

India-Jamaica relations

Overview

India and Jamaica have traditionally enjoyed cordial and friendly relations based on common linkages of history, Parliamentary democracy, 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. 70,000 strong Indian diaspora now constitutes over to 2-3% of the Jamaican population. They have assimilated well in the Jamaican society – fondly described as ‘genetically embedded and integrated in the Jamaican society,’ by the 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. 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 accelerated economic growth, eradication of poverty, improvement in the quality of life of our 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 our 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 our policy space. Jamaica has an Honorary Consul in India and intends to open a Resident Mission in New Delhi.

Political

2. 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. The recent 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 Valayar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs to Jamaica in June 2007. Our Prime Minister had a brief meeting with the

Prime Minister Mr. Orette Bruce Golding of Jamaica on the sidelines of the UNGA on 25 Sept' 2008 in New York.

3. Three rounds of Foreign Office Level Consultations have been held, two in Kingston in 2001 and 2005, and one in New Delhi in 2007. While Jamaica is a member of the IPU and the CPA, they have, of late, not been attending these meetings including the CPA meeting hosted by India due to financial constraints.

4. Jamaica has consistently supported Indian candidatures in elections to various UN bodies and other multilateral organizations. Jamaica has shared its concern at the continued terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India, and offered support to our draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism. It continues to advocate a proper international mechanism to address the menace of terrorism. Both Prime Minister Bruce Golding and Deputy PM and Foreign Minister Dr. Kenneth Baugh strongly condemned the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai and shared their outrage, sadness, sympathy, condolences and solidarity with us.. Jamaica has given strong indications of their support to our candidature for a Non-Permanent Seat on the UNSC for 2011-12. It has also indicated its support for our aspirations for Permanent Membership of the expanded UN Security Council, as and when it happens.

Economic and Commercial

5. As part of our efforts to strengthen the bilateral cooperation, an IT Centre has been established in Kingston with under the ITEC programme. It became operational in February 2009. Another MOU between the Scientific Research Council of Jamaica, and the CSIR, on cooperation in the field of food research, and technology has been signed in January 2010. India offers 15 slots annually to Jamaica under the ITEC programme. So far, around 170 Jamaicans have been trained in various institutions in India. We have given 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, and granted a Line of Credit (LOC) worth US\$ 7.5 million for import of water pumps from India for irrigational purposes.

6. In pursuance of an offer made by the then Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Anand Sharma, during his visit to Jamaica, in February 2007, an amount of US\$3,00,000/- (US Dollars three lakhs only) was sanctioned by the Government of India, as a humanitarian assistance to the Government of Jamaica for procurement of medicines and medical equipment for the Bustamante Hospital for Children in Kingston Jamaica. During a presentation ceremony on 11th August 2010 at the office of the Prime Minister, Hon. Bruce Golding, the High Commissioner, Shri Mohinder S. Grover, handed over the cheque of US\$3,00,000/- on behalf of the Government of India to the Prime Minister of Jamaica.

7. Trade between India and Jamaica has been restricted due to distances involved, lack of competitive shipping, small size of Jamaican market, and preferential arrangements for imports from the Caribbean common market. Major items of India's exports to Jamaica are motor parts, textiles, readymade

garments, cotton, manmade fibers, industrial machinery, plastic and linoleum products, imitation jewellery, pharmaceutical products and tobacco. Indian imports from Jamaica mainly consist of steel scrap and other miscellaneous products. Jamaica accounts for a negligible share in India's foreign trade. Jamaica's import from India during 2008 amounted to US\$ 24.163 m and Jamaica's exports to India in 2008 were US\$ 1.468mn.

8. 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 has neither any Resident Mission nor any trade representation in India. 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.

9. Jamaican economy has been facing severe crisis due to declining growth rates, depleting foreign exchange reserves, depreciating currency, high inflation, rising fiscal deficit, mounting debts and rising unemployment, compounded by fragile political balance, explosive crime rate and social tensions. Jamaica is seeking a stand by arrangement with IMF for US\$ 1.20 billion to avoid default on its debt-service obligations. Despite having secured the IMF Standby Arrangement for US\$1.27bn. and negotiated successfully the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme, the economy continues to remain fragile and highly vulnerable. This affects potential and possibilities for bilateral engagement.

Culture

10. ICCR's sponsored cultural troupes have visited Jamaica a few times. '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. There are four main Indian Associations in Kingston, and one each in Ocho Rios and Montego Bay. There are two Hindu religious groups called 'Sanatan Dharma Mandir' and 'Prema Satsangh' in Kingston.

Sports Interaction

11. A 25-member Indian Cricket Team led by Capt. M.S. Dhoni and officials played two ODI matches in Kingston in June 2009. The team was warmly welcomed by the cricket lovers.

Indian Diaspora

12. The Indian Diaspora, of about 70,000 Jamaican citizens of Indian origin, constituting around 2.3% 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 and integrated

themselves with the Jamaican mainstream. The duty free business in Jamaica is monopolized by the Sindhi community (about 250 families); along with a major share of jewelry, electronics and household 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. Two persons of Indian origin occupied high political position. Another has been conferred with Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award recently.

October 2010