

India-Singapore Relations

The close ties between India and Singapore have a history rooted in strong commercial, cultural and people-to-people links. India's connection with Singapore dates back to the Cholas. The more modern relationship is attributed to Sir Stamford Raffles who, in 1819, established a trading station in Singapore on the route of the Straits of Malacca which became a colony under British India, governed from Calcutta (1830-1867). The colonial connection is reflected in a similarity of institutions and practices, usage of English and the presence of a large Indian community.

India was one of the first countries to recognize Singapore in 1965. India's economic reforms in 1990s and the Look East Policy provided opportunities to recreate a new framework for cooperation, which included the **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA)** of 2005.

This robust relationship was elevated to a **Strategic Partnership** during the visit of Prime Minister Modi in November 2015 who signed a Joint Declaration on a Strategic Partnership with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Exchange of Visits

Prime Minister Modi paid an Official Visit to Singapore on 23-24 November 2015. Nine bilateral documents were signed/exchanged in areas of defence, maritime security, cyber security, narcotics trafficking, urban planning, civil aviation, and culture and a Joint Statement was issued which outlined areas of cooperation and mutual interest. Joint commemorative stamps depicting the Presidential Buildings of the two countries were released by the two Prime Ministers to commemorate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations. Prime Minister paid homage to Netaji at the INA Memorial Marker, delivered the 37th Singapore Lecture titled '*India's Singapore Story*', visited the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) and addressed the business community at the India-Singapore Economic Convention and the Indian community in Singapore at a gathering of around 20,000 people.

Prime Minister Modi had visited Singapore earlier in 2015 to attend the State Funeral of Lee Kuan Yew on 29 March. PM's participation in the funeral along with the declaration of the funeral day as a day of mourning in India with our flags flying half-mast, was deeply appreciated by Singapore Government.

Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Hsien Loong made a Working Visit to India from 3-7 October 2016. He was accompanied by Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) Mr. S. Iswaran, acting Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) and Senior of State for Defence Mr. Ong Ye Kung, Senior Minister of State (Defence and Foreign Affairs) Dr. Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman and Members of Parliament. PM Lee called on President, and met with PM, who hosted a banquet in his honour. The two PMs held wide-ranging discussions on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues and reviewed the bilateral

relationship since the signing of the Joint Declaration on a Strategic Partnership in November 2015. Three MoUs on collaboration in the field of technical and vocational education and training and cooperation in industrial property were signed. During the visit, PM Lee met External Affairs Minister (EAM) and visited Udaipur to inaugurate a Centre of Excellence for Tourism Management.

An active calendar of visits from both sides have added momentum to bilateral relations. **Visits from India in 2017** include Defence Secretary Mr. G Mohan Kumar for Defence Policy Dialogue in January ; Minister for Skill Development of Jharkhand Ms. Neera Yadav to explore cooperation in skill development and IT sector in February ; Minister for Shipping, Road Transport and Highways Shri Nitin Gadkari for Road Show on India Integrated Transport & Logistics Summit and to launch Masala Bonds in April ; Chief Minister of Haryana Shri Manohar Lal Khattar for investment promotion and Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chief of the Naval Staff for naval exercise in May; Foreign Secretary Dr. S Jaishankar to deliver S T Lee Lecture co- hosted by Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in July; Chief Minister of Maharashtra Shri Devendra Fadnavis for investment promotion in September ; Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Shri Arun Jaitley to attend Singapore Fintech Festival and at the Asia Pacific Summit; Finance Minister of Assam Shri Himanta Biswa Sarma (twice), Minister of Public Health and Engineering of Assam Shri Rihon Daimary, Finance Minister of Jammu & Kashmir Shri. Haseeb Drabu, Minister of Labour and Excise of Kerala Shri T.P. Ramakrishnan, and Minister for Tamil development, Tamil Culture and Archaeology of Tamil Nadu Shri K Pandiarajan visited in November.

This year, Minister of External Affairs Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister for Shipping, Road Transport and Highways and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari, Chief Minister of Assam Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Secretary (East) Smt. Preeti Saran, and CEO, NITI Aayog Shri Amitabh Kant with host of other dignitaries from India visited Singapore for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) on 6-7 January.

Visits from Singapore in 2017 include Minister of Home Affairs & Minister of Law Mr. K Shanmugam to attend Counter terrorism Summit in March ; Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance Mrs. Tan Ching Yee to hold discussions with Secretary DEA in April ; Minister for Trade & Industry (Industry) Mr. S Iswaran in March and November to New Delhi and in May and November to Andhra Pradesh ; Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam to deliver key note address at Delhi Economics Conclave and Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman for Delhi Dialogue in July; Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan visited New Delhi and Guwahati on 31 October – 1 November for Fifth India-Singapore Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) meeting and in connection with North East Skills Centre (NESC) respectively; Senior Minister of State for Law and Finance Ms. Indranee Rajah to New Delhi in October to attend Singapore International Arbitration Centre India Conference ; Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen to New Delhi and Kalaikunda to attend the second India-Singapore Defence Ministers' Dialogue (DMD) and to view Joint training of India

and Singapore Air Forces; and Emeritus Senior Minister (ESM) Mr. Goh Chok Tong visited New Delhi in December 2017.

This year Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman visited New Delhi for participation in Raisina Dialogue on 16-17 January.

Framework of the Bilateral Relationship

India-Singapore relations are based on shared values and approaches, economic opportunities and convergence of interests on key issues. Both countries have a full calendar of more than 20 bilateral mechanisms, dialogues and exercises, many of which take place annually.

Agreements concluded between India and Singapore reflect the growing breadth of our cooperation and provide a larger framework for activities between the two Governments, the business community, and people-to-people exchanges. Key agreements include the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (2005), Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (1994, Protocols signed in 2011), Bilateral Air Services Agreement (1968, revised in April 2013), Defence Cooperation Agreement (2003, enhanced Agreement signed in Nov 2015), MOU on Foreign Office Consultations (1994) and Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (2005). There is a Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC), chaired by EAM and Singapore Foreign Minister.

The 5-S Plank - Five areas of cooperation to enhance bilateral relations – referred to as **5-S Plank**- were agreed during the visit of EAM to Singapore in August 2014. 5S Plank directs the relationship towards– (i) Scale up Trade & Investment; (ii) Speed up Connectivity; (iii) Smart Cities and Urban Rejuvenation; (iv) Skill development; and (v) State focus.

5S-I - Scale up trade and investments: Singapore is India's 2nd largest trade partner among ASEAN countries. Bilateral trade expanded after the conclusion of CECA from US\$ 6.7 billion in 2004-05 to reach US\$ 16.7 billion in 2016-17. In 2016-17, our imports from Singapore were US\$ 7.1 billion and exports from India totaled US\$ 9.6 billion. In the year 2017-18 (up to September 2017) bilateral trade stood at US\$ 8.7 billion. Exports to Singapore for the corresponding period stood at US\$ 5.2 billion, recording a growth of 31.4% while imports stood at US\$ 3.5 billion, a growth of 7.4%.

Total foreign direct investments from Singapore into India was USD 59.9 billion (till September 2017) which was 11.5% of total FDI inflow. The FDI from Singapore in the period April 2017 – September 2017 was US\$ 5.3 billion. The outward Indian FDI to Singapore was USD 51.65 billion (till September 2017), making Singapore one of the top destinations for Indian investments. The sectors which attracted investments include Information Technology, real estate, manufacturing, construction, renewable energy and pharmaceuticals. More than 80 % of listed offshore bonds by Indian issuers are listed on Singapore Stock Exchange (SGX). SGX has also hosted several high profile *Masala*

Bonds. Singapore-based investors have Assets Under Management (AUM) valued at over US\$ 100 billion in India.

About 8,000 Indian companies are registered in Singapore. 6 PSUs, 9 banks, India Tourism, CII, FICCI, Air India, Jet Airways have their offices in Singapore. More than 440 companies from Singapore are registered in India. 2 banks, International Enterprise Singapore (IE) and Singapore Tourism Board have their offices in India. On 28 August 2017, DBS Bank India received approval of RBI to become locally incorporated wholly owned subsidiary.

High Commission organised India Singapore Entrepreneurship Bridge – InSprenuer on 5-6 January 2018 along with ASEAN- India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas. The event drew more than 650 participants, including 250 start ups and 100 investors from India and Singapore. It involved entrepreneur- investor pitching sessions, an Innovation Showcase and concluded with the launch of India-Singapore Entrepreneurship Portal on 6 January.

5S-II - Speed up connectivity: The Air Services Agreement of 1968 was revised in 2002 and 2005. With increased economic activity, an MOU on bilateral air services arrangements was signed in April 2013. Directly connected to 16 Indian cities. Latest being Madurai, connected by an Air India Express 4 days a week flight from 16 September 2017. There are now 242 weekly services (484 weekly flights) between Singapore and India. Singapore also has access to 18 additional Indian points open to ASEAN countries. Singapore Airlines holds a 49 % stake in Vistara, a JV with Tata Group. India was the fourth largest source of visitors for Singapore. Approx. 1,097,000 Indian tourists visited Singapore in 2016.

5S-III - Smart cities: Singapore has expressed interest in working with India on the Smart Cities initiative. A consortium of Singapore companies is working to develop Amaravati, new capital city of Andhra Pradesh. Singapore is also working with Government of Rajasthan in preparing Concept Plans for townships in Udaipur and Jodhpur and with the Government of Himachal Pradesh for developing an integrated township of Greater Shimla. There is also cooperation in capacity building in urban planning sector. 2 MoUs related to Urban Planning and Governance were signed during PM's visit in November 2015.

5S-IV - Skill development: Singapore is working with the Central and state Governments as well as Government organisations to establish skill development centres in various sectors. A World Class Skill Centre (WCSC) has been set in Delhi in 2013. During PM Lee's visit in October 2016, MoUs on collaboration in fields of skill development and vocational Training were signed. A Centre of Excellence for Tourism Management was inaugurated in Udaipur during PM Lee's visit. A Skill Centre for North East is being established in Guwahati.

5S-V - State focus: As mentioned above, many state governments are participating in the Smart cities & Urban Rejuvenation as well as Skills Development initiatives undertaken in collaboration with Singapore. There are regular visits of delegations from

states at various levels to Singapore. In 2017-18, Chief Ministers of Haryana, Maharashtra, Assam visited Singapore. Singapore was Partner Country for Vibrant Gujarat Summit and Resurgent Rajasthan Partnership Summit in 2015. Singapore's Minister for Trade & Industry S Iswaran has visited Andhra Pradesh several times in connection with the new capital city, Amaravati. A consortium of Singaporean companies is appointed as master developer of Amaravati, the new capital city of Andhra Pradesh.

Defence Cooperation

Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA), signed in October 2003, and the enhanced DCA signed in November 2015 during PM Modi's visit to provide an overarching framework for bilateral defence cooperation. This includes conduct of policy dialogues, working group and staff talks, exercises, training activities, exhibitions and conferences. Pursuant to the enhanced DCA, the inaugural Defence Minister Dialogue (DMD) was held on 3 June 2016 when the then Raksha Mantri Shri Manohar Parrikar visited Singapore for the 15th Shangri-La Dialogue. Defence Minister of Singapore Dr. Ng Eng Hen visited New Delhi in November for 2nd round of DMD on 29 November 2017. Exchange of visits and exercises are regularly held between armed forces of two countries.

Cultural Cooperation

Inter-governmental cooperation in culture is governed by a 1993 MOU for Cooperation in the fields of Arts, Archives and Heritage. Executive Programmes (EP) on cultural cooperation are agreed upon for specified periods, the latest for the period 2015-18 was signed during Prime Minister's visit to Singapore in November 2015. ICCR and the National University of Singapore (NUS) have signed an MOU in March 2010 establishing a short-term Chair on Indian Studies at the South Asian Studies Programme, NUS. Indian cultural activities are held regularly in Singapore by various community organizations. A number of cultural societies promote Indian classical dance and arts. Regional and community based organizations are also active in promoting language teaching, yoga and arts. Mission also sends youth delegations from Singapore under various initiatives.

Indian Community

Ethnic Indians constitute about 9.1 % or around 3.5 lakhs of the resident population of 3.9 million in Singapore. In addition, among the 1.6 million foreigners residing in Singapore, about 21 % or around 3.5 lakhs are Indian expatriates holding Indian passports, mostly serving in financial services, IT, students, construction and marine sectors. Singapore has the highest concentration of IIT and IIM alumni in any one city outside India. There are about 1.5 lakh Indian migrant workers in Singapore. Singapore, however does not feature in the 'Emigration Clearance Required' category. Tamil is one of the four official languages of Singapore. Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Bengali and Punjabi are also taught in schools. About two-thirds of the community are Tamil. Punjabis, Malayalis and Sindhis are the other major communities. Welfare and well-being of the Indian nationals, including of Indian workers feature prominently in consular responsibilities of the High Commission.

ASEAN-India Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) was held in Singapore on 6-7 January 2018 as part of commemoration of 25 years of ASEAN-India Partnership, with the theme, “Ancient Route, New Journey.” Held at iconic marina Bay Sands Convention Centre, the event attracted 5300 registrations with an average of 3000 participants at any given time at the venue. There were 16 thematic sessions covering business, technology, connectivity to culture, youth and diaspora. In addition, there were writers’ festival, cinema festival, art exhibition, Yoga corner and Ayurveda conference all showcasing ASEAN Indian diaspora talent and expertise. In the run up, competitions for youth on essays, poetry (in English, Hindi & Tamil), classical dance and music, photo competitions and online competitions around PM’s flagship initiatives were organised, for which close to 1000 entries were received.

Useful Resources

Website: www.hcisingapore.gov.in

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInSingapore>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/IndiaInSingapore>

Fortnightly E-Newsletter ‘India Focus’:

https://www.hcisingapore.gov.in/news_letter.php?nid=all

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