

India-The Bahamas relations

Overview

Relations between India and The Bahamas have traditionally been friendly and cordial. Being members of the Commonwealth, various meetings under its auspices such as CHOGM, CPA, etc. have provided the opportunities for meetings on the sidelines. Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of The Bahamas visited New Delhi for the CHOGM meeting and in October 1985, Late Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi visited Nassau for the CHOGM in The Bahamas. India has made a modest contribution of medicines worth US\$ 50,000/- as relief in the aftermath of devastation caused by Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. Recent exchange of visits include visit of Secretary (West) in September 2005 to The Bahamas for the Foreign Office Consultations; visit of The Bahamas Minister of Foreign Affairs and Public Service Frederick Mitchell, along with a business delegation, in January 2006 to India; and visit of MOS (PMO) Shri Prithviraj Chauhan to The Bahamas on 23-26 May 2006 for participation in the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Conference. (Frederick Mitchell accompanied wife of then Prime Minister Perry Christie of the Progressive Liberal Party, on her private visit to India in March 2006.) The Bahamas appointed an Honorary Consul (Shri Ashish Saraf) in India in October 2006. Prime Minister Hubert A. Ingraham of The Bahamas had a meeting with our Prime Minister on the sidelines of the last CHOGM meeting in Kampala in November 2007 and sought cooperation in Solar energy, technical and vocational education, Specialists' Teachers and IT-assistance. Our High Commissioner, resident in Kingston, during his visits to the Bahamas in March and November 2009 had meetings with the Prime Minister, Dy. Prime and Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Environment, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Chief Justice, the Chief of Defence Forces, Police Commissioner, President of Chambers of Commerce and other senior officials.

Political

2. The Bahamas has been generally supportive of India's concerns in the international fora, particularly with regard to situation in Pakistan.

3. In elections to various UN bodies, The Bahamas has consistently supported Indian candidatures unilaterally or reciprocally. The Bahamas supports Indian draft on Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. The Bahamas position on various trade and development related issues, is largely in sync with our position. On climate change, Bahamas as a member of the Association of Small Island States, has been demanding more stringent limits, than the other developing countries and seeking binding commitments on reduction of green gas emissions arguing that even with a cap of 1.5 degree rise in temperature, most of the Bahamas would be submerged in water.

4. The Bahamas is sensitive to India's concerns on international terrorism and supports the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism proposed by India. The Bahamas also supports Indian candidature for a Non-Permanent Seat on the UN Security Council for the year 2011-12, as well as our aspirations for Permanent Membership of the expanded Security Council as and when it takes place.

5. The Bahamas is not a member of the IPU and the Parliamentary exchanges/interactions at the CPA level being limited; there is a deficit of bilateral Parliamentary exchanges. Neither are there any Bahamian students in India, nor any Indian students in The Bahamas. Ten ITEC slots offered every year are not fully utilized. A Bahamian Foreign Service Officer attended the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats at the Foreign Service Institute in 2006. There is no Cultural Exchange Agreement and the cultural interaction is rather limited. Indian community of about 280, comprising mostly professionals, largely located in the capital Nassau, is well respected, and has integrated in The Bahamian mainstream.

Bilateral issues

6. There are no outstanding issues between India and the Bahamas. We have offered to set up an IT Centre in the Bahamas. A two member expert team from India, comprising Dr. G. Prasad Scientist, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, New Delhi, and Shri M.B. Mathur, Additional General Manager Rajasthan Electronics & Instruments Ltd. Jaipur visited The Bahamas from 18th July 25th July 2010 for the feasibility study of setting up a solar Energy Centre in the Bahamas under the bilateral cooperation between India and the Bahamas, and had fruitful meetings with Senior Government Officials in the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Housing, Bahamas Electricity Corporation etc., in addition to the various site visits. A detailed report of the feasibility study is awaited. We have recently initialed 'Tax Information Exchange Agreement', which is expected to be formally signed in the near future.

Economic Commercial

7. During the visit of The Bahamas Minister for Foreign, to India in January 2006, two agreements - an omnibus 'Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation' between the two Governments and an 'Agreement on the Establishment of Joint Business Council between FICCI and The Bahamas Chamber of Commerce' were signed.

Bilateral Trade

8. Small size of the market, and lack of direct connectivity with India has gravitated the local business community in the Bahamas to import products of Indian origin through their network in the US because of close proximity and economical and efficient shipping arrangements. Besides the Bahamian economy's contraction in the aftermath of recent global financial crisis which

among others also slowed down the in-flow of tourism into the Bahamas, also impacted on the volume of the bilateral trade.

9. Bilateral trade between India and Bahamas has been fluctuating depending on import/export of a particular item in a particular year as manifested by the relevant figures for the last four years.

US\$ mn.

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
India's exports to Bahamas	5.55	9.35	61.15	17.56
India's imports from Bahamas	45.40	0.21	12.11	0.24

(Source : Department of Commerce Export Import Data Bank)

10. IT products/services, pharmaceuticals, manufactured goods and auto parts are the major areas of India's export interests. Small size of Indian community and small size of its market makes it for more efficient and economical for The Bahamas to import products of Indian origin largely from the US, and to a smaller extent from the UK.

11. The State Bank of India and the Bank of Baroda have their resident branches in the capital Nassau.

October 2010