

India - Suriname Relations

1. Political

Political relations between India and Suriname have been consistently cordial. Persons of Indian origin (descendants of Indian indentured labour) comprise 27.4% of the population of Suriname. Due to the continuous migration of Hindustanis to Holland and other countries, the population of Hindustani community in Suriname is continuously coming down. (It used to be 37% of the total population about 20 years ago and about 50% before Independence in the early 1970s). The Hindoestanis are facing a stiff competition from the Chinese Diaspora, many of whom are recent migrants into Suriname.

After the last general elections held in May, 2010, the ruling NPS/VHP alliance lost power and the Mega Combination led by Mr. Desi Bouterse – former military ruler - formed the new government in alliance with A-Combination – a political party dominated by Maroons - and the Javian dominated People's Alliance. The new government is also very keen to improve relations with India and has expressed intent to seek India's support for various infrastructure projects under LOCs.

Suriname has generally supported India in international fora. Suriname supported India's case for a permanent seat in the United National Security Council. Suriname also supported India for non-permanent seat at UNSC.

Important Government Officials

- 1. H.E. Mr. Desire D. Bouterse - President of Suriname**
- 2. H.E. Mr. Robert L.A. Ameeralli- Vice President of Suriname**
- 3. H.E. Mr. Winston G. Lackin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Suriname.**

2. Bilateral Visits

(i) There have been many senior level bilateral visits from the Surinamese side, including President, Vice President and Speaker of the National Assembly of Suriname. However, there has been no senior level visit from the Indian side since 1988 when Vice President (Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma) visited Suriname.

(ii) Shri Anand Sharma, Minister of State for External Affairs, visited Suriname in May, 2008 in connection with the 4th Joint Commission Meeting which was held in Paramaribo on 16th May, 2008

3. Bilateral Trade

Bilateral trade between India and Suriname has been rather modest and has not reached its potential due to distance, heavy transportation costs and

competition from cheap Chinese imports. Data for the last four years is given below.

Year	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
TOTAL TRADE	12.07	14.66	17.73	13.61
%Growth	-32.04	21.45	20.97	-23.27
India's Imports	0.86	1.20	1.47	0.88
India's Exports	11.21	13.46	16.26	12.72

(Figures in US\$ Millions)

An Indian company (3-F) has signed an agreement with the government to develop a 40,000 hectare palm oil project in Suriname. The company has submitted a business plan to the government and is awaiting final clearances. If approved, the company would be investing US\$ 200 million in the project and would generate 4,000 jobs.

4. Fourth Joint Commission Meeting

An Agreement to set up a Joint Commission was signed in September, 1992 and 4 Joint Commission Meetings have been held so far. The last Joint Commission Meeting (Fourth) was held in Paramaribo on 16th May, 2008. The next JCM is due to be held in 2012.

Under JCM, a Joint Working Group for Cooperation in the field of Agriculture has also been established and details of the agenda and mutually agreeable dates for the first meeting are yet to be finalised.

5. Credit Lines

So far India has offered Four Lines of Credit to Suriname as per following details:

(a) First LOC of Rs. 50 million was given in 1992, Rs. 41.9 million was utilised by Suriname & the balance of payment was waived in 2003.

(b) Second LOC of US\$ 10 million was given in 2003 for renovation of water pumping stations, setting up of steel rolling mill and for supply of fourteen heavy hydraulic Excavator.

(c) Third LOC worth US\$ 16 million was approved for Suriname Electricity Company for setting up of a 161 KV 55 KM long power transmission line Paranam to Paramaribo by PEC and L&T and (ii) supply of bulldozers, trucks, excavators and (iii) supply of communication equipment and solar lanterns to Suriname.

(d) Fourth LOC of US \$ 10.4 million was given for the II phase of Pumping Stations Project of the Ministry of Public Works of Suriname to be executed by

M/s. Kirloskar Brothers Ltd. The project is currently held up due to delay in construction work by the Suriname side.

(e) Another LOC has been utilized among others for purchase of fire tenders for US\$ 4.3 million from M/s. BEML India, coastal equipment network for US\$ 2.946 million from M/s. BEL and purchase of 3 Chetak Helicopters for US\$ 13.4 million from M/s. HAL. Currently, procedural formalities are being worked out in connection with supply of helicopters.

(f) During the 4th JCM, MOS(AS) promised a new Government of India Credit Lines worth US \$ 30 million for the new projects to be submitted by the Government of Suriname.

(g) As a special gesture, Shri Anand Sharma also announced that India would fund and set up an IT Centre in Suriname as a gift.

6. ITEC

India is providing 25 training slots to Suriname this year which are likely to be fully utilized.

7. Cultural and Education

A Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) with Suriname was signed in March, 2003. However, most of the items of the CEP could not be implemented due to the lack of funds with the counter-part Ministries/Departments in the Government of Suriname.

Indian Cultural Centre (ICC): The Indian Cultural Centre in Paramaribo was established in 1978. It is the most active cultural establishment in Suriname and imparts teaching in Hindustani music (vocal and Tabla), Hindi, Yoga, and Kathak dances. The role of ICC in keeping the culture of Hindustanis alive has always been appreciated by Indian Diaspora and the Government of Suriname.

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