

High Commission of India
Suva

India – Tonga Bilateral Relations

Kingdom of 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, are regularly trained in India in defence and other courses under ITEC programme. Many Indian experts were also deputed. 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.

EAM's Special Envoy on UN reforms visited Tonga in August 2005. Indian Naval Ship – INS 'Tabar' paid a goodwill visit to Tonga in July 2006. A reception held on board was attended by Tongan PM, Cabinet Ministers, diplomatic corps, senior officers and members of the Indian community. A large number of Tongans visited the ship. The CO and DA in Canberra called on the Crown Prince.

MOS (EA) led the Indian delegation for the Post Forum Dialogue Partners' Meeting in Tonga on October 18-19, 2007. MOS (EA) paid a courtesy call on late King George Tupou V.

Late King George Tuopou V visited India on a private visit from 11-30 September 2009.

Tonga has been provided five training slots per year under ITEC programme. The number of persons who availed of civil training in 2012-13 was four, and in 2014-15, 10 slots were utilized. 11 slots have been utilized out of 15 slots allotted for 2015-16. Six slots were utilized out of 10 offered in 2016-17. For the year 2017-18, 10 slots have been offered.

Tongan Defence Service personnel who availed of defence training in various training institutions in India were seven during 2011-12, four during 2012-13 and 10 during 2013-14, one during 2014-15, 6 during 2015-16 and 3 during 2016-17.

Two experts from Tonga had attended the TERI Workshop on Sustainable Development in March 2007 in Suva. Two 'Solar-Mamas' attended a training course to become 'solar engineers' at the Barefoot College, Tilonia.

India had provided a grant-aid of US\$ 100,000/- each in 2007 to Tonga for construction of access road from Wharf to Hunga village and up-gradation of jetty in Hunga. India had also provided grant-aid of US\$ 3,00,000 for Tsunami Alert System in July 2014, US\$ 1,15,000 for Project Proposal "Upgrade to the Office of the Public Service Commission ICT Infrastructure" in October 2014, and US\$ 71,627/- for project titled 'Spectrum Monitoring Including Detection of Interference and Illegal Transmission', in September 2015.

On December 8, 2008, India donated 1,200 full uniform sets to Hon. Acting Minister of Defense, Tu'aTaumoepau Tupou for the Tonga's military.

Ms. Alisi Kelini Tuita, Executive Officer, Ministry of Education, Women's Welfare and Culture, visited India during 21-26 February 2010 to participate in the 10th Commonwealth India Small Business Competitiveness Development Programme at Jaipur. Dr. Amanki Fakakovi, Executive Board member of Tonga National Olympic Committee participated in Chef-de-Mission seminar held at New Delhi from 8-12 March, 2010. High Commissioner represented India at the funeral of late King George Tupou V on 27 March 2012.

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 Kiyanielie Peseyie and Rajasthan, Shri Dependra Singh Shekhawat also attended the meeting. Hon'ble Speaker launched the Kolomotu'a Solar Project on 19 April during her stay in Tonga.

A 5-member cultural troupe from the Indian Cultural Centre, Suva visited Tonga from 17-21 July 2012 to participate at the Heilala Festival.

Tongan delegation led by Mr. Ponepate Taunisila, Deputy Director, Ministry of Education and Training visited India in connection with the Second High Level Meeting (HLM) on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific, held in New Delhi on 23-25 October 2013.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi hosted the First Summit Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC-I) in Suva (Fiji) during the visit on 19 November 2014 with the participation of 14 Pacific countries. Tongan delegation led by Prime Minister Lord Tu'ivakano attended the Summit. The announcements made by Hon'ble PM on 19 November 2014 with respect to Pacific countries (including Tonga) were the following: (i) Setting up of a Special Adaptation Fund of US\$ 1 million, (ii) Development of Pan Pacific Islands Project for telemedicine and tele-education, (iii) Indian Visa on arrival for Pacific Island Countries – "Cook Islands, Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu, Republic of Nauru, Republic of Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Niue, Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Fiji and Papua New Guinea", (iv) Increase in Grant-in-Aid to Pacific Island Countries to US\$ 200,000 annually to be rolled over to provide for a wider scope for our development cooperation, (v) Establishment of Trade Office for Pacific Island Forum countries in India, (vi) Providing complimentary space to Pacific Island Forum countries during exhibitions, organized by ITPO, (vii) Deputation of ITEC experts to Pacific Island countries, including in the areas of agriculture, healthcare and IT, (viii) Organizing Training to Diplomats from Pacific Island Countries, (ix) Starting a Distinguished Visitors Programme for Pacific Island Countries, (x) Holding of the next Summit Meeting of India and Pacific Island Leaders in India in 2015, (xi) Cooperation in the use of Space technology applications for improving the quality of life of people and communications, (xii) Explore possibilities of sharing data for monitoring climate change, disaster risk reduction and management and resource management, and (xiii) Undertake joint research in traditional medicine; developing healthcare facilities for the benefit of people in the region.

While hosting second Summit of Forum for India Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC-II) at Jaipur, India, Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the following: (i) the establishment of an Institute for Sustainable Coastal and Ocean Research; and a Network of Marine Biology Research Stations in various Islands. (ii) holding an International Conference on "Ocean Economy and Pacific Island Countries" in New Delhi in 2016. (iii) Goodwill visits by Indian Navy to Pacific Islands will be held and extend support in areas of

Healthcare through medical camps on the islands, (iv) the establishment of a Space Technology Applications Centre in any one of the Pacific Islands for the entire region and provide training in space applications. (v) Under ITEC cooperation, Fiji will receive 110 slots while the other 13 countries will double their slots from 119 to 238. In addition, two Scholarships for College Education in India to each of the 13 countries that do not receive them yet, whilst Fiji will continue to receive its existing 33 scholarships. India will also expand its Training Courses for Pacific Island diplomats and offer a two-week Business Management Course at the globally renowned Indian Institute of Management in Bengaluru. (vi) India would train 70 women solar engineers from the islands and provide solar electrification to 2,800 houses – 200 houses in each Pacific Island Country; (vii) the establishment of at least one Information Technology Laboratory in each Pacific Island Country which will not only improve local IT infrastructure but also enable the countries to fulfill India's commitment to provide tele-medicine and tele-education to the Pacific. (viii) The FIPIC Trade Office in New Delhi will support the development of micro, small and medium enterprises and will extend support for purchase of machinery for coconut processing and enhancing rice and sugarcane yields. The Office will assist in improving Market Access for Pacific Islands.

A Tonga delegation led by Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests & Fisheries, visited India to attend 2nd Summit of Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) held at Jaipur on 21 August 2015.

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.

High Commissioner of India, based in Fiji, attended the coronation of King Topou VI, on 4 July 2015.

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.

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

Third International Day of Yoga was celebrated in Tonga on 24 June 2017.

Paula Pouvalu Mau, CEO, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communication, visited Marrakech, Morocco in November 2016, to sign Framework Agreement of International Solar Alliance. His visit was sponsored by Government of India.

Jayasekhar Somasekharan was deputed as Coconut Development Expert to the Kingdom of Tonga under ITEC programme, from 3rd March 2017 to 2nd October 2017.

Tonga supported our candidature of Dr Neeru Chadha to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in June 2017.

Useful Resources:

High Commission of India, Suva website: <http://www.indianhighcommissionfiji.org>

High Commission of India, Suva Facebook page:

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

Indian Cultural Centre, High Commission of India, Suva Facebook page:

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

Twitter: https://twitter.com/HCI_Suva;

YouTube Channel: India in Fiji

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJYT5H3NwEB10MdiXizST2g>

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