dominated Indo-Bahamas bilateral relations.

Political

Both India and the Bahamas are members of NAM, G-77, WIPO, WTO (Observer), the United Nations, and its various subsidiary bodies. With democratic governance, respect for rule of law, and rights of their people, both share similar aspirations for accelerated economic growth, eradication of poverty, improvement in quality of life of their people, and promotion of equity. Both also have shared stakes in shaping the emerging architecture of various multilateral institutions to address the existing inequities, and for addressing major contemporary issues related to energy security, food security, climate change, and international terrorism, among others. The Bahamas has consistently supported Indian candidatures, unilaterally or reciprocally, to various UN and other International bodies. Bahamas is sensitive to India's concerns on International Terrorism and supports comprehensive convention on International Terrorism proposed by India. The Bahamas supported Indian candidature for a Non-Permanent Seat on the UN Security Council for the year 2011-12, and also supports our aspirations for Permanent Membership of the expanded Security Council as and when it takes place. The Bahamas position is largely in sync with our position in various trade developments and other global issues. Bahamas is not only sensitive and supportive of our aspirations to play a commensurate global role, including in the UN Security Council, but also expects India to play a much larger role in Bahamas, and the Caribbean. Being members of the Commonwealth, various meetings under its auspices such as CHOGM, CPA, etc. have provided opportunities for bilateral meetings on the sidelines.

In October 1985, Late Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi visited Nassau for the CHOGM in The Bahamas. Exchange of visits include visit of Secretary(West) in September 2005 to The Bahamas for the Foreign Office Consultations; visit of The Bahamas Minister of Foreign Affairs and Public Service Frederick Mitchell, along with a business delegation, in January 2006 to India; and visit of MOS (PMO) Shri Prithviraj Chauhan to The Bahamas on 23-26 May 2006 for participation in the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Conference. (Frederick Mitchell accompanied wife of then Prime Minister Perry Christie of the Progressive Liberal Party, on her private visit to India in March 2006.) Former Prime Minister Hubert A. Ingraham of The Bahamas had a meeting with our Prime Minister on the sidelines of the last CHOGM meeting in Kampala in November 2007 and sought cooperation in solar energy, technical and vocational education, Specialists' Teachers, and IT-assistance.

The Bahamas is not a member of the IPU and the Parliamentary exchanges/interactions at the CPA level being limited; there is a deficit of bilateral Parliamentary exchanges.

India does not have a resident Mission and the High Commissioner resident in Kingston is concurrently accredited to the Bahamas. High Commissioner Shri Pratap Singh presented his credentials to Sir Arthur Foulkes, GCMG, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas on Thursday the 13th June 2013, as a non-resident High Commissioner.

The Bahamas has appointed an Honorary Consul (Shri Ashish Saraf) in India in October 2006.

We have offered to set up an IT Centre in the Bahamas. Modalities are being worked out, and the MOU is presently in a draft stage, with the Ministry (TC Division). The MOU envisages provision of hardware, software, courseware, and a training faculty of 3 for a period of 2 years, which would train about 600 Bahamians each year.

We have signed the Bilateral Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) on 11 February 2011 and it has since entered into force. Former High Commissioner of India signed the agreement on behalf of the Government of India, while the then Minister of State for Finance signed the agreement on behalf of the government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

India made a modest contribution of medicines worth US\$ 50,000/- as relief in the aftermath of devastation caused by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004.

Of late, the Fifteen ITEC slots offered are being increasingly utilized. A Bahamian Foreign Service Officer attended the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats at the Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi in March 2011.

High Commissioner attended Diplomatic Week – The Bahamas from 23-25 October, 2014 organised by the Government of The Bahamas in Nassau, New Providence, The Bahamas. This provided a good opportunity to meet the local dignitaries and other diplomats accredited to The Bahamas.

Economic content is conspicuously inadequate, high level exchanges are far from satisfactory, and a huge deficit of parliamentary and cultural exchanges are important features of our bilateral relations.

Trade

During the visit of The Bahamas Minister for Foreign Affairs to India in January 2006, two agreements - an omnibus 'Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation' between the two Governments and an 'Agreement on the Establishment of Joint Business Council

between FICCI and The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce' were signed. Bilateral trade between India and Bahamas has been fluctuating depending upon import and export of a particular item in a particular year. IT products/services, pharmaceuticals, manufactured goods and auto parts are the major areas of India's export interests.

Small size of Indian community, small size of the market and lack of direct connectivity with India has gravitated the local business community in the Bahamas to import products of Indian origin through their network in the US/UK because of close proximity and economical and efficient shipping arrangements. The Bahamian economy's contraction in the aftermath of recent global financial crisis, which, among others, slowed down the in-flow of tourism into the Bahamas also impacted on the volume of bilateral trade. The State Bank of India and the Bank of Baroda have their resident branches in the capital Nassau for offshore banking. Both have been doing brisk business and operating as profit centers for their respective parent organizations.

Cultural Relations and Indian community

Relations between India and The Bahamas have traditionally been friendly and cordial, reinforced by a small Diaspora of 300 approx. comprising mostly professionals, who have integrated in the Bahamian mainstream and distinguished themselves.

In the absence of any Cultural Exchange Agreement the cultural interaction is rather limited. There is neither any Bahamian student studying in India nor any Indian student in the Bahamas.

Useful Resources

High Commission of India, Kingston website:

<http://www.hcikingston.com/>

High Commission of India, Kingston Facebook page:

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

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