

INDIA - TRINIDAD & TOBAGO - BILATERAL RELATIONS

Historical Perspective: The relationship between India and Trinidad & Tobago started on 30 May 1845, when the first ship 'Fatel Razack' carrying 225 indentured workers from India reached the shores of Trinidad, then a British colony. Their numbers increased with subsequent arrival of more ships from India. The descendents of those workers, now in their fifth generation, form nearly 42% of the population and are part and parcel of the economic, political and social fabric of the country. They have maintained their traditional Indian cultural and religious customs. The presence of a substantial population of Indian origin (the largest ethnic group) has contributed greatly to bilateral relations between the two countries.

Exchange of Visits:

From India:

- A delegation from Ministry of Tourism visited T&T from 3-6 June, 2011.
- In May 2011, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs and Civil Aviation Shri Vayalar Ravi visited T&T (29 May–1 June) to participate in the Indian Arrival Day celebrations and inaugurate a 2 Day Conference on the Diaspora in the Caribbean.
- In November 2009, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh led a high level delegation for CHOGM Summit
- In November 2009, External Affairs Minister Shri S.M. Krishna attended Pre-CHOGM Foreign Ministers Meeting and CHOGM Summit meeting. Commonwealth Games Organising Committee Chairman Sh. Suresh Kalmadi also visited during CHOGM and gave a presentation on Delhi CWG, 2010.
- In May, 2007, Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs Shri Vayalar Ravi visited to participate in the Indian Arrival Day celebrations.
- In November 2006, Vice President Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat visited T&T
- In May 2005, Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee led a Parliamentary delegation to T&T

From T&T:

- Minister of Tourism Dr. Rupert Griffith led a Tourism Promotion Mission to India from 11-22 January 2011. The Mission visited four cities: Ahmedabad, Mumbai, New Delhi and Bangalore. During the visit the Mission also participated in the 5th Vibrant Gujarat Global Investors' Summit.
- **Delhi Commonwealth Games:** With the active participation of the Mission in publicizing Commonwealth Games 2010, T&T CWG Federation sent a contingent of 143 sport persons, coaches and managers.
- President of the Senate Danny Montano led a 3-member Parliamentary delegation to Delhi to attend a Commonwealth Parliamentary meeting in January 2010.
- Minister of Trade & Industry Mariano Browne visited India in September 2009 to attend WTO Ministerial Meeting at the invitation of Commerce Minister Sh. Anand Sharma
- A Parliamentary delegation led by Speaker of the House of Representatives Barendra Sinanan visited India in 2007. The delegation included President of the Senate Dr. Linda Baboolal and Leader of Opposition Kamla Persad Bissessar

- Minister of Trade and Industry Kenneth Valley visited India in March, 2007 at the head of a large business delegation. BIPPA was signed during the visit

Existing Agreements and MOUs: While a few agreements/MOUs were signed between India and T&T as far back as in 1985, viz. Cooperation in Science and Technology signed in 1985, and Cultural Cooperation Agreement signed in 1987, a number of agreements were signed during former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday's visit to India in January 1997. These were in the fields of technical cooperation, trade (according MNF status for each other's products), agriculture, research and education; development of small scale industries in T&T besides a few MOUs on Foreign Office Consultations, NSIC and Small Business Development Company of Trinidad and between CII and T&T Chamber of Industry and Commerce, etc. During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajapayee's visit to T&T, the two countries signed a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and a MOU for Cooperation in Low Cost Housing in 1999. An Inter-Governmental Commission Agreement on Political, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation was signed between India and T&T in February 2003. Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA) was signed in 2007. A MoU was signed between the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) and the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) in May 2009.

Joint Commission Meeting (JCM):

The coming into power of the new government headed by Prime Minister Kamla Persad Bissessar, a person of Indian origin (in May 2010), has opened a new chapter in the bilateral relations between India and T&T. A number of areas for cooperation have been identified. Discussions are on for formulation of a draft agenda for holding of the first meeting of JCM which is likely to be held in end 2011 or early 2012.

Participation in PBD and PBSAs:

- PM Kamla Persad Bissessar has been invited to attend PBD 2012 in Jaipur as Chief Guest. KPB has accepted the invitation.
- Senior Minister in the PM's office Dr. Lenny Saith attended PBD 10 in Delhi and received Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award [PBSA] on 9 Jan 10.
- In 2008 PBD, National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC) was awarded PBSA. NCIC President Deokinanan Sharma received PBSA on NCIC's behalf.
- Former Prime Minister Basdeo Panday attended PBD as official delegate in 2005 (Mumbai) and in 2008(Delhi). In 2005, he received the PBSA.
- In January 2006, Minister of Petroleum Dr. Lenny Saith visited India as official delegate to take part in the PBD celebrations in India (Hyderabad).

Consular:

Visa Waiver for Indian nationals: In a landmark decision the PP Government of Trinidad & Tobago waived visa requirement for Indian nationals visiting T&T for tourism and business for up to 90 days in end 2010. The unilateral decision came after persistent persuasion with the local government about problems faced by Indian nationals in getting Visa to enter T&T.

Recent Events:

Business Forum

As part of a 2-day Diaspora event, the High Commission of India in conjunction with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, New Delhi organized a Business Forum on 31 May. The theme of the event was 'Building a new partnership between India and the Caribbean: Role of Diaspora' The Business Forum was jointly inaugurated by Shri Vayalar Ravi, Hon'ble Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs & Civil Aviation and Mr. Stephen Cadiz, Hon. Minister of Trade & Industry, T&T. Shri Ravi underlined the role of Diaspora in building partnerships, rekindling old friendships and strengthening relationships. Mr. Cadiz talked of the strength of T&T economy i.e. strong banking system, stable political climate and excellent opportunities as the best place for investment in the Western Hemisphere. He made mention of incentives to businessmen in terms of duties on imports and 100% ownership of business/establishments. The T&T Govt is contemplating changes in the Free Zones Acts to bring in easier business environment. He also assured Government of T&T taking steps to curb the decline in the India-T&T trade figures and is considering attending India International Trade Fair in Nov 2011.

Hon'ble Prime Minister of Trinidad & Tobago, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar graced the occasion and termed the holding of the Business Forum as 'very opportune' and hoped that it would nurture sustainable business relationships. Delivering the feature address, the PM called for greater South-South Cooperation. and asked for identifying further areas of cooperation in ICT, pharmaceuticals, hospitals, medical professionals, sports, agricultural/food processing, film production, printing and production, shipping and yachting. PM also mentioned the need to develop wellness tourism in T&T for which expected the Indian Ayurvedic system could participate. She presented T&T as an attractive destination for such resources as asphalt, teak wood, world class financial institutions and a stable democracy.

HC made mention about the initiatives taken by the High Commission in furthering trade links between the two countries viz., the setting up of India Trinidad & Tobago Chamber of Commerce in October 2009 and the Business Facilitation Centre at the High Commission premises; facilitating CII and OIFC delegations in organizing a number of business meetings and organizing of several seminars to provide information on various sectors of Indian and T&T economies on how to set-up/to do business in India and T&T. The Business Forum was co-sponsored by Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC), Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), the India-T&T Chamber of Industry & Commerce (ITTCIC), GOPIO Trinidad & Tobago Chapter.

Academic Concerence:

To commemorate the 166th Anniversary of the arrival of Indentured labourers from India to T&T, High Commission of India and Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (UWI) and Partnership with the Global Organisation of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) organized a 2-day Academic Conference on 31 May to 1 June on 'Building a New Partnership between India and Caribbean: The Role of Diaspora'. Academics from T&T and the Caribbean region of Guyana, French Guyana, Belize, Suriname, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, Barbados, etc. presented their papers on the various themes of the Conference. HC opened the Conference and welcomed the gathering. Hon'ble MOIA & Civil Aviation Shri Vayalar Ravi gave the Feature Address and Hon'ble Minister of Foreign Affairs of T&T Surujrattan Rambachan also addressed the gathering.

Painting Exhibition:

The High Commission in collaboration with Ms. Leela Gujadar Sarup organized an exhibition of paintings at Divali Nagar in collaboration with the National Council of Indian Culture.

Indian Food Festival:

An Indian Food Festival was organized in Port of Spain from June 01-08, 2011 at the Hilton Hotel. The Ministry of Tourism sponsored the visit of two Chefs from India for the Indian Food Festival, Mr Radhe Bihari from Hotel Samrat specializing in North Indian Cuisine and Mr Girishkumar Palliyal Ayichthu from The Ashok Hotel specializing in South Indian Cuisine.

Indian Fashion Show

The High Commission's Ladies Group organized an Indian Fashion Show on 2 June 2011 at the Hilton Hotel which was a great success.

Visit of Indian Cricket Team

High Commissioner hosted a Reception on 3 June 2011 for the Indian Cricket team on touring to play a series of matches with the West Indies.

Joint Tourism Evening

High Commission and Ministry of Tourism of T&T organized a Joint Tourism Promotion Evening on 5 June at the Hilton Hotel. Dr. Rupert Griffith, Hon'ble Minister for Tourism of T&T welcomed the Indian Delegation and expressed interest in collaboration with India in medical and wellness tourism and mentioned incentives being given by his govt in tourism sector. HC expressed thanks for inviting the Indian Minister for Tourism and stated that this was a follow-up to the Minister Griffith's visit to India. Bilateral discussions centred on promotion of relations in tourism and related sectors. On the visa waiver issue, HC responded by saying that the Indian Govt had started 'Visa on Arrival' to citizens of some select countries and T&T could be included in that list. Presentations on Tourism and Investment opportunities in India were made by JS(Tourism) who extended an invitation to Minister Griffith to attend PATA being held in India on 6-9 September 2011.

The University of the West Indies (UWI) initiated a 'Diplomatic Dialogue' series with resident Missions. On 25 November 2010, High Commissioner Malay Mishra was invited to open the series where he gave a presentation on Contemporary India and India's Foreign Policy: Issues and Challenges. His presentation along with that of Prof. Kapil Kumar, Chair of Contemporary Studies in UWI, who spoke on 'India: Continuity and Change' led to an interesting Q&A session. HC also gave an address on 'India: An Overview' at the University of Trinidad and Tobago as part of their Public Policy Lecture series on 27 January 2011.

Economic/ITEC:

Assistance under ITEC: India offers 30 ITEC training slots annually for T&T nationals for training in various courses in Indian institutions. These mostly relate to IT and related fields; Standardization and Quality Assurance, Manpower Research and HRD skills. To ensure optimum utilization, these were re-allotted and five of these have now been earmarked for the sister island of Tobago. T&T Government has conveyed request for Indian experts under ITEC in areas of IT and Healthcare. IT Audit Specialist Dr. C.A. Bodh arrived in Port of Spain on 27 April 2011 for a period of 6 months to take up his duties at the Auditor General Deptt. of T&T under the ITEC Programme. India has forwarded the Bio-data of 5 Scientists

for consideration by the Govt. of T&T in the control of Red Mite Disease in Coconut trees. These have been vetted and selection of a suitable Scientist has been forwarded to MEA for consideration.

Trade & Commercial: During 2008-09 Indian exports to TT increased to US\$329.25 million while T&T exports amounted to US\$93.33 million. Pharmaceuticals, Ayurvedic & herbal products, readymade garments and accessories, food stuff including spices, auto spare parts, sports goods and consumer goods have been areas for Indian exports, T&T's exports to India mainly constitute LNG and other petrochemical products. However, bilateral trade considerably declined during 2009-10 on account of the global economic crisis to US\$206.83. Bilateral trade during 2010-2011 (April to September) stood at US\$94.66 as compared to US\$145.10 for the same period of 2009-2010.

i) **India Trade Expo:** The Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) in partnership with India-T&T Chamber of Industry and Commerce organized an India Trade Exposition from 21-31 May 2010 at the Centre of Excellence coinciding with Indian Arrival Day. Indian companies displayed their merchandise ranged from garments, jewellery, handicrafts, household goods, furniture and object d'arts etc. at the Trade Expo.

ii) **New India Assurance Company:** Mr Madhuswamy Ramadoss, Chairman, New India Assurance, accompanied by Mr Tarun Bajaj, Joint Secretary, Banking & Insurance visited T&T in September and turned the sod for construction of its new building which will serve as the company's regional headquarters.

iii) **Visit of an Energy Delegation:** A 3-member delegation from GAIL and Petronet LNG visited T&T from 9-11 November 2010. The delegation held a series of meetings with various stakeholders to enhance trade relations between India and T&T in the field of energy as well as to explore opportunities for investments. This was followed by two more Energy delegations from India.

iv) **Dr. V. Kumar**, Senior Horticulture Scientist at the National Research Centre for Banana, Tamil Nadu paid a short visit to T&T from 21-24 January 2011 on his way back from the Commonwealth of Dominica to India. During the visit he made a presentation on Horticulture at a seminar hosted by the Caribbean Agricultural Research & Development Institute (CARDI).

v) High Commission hosted a one-day Business Seminar on 23 March 2011 titled 'Why India: Building an India-Trinidad & Tobago Trade & Investment Partnership'. In his welcome address High Commissioner spoke about various opportunities that existed for investment. Minister of Trade & Industry Stephen Cadiz also addressed the gathering whilst Minister of Tourism Rupert Griffith delivered the feature address on 'India-Trinidad & Tobago: Outlook for Tourism'. A wide cross-section of Industry leaders also made their presentation on trade and investment prospects between the two countries.

vi) A 2-member technical delegation from NSIC visited Trinidad and held bilateral talks with the Ministry of Labour & SME Industries for the setting up of Incubation Centres and for providing Consultancy services to the Govt. of T&T. The delegation also visited Tobago for further bilateral discussions with the Tobago House of Assembly.

Culture:

- i) A 14-member dance and music troupe from Goa sponsored by ICCR was hosted by the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism for a 5-day visit in the context of India's Independence Day celebration. The troupe's performance held in several parts of the country were applauded by one and all.
- ii) An ICCR sponsored 15 member Bhangra and Giddah dance group visited Trinidad and Tobago from 29 May to 9 June for participation in Indian Arrival Day celebrations held throughout Trinidad and for performances from 1-8 June at the Indian Food Festival held at the Hilton Hotel.
- iii) An ICCR sponsored 24-Member Bollywood dance group led by Ms. Shubhra Bhardwaj visited Trinidad from 23 to 31 March, 2011. During the visit, the group gave performances titled 'Ticket to Bollywood' which were well appreciated.
- iv) A 10-member Mayurbhanj Chhau group led by Shri Kartikeswar Rana from Orissa visited Trinidad from 13-21 March 2010 and gave performances throughout Trinidad for the Holi festival. The group also performed at MGICC's celebration of Holi on 20 March.
- v) In commemoration of the 61st anniversary of India's Republic Day, the High Commission of India and the MGICC held a week-long Indian Folk Art Exhibition depicting Madhubani Paintings by visiting eminent Madhubani artist Ms. Bharati Dayal and Tribal Art by Mrs. Gargi Kaul Mishra. The Exhibition was inaugurated by Mrs. Nela Khan, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism on Monday, 17 January 2011.
- vi) On the eve of Republic Day of India, the MGICC organized a dance and music recital by the artistes of India Alumni Association at a Reception hosted by High Commissioner, at India House.
- vii) **Convocation Ceremony and Cultural Programme:** MGICC celebrated the International Scholars Day in commemoration of the Birth Anniversary of Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Founder President of ICCR, with a Convocation Ceremony and Cultural Programme on 12 November 2010.
- viii) **Indian Film Festival:** To commemorate 75 years of Indian Films in Trinidad and Tobago, the High Commission hosted the first ever Indian Film Festival and Exhibition on Indian Cinema in T&T from 17-23 November 2010 in Trinidad and Tobago.
- ix) **Qawwali Group:** A 7-Member Qawwali group led by Saadat Hussain Khan sponsored by ICCR visited Trinidad and Tobago from 20-27 October 2010. The Anjuman Sunnat-ul- Jamaat Association(ASJA) hosted the group which gave a number of performances throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

- x) **Visit of Gujarati Group:** A 12- Member Gujarati Group "Bhavi, Bahrupi and Acrobatic" led by Shri Joravarsinh Jadav visited T&T from 29 October-10 November. The group gave several performances throughout T&T and also at Divali Nagar which organized 10 days celebrations leading up to Divali.
- xi) **Kala Ramnath's concerts:** Renowned Violinist Ms. Kala Ramnath visited Trinidad from 6-16 August, 2010. The visit was organised by the High Commission. Ms Ramnath gave two concerts, one at Queen's Hall on 7 August and at the Centre of Excellence on 13 August.
- xii) **Cine Club:** MGICC in collaboration with the University of West Indies(UWI) set up a Cine Club to screen popular Indian movies. The Club was inaugurated with screening of the film "Chak de India" at Gaston Court, Chaguanas on 5 June 2010.
- xiii) **Indian Arrival Day (IAD) Celebrations:** A 5-member ICCR classical *Dhrupad Sangeet* group of Gundecha Brothers and 10-member Rajasthani Folk dance) visited T&T to participate in the 2010 IAD celebrations. The performance of the Rajasthani Folk dance, organised by the National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC) at Divali Nagar was attended by the new Prime Minister Mrs. Kamla Persad Bissessar who addressed the gathering.
- xiv) **Phagwa celebration** A 10-member Charkula dance Group from Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh sponsored by ICCR visited Trinidad and Tobago and accredited countries of Grenada and Montserrat and other Caribbean countries to participate in the Holi Festival in March 2010.

Hindi Day celebrations and other events:

- i) Renowned mathematics genius Ms Shakuntala Devi visited Trinidad in April where she gave a series of public lectures titled 'Mathematics Bonanza'.
- ii) To mark the 63rd anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi's Martyrdom, the High Commission of India and MGICC in collaboration with National Library and Information Systems (NALIS) screened the National Award winning film "Gandhi My Father" at NALIS, Port of Spain.
- iii) **Martyrdom Day observed:** High Commission observed the 63rd anniversary of Gandhiji's Martyrdom Day on 30 January 2011. A two minute silence was observed in memory of those who gave their lives in the struggle for India's freedom before floral tributes were paid at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Gandhi Square. This was followed by singing of bhajans by children and teachers of MGICC. In the evening, a memorial service was also held at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Harris Promenade in San Fernando.
- iv) **World Hindi Day:** The Mission celebrated World Hindi Day on 10 January 2011. Prime Minister's World Hindi Day Message was read out on the occasion and gifts in the form of Hindi books, dictionaries and CDs of '*Mera Bharat Mahan*' were given out to socio cultural organisations who are working in promotion of Hindi.

- v) Grants-in-Aid worth TT\$ 14,000/- each was given to 5 socio-cultural organizations - Indian Alumni Association, Islamic Relief Centre, Bhartiya Vidya Sansthan, Sangeet Mahavidyalya and Gandhi Sewa Sangh.
- vi) **Hindi & ITEC Day Celebrations:** Hindi and ITEC Day was celebrated on 15 September 2010 at India House. A number of socio-cultural organizations involved in teaching and promoting Hindi language participated in the celebration.
- vii) **Gandhi Memorial Lecture:** The Annual Gandhi Memorial Lecture was organized in collaboration with the University of the West Indies on 1 October 2010. The feature address was delivered by Gandhian scholar Shri R.P Jain who spoke on "Gandhi's Legacy of Ahimsa & Compassion".
- viii) **141st Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi:** High Commission of India in collaboration with the Inter Religious Organisation (IRO) commemorated "Gandhi Jayanti", the 141st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and the United Nations (UN) International Day of Non-Violence with an interfaith service in Gandhi Square on 2 October 2010. Later in the day a floral tribute was organised in collaboration with the Gandhi Seva Sangh at the Gandhi Statue in San Fernando.
- ix) **International Ayurveda Conference:** A 2-member delegation from the Department of AYUSH visited Trinidad from 1-7 August 2010 to take part in the first ever International Ayurveda Conference & Exhibition held in T&T. The event was held on 3 August by this Mission in collaboration with the University of the West.

Major Indian Business Companies in T&T:

- i) **Bank of Baroda:** The Bank of Baroda opened its first branch in October 2007 in Port of Spain and has since consistently grown. The Bank opened two more branches on 10 July 2009, one each in San Fernando and Chaguanas, the energy and commercial cities respectively of T&T.
- ii) **New India Assurance Company:** The company has been in existence for over fifty years in Trinidad with branches in several other Caribbean countries. The company during the last financial year reported gross revenue increase by 22.72 percent.
- iii) **Arcelor Mittal Steel Plant:** One of the oldest Steel plants acquired by L.N. Mittal in the early 1980s, located in the Industrial Zone of Point Lisas in South Western Trinidad has been passing through fall in demand for Steel due to global economic downturn. Consequently the plant had to retrench staff and bring down production. Presently the Plant has shown growth and is relatively down-turning production.

Diaspora and Indian Cultural Heritage: PIOs which constitute around 42% of the total population and whose ancestors were brought in as indentured workers to work on sugarcane plantations, have zealously preserved Indian values, traditions, culture & religion. PIOs occupy important positions in business, industry and academia. Mr. Basdeo Panday, a PIO, was PM from 1995 to 2001. He received the PBSA in PBD 2005. V.S. Naipaul, recipient of Nobel Prize for Literature is another Trinidadian of Indian descent. The National Council of Indian Culture (NCIC), a premier local cultural body involved in the celebration of various Indian cultural activities in T&T was awarded the PBSA at the 2008 PBD. Dr. Lenny Saith, Senior Minister in the PM's office received the

PBSA in PBD '10. KPB became the first woman PM of T&T on 24 May 2010 and the only woman HoG in the diaspora. There is a small NRI community of about 1000 families comprising doctors, businessmen, academics and other professionals.

Cultural Centre:

- i) **MGICC:** The Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Cultural Cooperation (MGICC), the cultural wing of HCI has facilities for teaching Indian classical dance (*presently teaching bharatnatyam*), music (vocal) and *tabla* for which ICCR sends teachers on deputation. The Centre also conducts Hindi classes. Two Chairs at the University of West Indies for Contemporary Indian Studies and Hindi are maintained by ICCR. Besides, cultural troupes regularly visit T&T during Indian Arrival Day, Diwali and other celebrations.
- ii) **MGICC Construction Project:** The construction of the project after considerable delay has been revived and is now set to take off.

TOBAGO:

The High Commission has involved the sister island of Tobago in its bilateral cooperation framework by extending assistance under ITEC, and to explore cooperation on several development projects in Tobago. There is a substantial potential in Tobago in many areas of development such as ICT, SMEs, tourism and business investments for which Indian collaboration has been sought. The FIEO/CII and SME delegations which visited T&T also visited the island of Tobago to explore possible Indian investment and cooperation for various areas of development. Mission has also established an Outreach Centre of MGICC, and some of the ICCR-sponsored cultural troupes who have visited Trinidad have also given cultural performances in Tobago.

Tobago House of Assembly (THA) business delegation visited India as part of 3-nation tour: The first-ever business delegation from the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) led by Secretary of Finance & Enterprise Development Dr. Anselm London was on a two-week mission to China, Japan and India to seek business opportunities from 7 to 21 April. The Mission sought business and investment opportunities for joint venture in development and management of its IT Centre as well as collaboration in development of micro, small and medium enterprise industries in Tobago. THA signed a MoU on cooperation in MSMEs with the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) at their headquarters in New Delhi on 19 April 2010.

August 2011