

India-Jamaica Relations

Overview

India and Jamaica have traditionally enjoyed cordial and friendly relations based on common linkages of history, Parliamentary democracy, and membership of the Commonwealth, English language and the love of cricket. There also exists a cultural heritage bond as Indian nationals were brought to this region as indentured labour between 1845-1917. Both India and Jamaica are members of NAM, G-77, G-15, WTO, WIPO, UN and its various subsidiary bodies. Both being developing countries, share similar concerns and common aspirations for their accelerated economic growth, eradication of poverty, improvement in the 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. Both have common interests in promotion of South-South Cooperation and synergizing efforts towards the common objective of securing a better deal for the developing world in the relevant multilateral fora to promote the development imperatives of the South without impacting on their policy space.

Convergence of views on various important contemporary issues, shared concerns and aspiration as developing countries and excellent cooperation at various multilateral fora has largely shaped and dominated the Indo-Jamaica bilateral relations. Jamaica wishes to open a Resident Mission in New Delhi soon.

Political

Late Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Kingston in 1975, following which the decision to open a resident Indian Mission in Jamaica was taken. Jamaica's Prime Minister Mr. Edward Seaga visited India to attend the Seventh NAM Conference in March 1983. Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Jamaica in February 1999 to attend the Ninth G-15 Summit in Montego Bay. The Jamaican Minister of Foreign Trade, Mr. Anthony Hylton paid a visit to India from 1-4 August, 2001. A delegation led by Dr. Phillip Paulwell, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Technology of Jamaica visited India from 16-20 October, 2001. Shri Digvijay Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs paid an official visit to Jamaica from 6-7 February, 2003 and discussed bilateral, regional and international matters of mutual interest with his counterpart Senator Delano Franklyn, Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica. Other Ministerial visits were of Mr. Wykeham McNeille, Minister of State for Tourism and Culture to India in January 2007 for participation in centenary celebrations of Satyagraha, Shri Anand Sharma, MOS for External Affairs to Jamaica in February 2007, and Shri Vayalar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs to Jamaica in June 2007. Our Prime Minister had a brief meeting with the former Prime Minister Mr. Orette Bruce Golding of Jamaica on the sidelines of the UNGA on 25 Sept 2008 in New York.

In June 2013, Shri Vayalar Ravi, Hon'ble Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs, again visited Jamaica on an invitation from the Government of Jamaica to participate in the 'Fifth Biennial Diaspora Conference' held from 16-19 June'13 at Montego Bay, Jamaica. The Hon'ble Minister addressed the audience on 19th June. During his visit, the Hon'ble Minister also paid courtesy call on Hon'ble Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister of Jamaica; Hon'ble Anthony Hylton, Minister of Industry, Investment & Commerce; and Hon'ble Arnaldo Brown, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

In February 2014, a delegation led by Hon. Anthony Hylton, Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce of Jamaica, visited India to attend the NASSCOM India Leadership Forum 2014, held in Mumbai from 12-14 February 2014.

Four rounds of Foreign Office Level Consultations have been held so far. Three in Kingston in 2001, 2005, 2011 and one in New Delhi in 2007. During the Fourth round of the FOC in Kingston, it was agreed to explore the possibilities of cooperation in Agriculture, Sports, development of Small Scale Industries in Jamaica; conclusion of bilateral agreements on protection and promotion of investments; and avoidance of double taxation. It was also agreed to facilitate and encourage conclusion of MOUs between the National Small Industries Corporation of India and Jamaica Business Development Centre (JBDC); and between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce (FICCI) and the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce (JCC). It was also agreed to have a re-look at the drafts already exchanged earlier on an Extradition Treaty; and Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance.

Economic and Commercial

Of late, the bilateral economic and commercial interaction between India and Jamaica has been constrained by small size of the economy, distance from India and preferential trade arrangements with the USA, EU and the Caribbean. Some of the highlights of the India's economic and commercial interaction with Jamaica are as follows:

- A Line of Credit (LOC) worth US\$ 7.5 million was extended by India for import of water pumps from India (M/s Kirloskar Brothers Ltd) in the year 2001.
- India set up an IT Centre under the ICT Capacity Development Project in Jamaica in February 2009 following the assurance given by the then MOS (AS) in 2007. Under the agreement, India had provided the entire hardware, software, training modules and faculty of 3 deputed by the NIIT for a period of two years, which trained over a thousand Jamaicans in various modules of IT Skills. The programme came to an end in February 2011. The concluding ceremony was held on the 17 March 2011 and was addressed by the then Minister of Information Daryl Vaz, and the then Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Ms. Marlene Malahoo Forte, High Commissioner and various senior officials.

- An assistance of US\$ 200,000 in the form of medicines and medical supplies for the victims of Hurricane Ivan that struck the Island in September 2004, was given by India.
- Government of India donated an amount of US\$300,000/- (US Dollars Three Lakh) in the month of August 2010, as humanitarian assistance for procurement of medicines and medical equipments for the Bustamante Hospital for Children in Kingston.
- As a part of Indian Humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Nicole which lashed Jamaica in September–October 2010, the Government of India donated an amount of amount of US\$50,000/- (US Dollars Fifty Thousand only) in the month of December 2010 to the Government of Jamaica.
- India offers 20 slots annually to Jamaica under the ITEC programme. So far, around 280 Jamaicans have been trained in various institutions in India. From 2015 the slots have been raised to 20.
- During the 3rd International Civil Aviation negotiations Conference organised by IATA in Montego Bay in June-July 2010, India and Jamaica initiated discussion on an Agreement of Cooperation in Civil Aviation.
- An MOU between the Scientific Research Council of Jamaica and the CSIR on cooperation in the field of Food Research and Technology was signed in January 2010 and is being operational.
- Following the fourth round of Foreign Office Level Consultations in July 2011, in Kingston, an MOU between The National Small Industries Corporation Ltd India (NSIC) and The Jamaica Business Development Corporation (JBDC) was signed in Kingston on the 28th February 2012.
- India and Jamaica have agreed in principle to enter into an Agreement for The Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with respect to Taxes (AEI&ACT). India has proposed a Draft Agreement and is awaiting the response of the Jamaican side to the proposed draft.
- The Central Bank of India, agreed to work jointly with the Commonwealth Secretariat in the capacity building process of the Small Scale Business Association of Jamaica.
- India was elected as President of International Seabed Authority for the year 2010-2011 during the 16th session of the International Seabed Authority (ISBA), held in Kingston (Jamaica) from 26 April to 7 May 2010.
- The Government of India is also considering setting up a Vocational Training

Centre(VTC) in Jamaica. The VTC will help in training Jamaican youth with professional skills leading to employment. In this connection, two experts from HMT (Intl) Ltd. visited Kingston from 4-10 May 2014 for field study, who have already submitted their report to the concerned authorities for setting up of the Vocational Centre.

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 31st March 2014 between the Government of India and Government of Jamaica for providing Indian grant assistance of US\$ 2.1 million for installation of flood lights at the Sabina Park. A cheque of US\$ 0.770 million as the first installation in this regard was given to the Government of Jamaica. On 10th July the cheque for the balance amount of US\$ 1.33 million was handed over to the Government of Jamaica

Major Items of India's exports to Jamaica are motor parts, mineral fuels, mineral oils, textiles, cotton, readymade garments, industrial machinery, plastic and linoleum products, pearls, precious and semi-precious stones, artificial jewellery, and pharmaceuticals products.

Indian imports from Jamaica mainly consist of beverages, organic chemicals, steel scrap and other miscellaneous products.

Relevant trade figures between India and Jamaica for past couple of years are as follows:

	VALUE IN US\$ Million				
	2013-14	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10
Exports to Jamaica	36.22	29.70	26.66	22.34	20.85
Imports from Jamaica	0.90	2.40	1.62	0.77	0.65
Total Trade	37.12	32.10	28.28	23.11	21.51
Trade Balance	35.32	27.30	25.04	21.57	20.20

(Source: Department of Commerce - Export Import Data Bank)

(A significant portion of Jamaican imports of products of Indian origin takes place from the US, Canada and the UK. On account of small volumes as well as existing trade networking in these countries, it is not reflected in the above statistics.)

No Indian trade exhibition has ever been held in Jamaica and vice versa. Investment from India in Jamaica is insignificant/non-existent. There is no Indian Bank or Trade Centre in Jamaica nor any direct air connection or shipping lines from India. Jamaica does not have any Resident Mission in India. Though now they have appointed Mr. Vaswani as Special Envoy of India to Jamaica primarily to look after trade. There are no bilateral agreements with Jamaica on protection of investments, avoidance of

double taxation, narcotics and drug trafficking, extradition treaty or agreement on mutual legal assistance in civil/criminal matters.

Culture

Institutional Cultural interaction is virtually non-existent. The lack of enthusiasm and support for promotion of Indian cultural activities by the Indian Diaspora business community has restricted the Mission's ability to meet the local hospitality requirement for inviting ICCR cultural troupes on regular basis. Consequently the Mission has to harness the local talent and the limited resources to promote Indian culture by organizing various cultural programmes, symposia and seminars on important occasions.

- Friends of Indian Community' in Jamaica organized a 'Dance of India Festival' in September 2007. Two music teachers from the Indian Cultural Centre, Paramaribo visited Kingston and trained 70 students in classical music and tabla at the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts, Kingston in July 2007. A dance teacher from the Indian Culture Centre, Parimaribo, Suriname visited Jamaica for 2 weeks in 2008 and taught students at the Edna Manley College of Vision and performing Arts, Kingston.
- A five member dance troupe from the dance school "Nriyanjali" based in Suriname, accompanied by a Tabla teacher from Indian Cultural Centre, Suriname, gave performances in Jamaica, each in February 2012 and February 2013. The performances were well received and appreciated by the audience, which included the Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, Academics, Heads of the Diplomatic Corp, prominent members from different walks of life, Members of the Indian Diaspora, Indo-Jamaicans, Media etc.
- Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's 150th Birth Anniversary was celebrated by the Mission on 1st December 2011. It was a major event attended by over 350 invitees, comprising Ministers, VIPs, parliamentarians, academics, artists, corporate executives, social elite, and prominent members of the Indian community among others. The programme included poetry recital from Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's compositions by noted litterateur Prof. Edward Baugh; a short presentation on Tagore's life by Dr. Petrine Archer, a renowned art critic and a Visiting Scholar in the Department of History of Art, Cornell University, and a small drama skit by Dr. Jean Small, a celebrated stage presenter in Jamaica. The cast included well-known stage actors. It was followed by a scintillating cultural performance by the visiting 11-member Priti Patel Dance Troupe from India, sent by the ICCR which staged Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's play 'Chitra'. The Courtleigh Auditorium, the largest auditorium in Kingston, with a capacity of 400, was full to its capacity. The event was covered by the media. It was very well received and contributed to a better understanding of Indian heritage and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's contribution.

- Indian Village Craft Fair was organized by the World-Wide Events India in Jamaica in March/April, November/December 2012 and December 2013.
- There are four main Indian Associations in Kingston and one each in Ocho Rios and Montego Bay. Apart from the Indian Associations there are Hindu religious groups namely, 'Sanatan Dharma Mandir'; 'Prema Satsangh'; and 'Shri Sathya Sai Baba Organisation' in Kingston.
- Statue of Mahatma Gandhi depicting the famous "Dandi March" provided by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, was installed at the University of West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston, and unveiled by the High Commissioner on 12th July 2012. The event was attended by around 200 guests including the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister of Jamaica, Principal, Dean Faculty of Humanities, Professors of the University of West Indies, members of the Diplomatic community, academics, distinguished personalities from various walks of life and members of the Indian Diaspora. The event was widely covered by the media.
- An agreement on the establishment of a Chair on Indology/Gandhian studies between the University of West Indies (UWI) and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) was signed on 30th August 2012 and was to be made operational by the commencement of the academic year in August 2013, but could not materialise due to non-selection of the candidate. It is expected that the Chair will be operationalised this year.
- The Government of Jamaica have recently appointed Mr. Prakash Vaswani, Special Envoy of Jamaica to India and they have also nominated H.E. Mr. Clement Phillip Allicock as High Commissioner of Jamaica resident in Tokyo who has presented his Credentials in October, 2014.

Sports Interaction

A 25-member Indian Cricket Team led by Capt. M.S. Dhoni played two ODI matches in Kingston in June 2009. Again in 2011, as a part of their itinerary for the Caribbean region, the Indian Cricket Team played one ODI and one Test match in June 2011 in Kingston (Jamaica). The Indian Cricket Team, led by M.S. Dhoni, **visited Jamaica** to participate in the Tri Nation series, involving India, West Indies and Sri Lanka. They played against West Indies on 30th June and against Sri Lanka on 2nd July 2013 at Sabina Park, Kingston. A reception was hosted by the High Commissioner on 27th June at India House. On all occasions, the team was warmly welcomed by the cricket lovers.

Indian Diaspora

The Indian Diaspora, of about 70,000 whose forefathers came from India (mainly from Eastern UP, Bihar, Basti, Deoria, Gorakhpur) as indentured labour from 1845-1917, constituting around 3% of the Jamaican population, are proud of their Indian origin and have retained and nurtured their abiding interest in Indian culture, music,

dance and history. They have assimilated well in the Jamaican society – fondly described as ‘genetically embedded and integrated in the Jamaican society’, by the former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr. Kenneth Baugh – and their contribution to the Jamaican economic and social development has been acknowledged and appreciated at the highest political level in Jamaica.

The first ship – the Blundell Hunter – carrying indentured labour from Calcutta reached the Morant Bay on 8th May, 1845 and sailed for the Old Harbour near Kingston next day. It is accepted that 261 Indians first landed at Old Harbour on 10th May 1845. Now the 10th May is officially celebrated as the Indian Heritage Day in Jamaica.

The duty free business in Jamaica is monopolized by the Sindhi community (about 250 families) with a major share of jewellery, electronics and household goods market. They have further brought another group of expatriate workers to work as office managers in their establishments. There is also a small floating and expanding group of expatriate skilled Indian professionals such as doctors, professors, chartered accountants, etc., who provide professional and specialist services of a very high order, and consequently are relatively better paid and much respected. Many Professors are teaching in the prestigious University of West Indies, Mona, Kingston, and among doctors many are attached to the government Hospitals.

An Indian Professor Dr. Ashok Kulkarni, on selection and invitation from India, was appointed as Vice President of the prestigious University of Technology in Kingston. He has since departed on completion of his tenure. Two persons of Indian origin occupy highest judicial posts – Justice (Ms.) Ingrid Mangatal is a Judge of the Supreme Court and Justice Mahadev Dukharan has been elevated from the Supreme Court to the Appellate Bench. Another Jamaican of Indian origin Mr. Kenneth S. Benjamin, who has acquired the Jamaican nationality, was honoured with ‘Pravasi Bharatiya Samman’ Award. He was honoured with the second highest civilian award ‘Order of Jamaica’ for his outstanding contribution to the restoration and expansion of the Hope Zoo by the Government of Jamaica on the occasion of their 51st Anniversary of Independence in the year 2013. He is the first person of Indian origin who has been conferred with this award. Mr. Benjamin has received several awards for his contribution to the industry, including the prestigious Order of Distinction, Commander Class in 2006. A former President of the Indian Cultural Society, Mrs. Sipragie Maragh was decorated with the 4th highest civilian honour by the Jamaican Government in 2010.

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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