

India- Palau Bilateral Brief

India and Palau share warm and friendly relations. India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations in April 1995, soon after Palau's independence. Since then, there have been regular interaction and consultation with the political leadership and administrative representatives of Palau. This has seen significant intensification since the initiation of the Forum of India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) in November 2014. President of Palau, Tommy Remengesau Jr. led their delegation to the 2nd FIPIC in August 2015 in Jaipur while the Health Minister of Palau Gregorio Ngirmang led their delegation at the 1st FIPIC held in Fiji. Recently, President Surangel S Whipps, Jr participated in the 3rd FIPIC summit held on 22 May 2023 in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea(PNG).

2. On September 24, 2019 on the margins of UNGA, former President Tommy Remengesau joined other Pacific Island leaders in the India-Pacific Islands Developing States Leaders meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. During the meeting PM announced allocation of US\$ 12 million grant(1 million to each PSIDS) towards implementation of high impact developmental project in the area of their choice. In addition, a concessional Line of Credit of US\$150 Million which can be availed by the PSIDS for undertaking solar, renewable energy and climate related projects based on each country's requirement was announced. PM also invited the PSIDS leaders to join CDRI. An agreement for exemption of visa requirements for holders of Diplomatic & Official passport was signed on 18 July, 2022.

3. Visits/meetings:

The Minister of State for External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan held a virtual interaction with H.E. J Uduch Sengebau Senior, Vice President and Minister of State(Foreign Minister) of the Republic of Palau on June 28, 2021. The Ministers reviewed the progress made in bilateral relations and ongoing development cooperation between India and Palau. The Ministers discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation in climate action and renewable energy, blue economy, capacity building, strengthening of healthcare and economic recovery from COVID-19 pandemic. They agreed to continue efforts to further broaden and deepen engagements between India and Palau for a secure, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific. During the meeting VP Uduch requested for India's assistance in providing medicines for non-communicable diseases(NCD) which has since been largely delivered.

MOS(ST & Earth Sciences) Y.S. Chowdhary visited Palau from Jan 18-20, 2017 to attend the swearing in ceremony inauguration of the 4th term of Palau

President, H.E. Tommy Remengesau. Palau President Mr. Tommy E. Remengesau visited India on 20-22 August 2015 for the 2nd FIPIC meeting in Jaipur.

4. Trade: India exported goods, mainly pharmaceuticals, cotton, iron & steel articles, vehicles, etc. worth USD 0.05 Million in 2019-20; USD 0.21 Million in 2020-21; USD 0.11 Million in 2021-22; and USD 0.22 Million in 2022-23. India imported goods worth USD 3.22 Million in 2018-19 (ships, boats, floating structure) and nil thereafter. Though trade between the two countries is limited, however there are opportunities in sectors such as IT, pharmaceutical, health care, hospitality, and renewable energy.

5. Support to Indian candidatures: Palau has generally been supportive of India's candidatures to various UN and international bodies. They supported India's candidatures to ICJ, IMO, UNESCO, ACABQ, etc. They also supported India's candidature for the non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for the year 2021-22 and has affirmed support for India's candidature for a permanent seat in the UNSC. Confirmation of support for India's candidature for UNSC non-permanent seat for 2028-29 is awaited.

6. Capacity Building and Scholarships: Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) has served as the principal mechanism of our technical assistance to Palau. Since 1996-97, India has been regularly offering training slots to Palau in different areas. From 2002 to 2017, two training slots were allotted to Palau every year. Since 2018, Palau is allotted 5 training slots under ITEC. Scholarships for higher education in India are also offered to Palau by Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). A representative from Palau, Ms. Adora Nobuo, Executive Director of Chamber of Commerce attended the India Pacific Sustainable Development Conference held in Suva in May 2017. Similarly, two participants from Palau attended the training on Tsunami Preparedness on Early Warning System for Oceanic Disaster and Mitigation organised by INCOIS, Hyderabad from 20-25 November, 2017. Ms. Jaelene Bsis Kebekol and Ms. Lolanny Tereked Dwight were trained as Solar Mammals at the Barefoot College in Jaipur from September 2018 to March 2019. Palau has expressed interest in Indian expertise in the areas of capacity building in the areas of IT, teachers training, nurses training, training for government servant in customers service, agriculture (improvement of soil quality, cooperative farming), tourism, etc.

7. Diplomats from Palau have regularly participated in the training programmes organised by Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service(SSIFS). A young Palaun diplomat attended 69th Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) held at SSIFS, New Delhi from 3-28 October, 2022. India also organized a Special Diplomats Training Programme for Pacific Countries at the Forum for India-Pacific

Islands Cooperation meeting held in Fiji in November 2014 and a Special Diplomat's Training Course for the diplomats from the Micronesian countries (Palau, Federated States of Micronesia and Marshall Islands) in Palau from 11-15 May 2015, where 6 diplomats from Palau participated.

8. Developmental Assistance to Palau: India's developmental partnership with Palau has been expanding over the last few years. India has funded several projects in Palau under the USD 200,000 annual Grant-in-aid. For the year 2016, the Palau Government utilised the annual grant programmes for skill upgradation, mentor leadership, sports, environment conservation under their initiative titled 'Year of Youth 2016'. Similarly, the year 2017, 2018 and 2019 were declared the 'Year of Family', 'Year of Health' and 'Year of Innovative Learning' for which the annual grants were utilised respectively.

9. GOI has also provided a financial grant in August 2005 towards purchase of kitchen equipment for Belau National Hospital. In 2008, assistance of US\$ 100,000 was given to Palau for purchase of a boat and 2 pick up trucks for its outreach programme. In 2010, GOI provided a grant of US\$ 100,000 for purchase of computers and related equipment & software. Another grant-in-aid of US\$ 100,000 was given in February 2011 for IT and computer upgradation in their offices and diplomatic missions. India also provided assistance for disaster relief in the wake of Super-Typhoon Haiyan in March 2014. Further, India also provided Palau with assistance for hosting the 45th Pacific Island Forum(PIF) in July 2014 and organizing PIF meeting(Pacific Media Summit) in 2016. India has also donated medicines and medical equipment amounting to Rs. 37 Lakhs to Palau in 2023.

10. India through the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York approved a grant of US\$ 152,767.50 on 9th April 2020 for "Strengthening national health capabilities to address Covid-19 crisis in Palau" under the South-South Cooperation(UNOSSC). In this regard the former Minister of Health Mr. Emais Roberts of Palau issued a letter of Appreciation to GOI on 20th April 2020. In addition, at the request of Government of Palau for support to their Covid 19 emergency response, the India-UN Fund Board of Directors approved additional funds for the provision of one garbage truck and 14 powered air purifying respirators. India is assisting Palau in upgrading and modernising 3 community healthcare centre under the India-UN Development Fund. India partnered with Palau in establishing facilities and renovating the Palau Civic Hall and the Palau Community College that provided essential institutional support to the 7th Our Ocean Conference through assistance of \$1 million under India-UNDP fund. These facilities are a part of the Palau Global Village Facilities that were handed over to Palau in September 2020. The 7th Ocean Conference was held in Palau on 13-14

April, 2022. IBSA Fund Board approved revised cost estimate of \$648,578 for rehabilitation of a High School Teacher Training Center project in Koror.

11. Diaspora and Culture: International Day of Yoga (IDY) is celebrated every year in Palau with an enthusiastic participation of local yoga teachers and yoga practitioners as well as the diplomatic community in Koror. In 2018, the IDY celebrations were led by the then President of Palau himself. As a special gesture, the President of Palau issued a proclamation on 21 June urging Palau citizens to participate in the IDY celebrations. In 2019 and 2020, IDY celebrations were held at Amayong Cultural Center, Koror. In 2021-2023, IDY events were held at Ngarachamayong Cultural Center, Koror with the support of the Office of the Ministry of State of the Republic of Palau. Local yoga teachers, yoga enthusiasts from Palau and the diplomatic community participated in the events. In February 2019, Ms. Diljune E Ngiraswei of the Ministry of Health of Palau participated in Kumbh Mela in India. There are around 20-30 Indians in Palau, mainly in the Island of Koror. While 3 Indian nationals are working in managerial positions in the hotels/shopping centers, one lady doctor in Belau National Hospital others are working in positions ranging from chefs and waiters in the hotels and shopping centers. Mr. Robert Scaria, the owner of the Taj Palau Restaurant has been appointed as the Honorary Consul of India to Palau. Mr. Neeraj Sharma has been appointed as the Honorary Consul General of Palau in India.

12 October, 2023