

India- Jamaica Bilateral Relations

India and Jamaica have traditionally enjoyed cordial and friendly relations based on common linkages of history, parliamentary democracy, membership of the Commonwealth, as well as love of cricket. Jamaica is one of the Girmitya countries with a 70,000 strong Indian diaspora, who act as a living bridge between India and Jamaica.

India and Jamaica share similar concerns and have common aspirations for economic growth, promotion of equity, eradication of poverty, and improvement in the quality of life of their citizens. Convergence of views and consistent cooperation in various multilateral fora are major factors which reinforce India-Jamaica relations. Jamaica has consistently supported Indian candidatures in elections to various UN bodies and other multilateral organisations, and shared its concern at the continued terrorist activities in several parts of India.

History and Background

The links between India and Jamaica go back to the 19th century when more than 36,000 Indians were brought to British Jamaica as indentured labourers. Around two-thirds of them remained on the island.

India was one of the first countries to recognize Jamaica after it became an independent nation. Diplomatic relations between India and Jamaica were established on 12th August 1962. Following the visit of PM Indira Gandhi to Jamaica (1975), a resident Mission was established in Kingston in 1976.

A Resident Mission of Jamaica in India started functioning in 2020. (In May 2019, Prime Minister of Jamaica Mr. Andrew Holness had indicated Jamaica's intention to open a new Resident Mission in New Delhi). Prime Minister Andrew Holness was scheduled to visit in April 2020. The proposed visit could not take place because of the Covid 19 pandemic. In 2021, Ambassador Jason Hall was appointed as the first Resident High Commissioner of Jamaica to India.

Important visits and Interactions

There have been several high level and Ministerial visits between India and Jamaica. A list of high level and Ministerial visits between India and Jamaica is given below:

From India to Jamaica	From Jamaica to India
Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1975)	Prime Minister Mr. Edward Seaga (March 1983- to attend the 7th NAM Conference)
Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee (February 1999-to attend the Ninth G-15 Summit in Montego Bay)	Minister of Foreign Trade Mr. Anthony Hylton (August 2001)

MOS for External Affairs Digvijay Singh (February 2003)	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Technology Dr. Phillip Paulwell (October 2001)
MOS for External Affairs Anand Sharma (February 2007)	Minister of State for Tourism and Culture Mr. Wykeham McNeille (January 2007- to attend the centenary celebrations of Satyagraha)
Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs Vayalar Ravi (June 2013- to participate in the 5th Biennial Diaspora held in Montego Bay, Jamaica)	Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce Mr. Anthony Hylton (February 2014- to attend the NASSCOM India Leadership Forum)
Minister of State (MOS) for External Affairs General (Dr.) V. K. Singh (February 2015, April 2017)	Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Senator Kamina Johnson Smith (October 2017)
Hon'ble President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind (15-18 May 2022)	

PM Modi and Jamaican PM Holness have met several times on the sidelines of multilateral fora in 2018. PM Modi had brief meetings with PM Holness on the margins of CHOGM in April 2018 in London, at BRICS Summit in South Africa in July 2018 and at G-20 Summit in Argentina on 2nd December 2018. On 4th July 2019, PM Holness called PM Modi over telephone and congratulated him on his victory in the general elections.

In September 2019, PM Holness participated in the first-ever meeting between PM Modi and CARICOM leaders on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting. He was also one of the select speakers during the special event organised by India at UN Headquarters on 25th September 2019 to celebrate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. On 2nd November 2021, PM Holness participated in the launch of Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) on the sidelines of COP26 in Glasgow. In November 2023, PM Holness also participated in the Concluding Leader's Session of the Second Voice of the Global South Summit via video-conference.

There have also been Ministerial level visits and interactions between the two countries. Former MOS Gen (rtd) V.K. Singh paid two official visits to Jamaica in 2015 and 2017, during which he met his counterpart and held comprehensive discussions on the bilateral relationship. During his visit he also called on Jamaican PM. EAM had spoken to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica Ms. Kamina Johnson Smith twice, viz. on 29 April 2020 and 8 March 2021 in the context of COVID19 and Vaccine Maitri.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica Ms. Kamina Johnson Smith visited India from 9-12 October 2017 and held discussions with former External Affairs Minister, Smt. Sushma Swaraj on various aspects of the bilateral relationship, including trade and investment, health and health tourism, capacity building, agriculture, culture, and tourism. This was the first ever official visit by any Jamaican

Foreign Minister to India. Ms. Smith also met former Minister of State for Tourism and Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), representatives of leading Indian IT companies and the business community and also visited Mumbai. Senator Kamina Johnson Smith met with EAM during the CHOGM in Kigali in June 2022. In January 2023, Senator Johnson also participated in the virtual Global South Conference hosted by EAM. On 21 April 2023, EAM met with Senator Kamina Johnson on the sideline of the COFCOR held in Georgetown. In November 2023, Senator the Hon. Aubyn Hill, Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce joined the Trade Ministers' virtual summit of Second Voice of Global South Summit. Senator Johnson (Foreign Minister) and Minister of Education, Ms. Fayval Williams, also participated in the EAM Ministerial and Education Ministerial Sessions respectively, in the third Voice of Global South Summit hosted by India on 17 August 2024.

The ongoing bilateral exchanges of visits culminated in the historic visit of Honourable Rashtraptiji (HR), Shri Ram Nath Kovind from 15-18 May 2022. This was the first ever visit by the President of India to Jamaica. The visit coincided with the 60 years of diplomatic relationship between the two countries. 2022 is also the year when India and Jamaica celebrated the 75th and 60th years Independence of the respective countries. During the visit HR addressed a Joint parliament of Jamaica and MOU on cooperation between Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica was signed. The Hon. Rashtraptiji inaugurated Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Avenue, named after the architect of India's Constitution, in downtown Kingston. HR also inaugurated India Jamaica Friendship Garden at the Hope Garden during the visit. The visit further strengthened the existing cordial bilateral relationship of the two countries.

Institutional Mechanisms

The Foreign Office Consultation (FOC) serves as an important dialogue mechanism between India and Jamaica. Under this mechanism, 5 rounds of meetings have been held so far; three rounds in Kingston (2001, 2005, 2011) and two in New Delhi (2007 and October 2017). The fifth and the latest meeting of FOC held in October 2017 in New Delhi reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations including political and economic relations, technical and development cooperation, as well as cooperation in regional and multilateral fora.

Agreements/MoUs

Several key agreements have been signed between India and Jamaica to strengthen their bilateral relationship. The Cultural Agreement, signed in 1996, laid the foundation for cultural exchange. In 2010, MoU for cooperation in Food Research and Technology was signed between the Scientific Research Council of Jamaica and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of India. The agreement for the establishment of a Chair on Indology/Gandhian Studies between the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) was signed in 2012 and has been renewed multiple times, most recently in 2022 for another five years. Additionally, an Agreement for Cooperation in Civil Aviation was signed in 2016. In 2021, a MoU was signed between the Asian News International (ANI) and the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica for mutual content sharing. Most

recently, on May 16, 2022, a MoU was signed between the SSIFS of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica.

In October 2021, an Agreement was signed between Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica and the High Commission of India, Kingston for commissioning a documentary on the Indian diaspora in Jamaica. In 2021, High Commission of India, Kingston also signed an agreement with the Nature Preservation Foundation (NPF) for establishing an India-Jamaica Friendship Garden at the Hope Botanical Gardens.

Trade and Investment

There has been a steady growth in bilateral trade as well as economic and commercial interactions despite the constraint of distance and Jamaica's preferential trade arrangements with 3rd country / regional partners. Bilateral trade has experienced significant growth over the past decade, increasing from USD 28.28 million in 2011-12 to 116.73 million in 2023-24. The trade in 2023-24 grew 26% compared to the previous year.

Year	India's Exports (US\$ in millions)	India's Imports (US\$ in millions)	Total (US\$ in millions)
2020-21	64.06	2.23	66.29
2021-22	80.60	1.80	82.4
2022-23	87.75	4.99	92.74
2023-24	109.15	7.48	116.63
2024-25 (1 quarter)	20.40	2.80	23.2

Source; Ministry of Commerce

The main items of exports from India are Pharmaceutical products, Vehicles other than railway or tramway rolling stock and parts and accessories thereof and seafood. Main items of import from Jamaica are electrical machinery and equipment and parts thereof; pulp of wood or of other fibrous cellulosic material, waste and scrap of paper or paperboard; aluminium, iron and steel, copper articles; essential oils; coffee, tea etc.

Development Partnership

A rural development project in Kitson Town is being implemented through the FAO with the US\$ 1 million grant announced by PM Modi during the 1st India-CARICOM Summit in New York in 2019. The two year project started its implementation on 30th April 2023. Letter of Agreement was signed by Hon'ble Floyd Green, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining and Dr. Crispim Moreira, FAO Representative on 3rd October 2023.

In March 2021, a gift of 50,000 doses of 'Made in India' COVID-19 vaccine was made to Jamaica under the 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative of the Indian government. In February 2021, India donated essential medicines and medical equipment to the Jamaica for combating the COVID-19 pandemic. There were similar support supplies by India in the past to Jamaica for sports (installation of flood lights at Sabina Park stadium), following hurricanes etc. India extended a Line of Credit (LOC) in 2001 for import of water pumps from India (M/s Kirloskar Brothers Ltd).

During the visit of Honourable Rashtraptiji (HR) in May 2022, allocation under ITEC programme was increased from 30 slots to 50 slots. Cumulatively over the years more than 360 Jamaican nationals have been trained in various institutions in India under ITEC programme.

A diplomat from Jamaica participated in the Second Special Course for Diplomats from the Caribbean Community in August 2019, the 71st Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats in April-May 2024, and the Second Annual Disarmament Fellowship Programme in January 2020. There is regular participation in four slots offered for defence training courses by Jamaica Defence Forces (JDF) personnel..

In February 2009, India had established an IT Centre in Jamaica as part of the ICT Capacity Development Project. The initiative included the provision of hardware, software, and training modules, along with a three-member faculty from NIIT who were deployed for two years to deliver training. By the end of the program in February 2011, over a thousand Jamaicans were trained in various IT modules.

Cooperation in Multilateral Organizations

India and Jamaica cooperate in the multilateral fora with common views and positions on issues such as promoting South-South Cooperation and the developmental imperatives of the Global South. They have a shared interest in shaping the emerging architecture of various multilateral institutions, especially with regard to addressing issues such as energy and food security, climate change and international terrorism.

Jamaica has signed and ratified the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and is now a full-fledged member. A group of more than 40 Jamaicans underwent an online training programme organized by ISA in December 2020. Jamaica has also joined the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).

Culture

In Jamaica, there is a keen interest in India's culture, religion, performing arts and philosophy. Jamaicans strongly relate their colourful festivities to the folkloric traditions and celebrations of India.

Popular festivals like Holi, Diwali, Onam, Navratri and Garba, Durga puja are celebrated with fanfare and religious fervour.

Mahatma Gandhi is highly regarded among the people of Jamaica. A statue of Mahatma Gandhi depicting the famous “Dandi March” donated by ICCR was installed at the University of West Indies, Mona Campus, Kingston in July 2012. Another Statue of Mahatma Gandhi has been installed in front of Kingston city Library. In July 2021, a bust of Mahatma Gandhi was installed in Clarendon Library in the city of May Pen, which has a large Indian diaspora. A MoU for setting up an ICCR Chair of Indology/Gandhian studies was signed in 2012 between ICCR and University of West Indies, further renewed in 2022. Under this, a professor from India is deputed by ICCR to teach philosophy at the University of West Indies.

International Yoga Day is celebrated annually in Kingston, Jamaica. The first International Day of Yoga (IDY) was organised in National Indoor stadium in Kingston on 21st June 2015. The 10th International Day of Yoga was organised at various locations during the month of June, 2024, including yoga on themes of Yoga for Kids and Yoga for Women Empowerment. The events saw enthusiastic participation by Yoga enthusiasts in Jamaica. In December 2021, six participants from Jamaica visited India under ICCR’s Distinguished Visitor’s Programme titled “Gen-Next Democracy Network” Programme. Among the participants were Members of Parliament from ruling and opposition party as well as from media and business fields.

Indian cinema and television shows are popular among the Jamaican people. Bollywood movies are regularly screened in cities like Ocho Rios which have a concentration of Indian diaspora. Some Indian television shows are also telecasted and enjoy huge popularity in Jamaica.

There have been regular bilateral tournaments between India and the West Indies cricket team, with some of the matches (T-20, ODI and Test matches) taking place in Kingston. This has made India and Jamaica a natural partner for cooperation in sports.

India week was celebrated during Independence Day celebrations in August 2023. During the week, Bollywood dance workshops, free medical camp and 2 ‘Bollywood extravaganza’ shows were organised. Further, a Manipuri dance troupes from ICCR and a Kuchipudi dance troupe also visited Jamaica during this period. They performed at 12 locations across Jamaica. A total of 35 free medical camps and 1 blood donation drive have been conducted by the High Commission of India so far, with the continued support of Indian Doctors and Pharmaceutical companies generating overwhelming goodwill of the common people and the Government.

Indian Diaspora

Jamaica is home to an Indian diaspora of approximately 70,000, whose ancestors arrived as indentured labourers primarily from Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Basti, Deoria, and Gorakhpur between 1845 and 1917. 10th May is celebrated as India Heritage Day in Jamaica. While most indentured labourers hailed

from the Bhojpuri and Awadhi regions, there was also a notable presence from South India. This diaspora, which makes up around 3% of Jamaica's population, is well integrated into Jamaican society and is fondly described as 'genetically embedded and integrated.' Their contributions to Jamaica's socio-economic development have been recognized at the highest levels. Members of the diaspora maintain a strong connection to Indian culture, music, dance, and history, serving as a vital cultural link between India and Jamaica. The main Indian Associations in Kingston is Indian Cultural Society of Jamaica (ICSJ), and similarly there is one each in Ocho Rios and Montego Bay. Apart from the Indian Associations there are Hindu religious groups namely, 'Sanatan Dharma Mandir' and 'Prema Satsangh' in Kingston.

The Indian diaspora brought another group of Indian expatriates to work as office managers in their establishments. There is also a small floating and expanding group of skilled Indian professionals such as doctors (including many attached to government hospitals), and professors (some of whom are teaching in the University of West Indies, Kingston). There is also a sizable Indian community in Jamaica engaged in various business activities, primarily in the pharmaceuticals, jewellery and diamonds, ICT, medical and health, and construction sectors. Currently, there are approximately 5,000 Indian passport holders residing in Jamaica.

Indian Diaspora Conference, a first of its kind, was organised on 26 March 2023. More than 400 Indian diaspora members participated in the Conference.

Indian passport holders are granted visa-free entry into Jamaica, allowing for a stay of up to 90 days.

September 2024