

India – Fiji Bilateral Relations

Historical Perspective

India's links with Fiji commenced in 1879 when Indian laborers were brought here under indenture system to work on sugarcane plantations. Between 1879 and 1916 around 60,553 Indians were brought to Fiji. Beginning with early 20th century, Indian traders and others also started arriving in Fiji. In 1920, the indenture system was abolished. Currently, of the 886,416 population (as of 1 March 2017), over one-third are Persons of Indian origin.

Prior to Fiji's independence in 1970, India had a Commissioner since 1948 to look after the interests of people of Indian origin. It was later upgraded to High Commissioner after independence.

Fiji's Prime Minister Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara visited India in 1971 and Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Fiji in 1981.

Visit of Prime Minister of India

The visit by Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, to Fiji on 19 November 2014 was a watershed moment not only for India-Fiji relations but also for India's relations with all the Pacific Island Countries. During the visit three MoUs were signed with Fiji: (i) MoU for Extending a Line of Credit for Establishing a Co-Generation Plant in Fiji, (ii) MoU on Cooperation in the field of training of diplomats, and (iii) MoU on the Earmarking of Land for their Diplomatic Missions in the respective Capitals.

FIPIC-I: During the November 2014 visit to Fiji, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India also hosted the First Summit of the 'Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC-I)' in Suva (Fiji) during the visit on 19 November 2014 with the participation of 14 Pacific Island Countries. India announced various development assistance initiatives during the Summit and other cooperation projects in various fields including, Climate Change, trade, economy, telemedicine and tele-education, IT, Grants for community development projects, human resource development and deputation of experts from India, etc.

FIPIC-II: As a follow-up of the historic first FIPIC Conference in 2014, India organized the second FIPIC at Jaipur, which was hosted by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Building upon the success of the first FIPIC, India announced major initiatives to boost cooperation with the 14 Pacific Island countries. Fijian delegation, led by Prime Minister Hon'ble Josia Vorenqe Bainimarama, attended the Summit.

India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPISDC):

Government of India organized the India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPISDC) which was held at Grand Pacific Hotel, Suva, Fiji on 25-26 May 2017. Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. (Dr.) V.K.Singh (Retd.) hosted the event. The Conference saw the participation of several high profile leaders from the 14 Pacific Island Countries. India signed MoUs for setting up of Centers of Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) with Fiji, Cook Islands, Nauru, Samoa and Niue. India and Fiji also signed three MOUs for 'Co-operation in Youth Development', 'Cooperation between Broadcasting Agencies', 'Cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy'. Prasar Bharati of India also gifted programmatic content on India for telecast to all the Pacific Island Countries. India had provided US\$ 1mn. towards Climate Change assistance to Fiji's COP23 Presidency.

International Solar Alliance: Fiji has become one of the first Founding Members of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) – a joint initiative of the Governments of India and France to promote solar energy. PM Bainimarama participated in the Founding Conference of the ISA held in New Delhi on 11 March 2018.

Development Assistance: Government of India is a committed development partner of Fiji. Indian assistance extends to sectors such as capacity building through human resource development and training under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programmes.

Every year, hundreds of ITEC slots are made available to Fijian nationals. Many others, benefit from training opportunities and for pursuing higher education in India every year under various scholarships offered by Ministry of AYUSH of India as well as by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR).

India also provides Humanitarian and Disaster Relief assistance from time to time whenever the need arises. One such example in recent past was in February 2016 when Tropical Cyclone Winston struck Fiji. India not only supplied a plane-load of relief assistance which arrived in Fiji within a week of the Cyclone striking in Fiji but also provided follow-up assistance by sponsoring renovation of twenty schools in Fiji under Government of Fiji's Adopt a School Programme. India also donated five tons of vegetable seeds and contributed One Million US Dollars to the Fijian Prime Minister's Relief Fund. India has also been supporting the Fijian SME Sector through grant assistance and the Fijian Sugar Industry through direct financial assistance and also through training programmes. India has also been supporting Fijian General Elections of 2014 and 2018 by gifting indelible ink as well as vehicles to the Fijian Elections Office. India also participated in the Fijian General Elections 2014 and 2018 as a co-Chair of the Multinational Observers Group (MOG) alongside Australia and Indonesia.

Commercial and Economic Relations

Trade statistics apparently do not project realistically the trade happening through third countries/places such as Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, etc.

Bilateral Trade:

Year	Exports to India	Import from India	Trade Imbalance
2012-2013	1.38	41.01	39.69
2013-2014	2.0	48.74	46.74
2014-2015	1.8	49.75	47.95
2015-2016	0.37	44.15	43.78
2016-2017	0.60	52.70	42.92
2017-2018	0.49	54.24	53.75

(Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India) in US\$ Millions

Banking: MoU on Supervisory Cooperation and Exchange of Supervisory Information between the Reserve Bank of India and the Reserve Bank of Fiji was signed in March 2013.

Indian Diaspora : The number of Indians living in Fiji is about 1400, mostly engaged in services like IT, management, finance, banking, educational, medical, hotel industry etc. As for the persons of Indian descent in Fiji, the journey of Girmity (contract for indentured labourers) started in Fiji in 1879 and ended in 1920. Indian origin population constitutes over one-third of the total population of 884,887 (Census - Sept 2017). Hindi is widely spoken and is the third Official language in Fiji (English and iTaukei are two other languages). There are four radio stations in Fiji named Radio Fiji2, Radio Sargam, Navtarang and Radio Mirchi that broadcast round the clock Hindi programmes. The Indo-Fijian organizations run several schools and colleges, with Government support. There are over 2,000 Ramayana Mandalies, which do Bhajana / Kirtana on regular basis in Fiji. Indian Diapsora celebrates Ramlila, Diwali, Holi, Chat puja, Ganesh festival, Durga puja, Eid, Rath Yatra, Christmas, etc.

Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) / Pravasi Bhartiya Samman (PBS): PBS awardees from Fiji are: (i) Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, former PM (2004); (ii) Golfer Mr. Vijay Singh (2005); (iii) Late Sir Moti Tika Ram, former Supreme Court Judge (2007), (iv) Mr. Y.P. Reddy, Reddy Group Chairman and Chairman, (v) Girmity Council (2010), (vii) RamKrishna Mission (2014) (viii) Mr Vinod Patel, businessman got award for social service in (2017). During PBD2017, 42 Indo-Fijians attended KIP event (out of total 160 KIP participants). In the Know India Programmes (KIP) participation of Fijian youth is excellent (41st KIP-06; 42nd KIP-09; 43rd-12; 44th-12; 45th-05, 46th-09; 47th-05; 48th-10 Till mid-November 2018).

Public Sector Undertakings of India in Fiji: Four Government of India undertakings, viz, New India Assurance Company Ltd. (since 1954), Life Insurance Corporation of India (since 1956), Bank of Baroda (since 1961), are functioning in Fiji; Water and Power Consultancy Services Ltd (Since 2015)

Cultural Relations: An Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) in Fiji was established by GOI in 1972 (which was first ever such centre abroad). It has been renamed as 'Swami Vivekanand Cultural Centre (SVCC) in May 2018. SVCC provides classes in seven streams: Indian classical music (Karnataki, Tabla, Harmonium) and dance (Bharatnatyam, Kathak), Hindi language and Yoga. SVCC regularly organizes cultural evenings, exhibitions, film shows, workshops and discussions.

Namaste Pacifika- Festival of India: To mark the 70th anniversary of India's Independence, High Commission of India organized a six-month long Festival of India named, 'Namaste Pacifika' from October 2017 to March 2018. The Festival, which was inaugurated by His Excellency the President of Fiji on 28 October 2017 in Suva saw participation of over 125 artistes from India who toured Fiji and the six other Pacific Island Countries of the jurisdiction of this High Commission namely, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu and performed in over 65 events altogether. Festival showcased something from every region of the country and also featured a Food Festival of India.

International Day of Yoga: Since its inaugural event in 2015, the International Day of Yoga is celebrated with much enthusiasm and fervour every year in Fiji with participation from all walks of life and the event has been honoured by the presence of some of the highest authorities of the country, including His Excellency the President of the Republic.

Useful Resources:

High Commission of India, Suva website:<http://www.indiainfiji.gov.in>

High Commission of India, Suva Facebook page: **India in Fiji**

Twitter: https://twitter.com/HCI_Suva;

YouTube Channel: India in Fiji

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJYT5H3NwEB10MdiXizST2g>

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