

India-Suriname Relations

Political

India enjoys close, warm and friendly relations with Suriname, reinforced by cultural and people to people contact bridged by Indian Diaspora's arrival dating back to 142 years. Over 2,30,000 Persons of Indian origin hailing from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and some 50 Sindhi families living in Suriname contribute significantly to economy, civil service, technocrats and composite cultural milieu of Suriname .

Several high level Ministerial visits have been exchanged since establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Suriname. Minister of State, Gen(Retd) V.K.Singh visited Paramaribo on April 28,2017 in connection with sixth Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) and Suriname and held high profile bilateral meetings with the President, Vice President and Foreign Minister. The Vice President of Suriname H.E Ashwin Adhin, was invited as a special guest to Youth Pravasi Bharitya Divas, 2017 in Bengaluru. During his visit from January 05-14, 2017, VP Adhin led an official delegation and held bilateral meetings with Prime Minister Modi, AYUSH Minister and Minister of Road Transport & Shipping . He also met different business entities and investors. During his private visit to India in March 2016, VP Adhin called on the Hon'ble Prime Minister on March 11, 2016 and discussed bilateral issues including issues of mutual interest and handed over the invitation of President Boutserse for a state visit to Suriname. A high level delegation comprising the then Foreign Minister Winston Lackin, and the then Education Minister and the current Vice President of the Republic of Suriname , Ashwin Adhin and experts from Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Agriculture visited India from January 12-15, 2015 in connection with the 5th Joint Commission meeting.

During 6th JCM, India announced US\$ 30 million as line of Credit to Suriname. Three MoUs were signed in the areas of Visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, official and service passports; Work Plan of Joint Working Group (JWG) on Agriculture for 2017-21; and, Suriname Bureau of Standards and the Indian Bureau of Standards. Cooperation in the areas of setting-up of AYUSH Chair, an ICT Centre of excellence in Suriname and Election authorities of both countries are under active consideration of the both governments. During the 5th JCM India approved US\$ 50 million as line of credit to Suriname.

India has provided four Credit lines worth US\$ 57 million to Suriname to set up water pumps, power transmission lines, 3 Chetak helicopters, Crash Fire Tenders and coastal equipment. Three Chetak helicopters produced by HAL worth US \$ 13.5 million were handed over to Ministry of Defence in March, 2015. Exim Bank of India has provided a loan of US 8.4 million to the Ministry of Agriculture, Suriname for rehabilitation of pumping station of Wageningen, under Buyers Credit programme in August, 2017

A LOC proposal of US \$ 27.5 million for the government owned Electrical Company EBS's for Electrification of PikinSaron Area and Upgradation of Transmission Network and Infrastructure Substation I, L, H, F and G (EPAR), has been recently approved by the Ministry . There are several LOC proposals under the active consideration of the Government of India.

General (Dr) V.K. Singh handed over a cheque of US\$150,000 to the Government of Suriname as humanitarian assistance for the rehabilitation of the victims of recent flood in Suriname. A grant of US\$ 29988/- has been provided to the Surinamese government for school going children community development project in August, 2017.

A grant of US\$ 3,11,567.21 for upgrading of the s' Lands Hospital morgue in Paramaribo and a sum of US\$1,69,400/- as an assistance to the Institute for Natural Resources and Engineering Studies (NATIN) of Suriname were sanctioned under Grant- in-Aid to Latin American and Caribbean region in the year 2015 . Both grants have been fully utilized.

Suriname and India actively cooperate on various multilateral fora. Suriname has been supporting India's candidature on various multilateral platforms including elections of different bodies under UN, including the recently held ICJ elections.

Finance Minister of Suriname Gillmore Hoefdraad recently visited Mumbai from September 19-21, 2017 on a working visit. During his visit he met the representatives of various chambers of commerce and potential investors and briefed them about the business potential in Suriname in the areas of Oil & Gas, Mining, Gold, Solar Energy and Bauxite

A four member pharmaceutical delegation from Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizers led by Shri Sudhansh Pant, Joint Secretary visited Suriname from April 07-10, 2015 to explore possibilities of future cooperation in Pharma sector.

Suriname introduced visa liberalization policy for Indians and "visa on arrival" facility extended to Indian Nationals with effect from 01st March, 2016.

Economy

Trade and economic links between India and Suriname are modest. Indian export to Suriname consists of boilers, machinery, iron & steel, electrical machinery & equipment, sound recorders, pharmaceutical products, textiles, vehicles, coffee, tea and spices, rubber, paper, tobacco, organic chemicals, furniture, carpets, ceramic products, footwear and printed books; Indian import consists of wood, aluminum and electrical machinery.

Exports to India

2011 – 2012	US\$ 4.40 million
2012 – 2013	US\$ 13.40 million [% Growth: 204.66]
2013 – 2014	US\$ 13.15 million [% Growth: -1.91]
2014 -2015	US\$ 210.87 million
2015 -2016	US\$ 43.33 million
2016-17	US\$ 45.92 million

(Source: Department of Commerce, Govt of India)

Imports from India

2011 – 2012	US\$ 10.43 million
2012 – 2013	US\$ 30.34 million [% Growth: 190.86]
2013 – 2014	US\$ 24.18 million [% Growth: -20.30]
2014-2015	US\$ 17.62 million
2015-16	US\$ 12.86 million
2016-17	US\$ 10.59 million

(Source: Department of Commerce, Govt of India)

The Surinamese businessmen have evinced interest in bilateral cooperation in agricultural sector and food processing industry. As a follow up to the Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the field of agriculture which was signed in 2003, the first

ever Joint Working Group of Experts from both sides met in New Delhi on July 28, 2014. A MoU was signed between FICCI and the Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Suriname in 2003 to set up a Joint Business Council.

A two member delegation led by Mr Henk Nareendorp, Chairman, Suriname Chamber of Commerce participated in 6th CII India- LAC Conclave in October 2015 for developing closer economic and commercial ties between the two countries.

ITEC

Under ITEC programme the slots reserved for Suriname are 35 during the year 2017-18. There is lot of interest in training programmes in rural development, banking, ICT, mass media, solar energy etc.

Culture And Education

Indian Cultural Centre in Suriname was opened in 1978 and is quite active in promoting Hindi language, Kathak, Yoga and classical music. India provided grants worth US 29500/- for promotion of Hindi in Suriname in the year 2016 as approximately 80 voluntary Hindi schools are functioning in different district of Suriname. Every year two Surinamese students learn Hindi in the Kendriya Hindi Sansthan in Agra. Surinamese students have also shown keen interest in various scholarship schemes of ICCR and currently one students is studying BAMS course in India under AYUSH scholarship.

Three Indian musical/dance groups from ICCR visited Suriname in the year 2016. On the occasion of Holi, a six member music troupe led by noted Bhakti singer Rajesh Pandey visited Suriname in March, 2016 whereas the other 12 member troupe led by Bhola Pandey visited in July 2016 during post Eid celebrations. A 12 member Bhangra Group performed in Suriname on November 26& 27 on the occasion of Deepavli and Independence Day of Suriname.

Noted academician and historian from Suriname Prof Mauris S. Hassankhan attended the PBD panel discussion on the topic” Documenting History of migration and achievements of Diaspora in Girmitiaya countries” held on August 23, 2016 in New Delhi. Mr Dew Sharman, MP participated in the PBD Panel discussion on “Role of Indian diaspora community organization” in New Delhi on November 12.

CONSULAR ISSUES

Since almost 37% of the total population of 5,73,311 is of Indian origin, demand for OCI cards is approximately 400 per year. The electronic travel authorisation system (eTVA) for Suriname has been implemented, reducing the number of visa applications to an average of 30 application per year.
