

India-Commonwealth of Dominica Relations

Historical Perspective:

The Commonwealth of Dominica is known as the "Nature's Island of the Caribbean" for its lush green mountains and serene beauty. It has a land area of 750 square kilometres and a population of approximately 72,500. In the recent past, Dominica was hit by two Hurricanes, Dean in August 2007 and Ophelia in December 2011, which caused extensive damage to its crops and infrastructure. Dominica is a member of both CARICOM and OECS and permanently hosts the Small Business Development Office of OECS.

India enjoys traditionally cordial bilateral relations with Commonwealth of Dominica since the diplomatic relations established in 1981. Commonwealth of Dominica is concurrently accredited to our Mission in Port of Spain and it does not have a diplomatic Mission in India. In December 2011, India donated US\$100,000 to Dominica to help alleviate problems caused by Hurricane Ophelia. Likewise, India recently provided humanitarian assistance of US\$300,000 to Dominica in the wake of damage caused by flash floods in December 2013. Nearly 50 persons of Indian Origin and a few Indian business families reside in Dominica.

Visits:

No high-level bilateral visits have taken place so far.

Agreements / MoUs between India and Commonwealth of Dominica:

- i) A MoU was signed between the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) and the Division of Agriculture (DOA), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Commonwealth of Dominica for cooperation in the field of education and research in agriculture and allied areas in October 2011.
- ii) A MoU was signed between GOI and the Government of Commonwealth of Dominica for setting up an IT Centre for Excellence in Dominica in October 2011.
- iii) A draft Agreement on 'Tax Information Exchange Agreement' proposed by GOI has been accepted by the Dominican Government with some changes. The Amended draft is pending at our side.
- iv) A Draft Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation proposed by Dominica in 2010 is under consideration at our side.
- v) A draft MoU on Assistance in Health Sector proposed by Dominica in 2010 is under consideration at our side.

Bilateral Cooperation Assistance:

i) Capacity Building: India has been contributing to capacity building of the Commonwealth of Dominica (CD) by providing training to its personnel under the ITEC programme at various training institutions in India. The Government of India has recently increased the number of annual training slots from 5 to 12 for Dominican nationals. Courses mostly sought after by Dominica are in the areas of IT, Accounts and Financial Management, HRD, SMEs, etc. Dominica has sought ITEC experts in the areas of Agriculture and Horticulture. Dr. V. Kumar, Sr.

Scientist (Horticulture) from National Research Centre for Banana, Thiruchirapalli visited Dominica for a month in January 2011 to advise the Dominican Government on horticulture.

ii) Proposal of deputation of Agro-processing Expert: A MoU on bilateral Agriculture Cooperation was signed between the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), GOI and Ministry of Agriculture of CD in October 2011. On the basis of MoU, GOI had agreed, in principle, to provide a short-term expert for Food and Agro-processing with specialization in horticulture to Dominica for 4 weeks followed by Montserrat for 2 weeks under ITEC programme. The Mission is awaiting the completed ITEC forms from Dominica. The matter is being followed up.

iii) ICT Centre for Excellence: Following the signing of MoU on setting up an ICT Centre for Excellence between GOI and CD in October 2011, GOI had conveyed our in-principle approval for setting up the Centre in Dominica. The courses for the ICT Centre of Excellence in Dominica suggested by the Ministry in 2013 have been approved by the Dominican side. The Dominican Government has also confirmed the location for the Centre at the Dominica State College as well as provision of infrastructure and logistical support as per the MoU. The matter is under process at our end as the Ministry informed in October 2014 that re-tendering was underway to award the tender for implementing the project.

iv) Donation of medicines: A request from the Dominican Government for donation of medicines and medical equipments for their public hospitals under GOI Grant-in-aid scheme is long pending at our side. A list of medicines and medical equipment was also forwarded to Ministry. As regards the quantity of the medicines, the Dominican Government had left it entirely to our side. The Ministry has recently conveyed that the proposal will be considered in the CFY 2014-15 as it was not considered earlier due to budgetary constraints. The Ministry informed on 31st October that the matter of supplying medicines was under consideration in consultation with the Ministry of Health and FW while the supply of the medical equipment may not be possible. The Dominican Government, after reducing the quantities of some medicines, has reconfirmed the list of medicines sent by Ministry recently. The matter is under process at our end.

v) Solar Street Lighting and Community Development: The Dominican Government requested for a 'Solar Street Lighting and Community Development' project in CD. GOI had confirmed, in principle, availability of funding for the project and it was suitably conveyed to the Dominican side. During the recent visit to Dominica, the High Commissioner was informed by the concerned authorities that they were no longer interested in the project.

Bilateral Trade:

India exports mainly pharmaceutical products, jewellery, readymade garments, textiles and home furnishings etc. to Dominica, while Dominica exports mainly scrap metals and plastic articles. Bilateral trade between India and Dominica during 2013-14 amounted to US\$2.48 million. Given the distance and small size of Dominica market, volume of our bilateral trade is comparatively small. India's exports to Dominica were US\$2.41 million and Dominica's exports were US\$0.07 million.

Gujarat Apollo Industries Company Ltd. has installed an Asphalt Separation plant in Dominica recently.

Possible Areas of Cooperation:

SMEs: During discussions at high level meetings, Dominica evinced interest in developing SME's particularly in the area of agro- industries, food processing and small scale manufacturing. A NSIC delegation visited CD in January 2010 and interacted with Dominica's Ministry of Trade and Industry, Consumer and Diaspora Affairs as well as with various stakeholders. The Dominican Government was interested in setting up small scale industries and a Training-cum-Incubation Centre in the country with National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC).

Eco-Tourism/Ayurvedic System of Holistic Health Care: Dominica, also called the 'Nature Island' because of its lush green vegetation, is suitable for setting up of an Ayurveda Resort and Wellness Centre and holds great potential in this field. Dominica is endowed with rare and large varieties of herbs and offers an ideal location for setting up of an Ayurvedic system of holistic health care, which could have touristic implications for the region.

Sports: Indian Cricket Team's visit: CD hosted the visit of the Indian national Cricket team to play in the first ever Test Match with the West Indies Cricket team from 6-11 July 2011.

Others: Other areas of potential cooperation include agro-processing, small scale manufacturing, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals and education.

Culture:

A 9-member Percussion Group "Drums of India" led by Shri Jaya Bhaskar Peravali sponsored by ICCR visited the Commonwealth of Dominica for participation in the Dominica Festival of Arts "DOMFESTA" from 18 to 20 May 2012. The group gave performances throughout the country and they were honorary guests at the "Night of the Classics" on 18 May 2012. The performances of the troupe were warmly welcomed. Given financial constraints, ICCR may not be able to send cultural troupe this year.

Indian Community:

The Indian community consists of a few Sindhi business families, professionals and faculty members of the Ross Medical University.

Useful Resources:

High Commission of India, Port of Spain website:
<http://www.hcipo.in/>

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