

India-Saint Vincent and the Grenadines relations

Political relations

Since establishment of diplomatic relations, St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), which became independent on 27 October 1979, enjoys cordial and friendly ties with India. Both countries interact actively in the U.N., Commonwealth and NAM and various other international fora. SVG supported India's candidature for Non-Permanent seat at UNSC, gave assurances for future support and has also committed support for India's bid for Permanent Membership of UNSC as part of the L69 group. India has also supported SVG's non-permanent membership of UNSC. SVG has supported India's successful candidatures in the elections to International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Tribunal of the Laws of the Seas (ITLOS), Executive Board of UNESCO and International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2018 and continued its support to India's candidature for WCO, IMO, WHO and ICAO in 2019 and continued its abiding support to India in 2020.

SVG Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, met Indian Prime Minister on September 24, 2015 in New York on the sidelines of UNGA meeting, when our PM extended an invitation to Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves to visit India, which he accepted and had a highly successful official visit to India on 8-12 September, 2019. During his stay in India, Dr. Gonsalves met Prime Minister Shri Modi and External Affairs Minister. Three MoUs were signed during the visit: (i) ISA Framework Agreement; ii) Traditional Systems of Medicine; and iii) Visa Waiver for Diplomatic and Official Passport Holders. Prime Minister Dr. Gonsalves also co-chaired the Session in the COP 14 Conference on Land, Climate and Renewable Energy held in New Delhi on 9-10 September, 2019. During the visit, a grant of US\$ 200,000 for Quick Impact Projects (QIP) in SVG was also announced.

The President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind had a highly successful state visit to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) from 18-20 May 2022. The President was accompanied by Minister of State for Finance Shri Pankaj Chaudhary, Members of Parliament Shri Satish Kumar Gautam and Smt. Rama Devi and a high-level official delegation. The Governor General H.E. Dame Susan Dougan, the Prime Minister Gonsalves and senior Ministers of the Cabinet received the President at the airport with full military honours. The President began the visit with a discussion with the Governor General and the Prime Minister at the Government House on 19 May. India conveyed its willingness to cooperate closely with SVG in the fields of Information Technology, Health, Tourism and Agriculture. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved on the four Quick Impact Grant Projects and an Arrowroot Modernization Grant Project undertaken in SVG with a US\$ 200,000 and a US\$ 1.3 million Indian grant respectively and also two other projects to be undertaken under a US\$ 1 million CARICOM grant extended by India. An agreement for Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with respect to Taxes and a MoU on refurbishment of the old Calder Community Center project were signed.

The President planted a sapling of an Indian white Sandalwood tree at the historic Botanical Gardens. He addressed the House of Assembly at a special sitting, dwelling on the commonalities between the two countries. He also addressed the Indian Diaspora at Calder Road and unveiled a name-board renaming Calder Road as 'India Drive'. The Governor General hosted a banquet in President's honour. The President visited Canouan Island of the country on 20 May to review the new developments there. The President gifted Cricket kits and related electronic gadgets for the promotion of cricket at a farewell reception hosted by the SVG Prime Minister. The First Lady Smt. Savita Kovind visited a School of Special Needs separately and donated US\$ 25,000/- to the Governor General's Charitable Fund.

Shri P.P. Chaudhary Minister of State for Law & Justice and Corporate Affairs visited St. Vincent and the Grenadines from April 22-24, 2018 under MEA's innovative outreach programme and held bilateral talks with SVG PM Dr Ralph Gonsalves. On 1st June, 2007, Mr. Vayalar Ravi, the then Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, attended the first ever celebrations of Indian Arrival Day organized by SVG Indian Heritage Foundation. During his one day visit to St. Vincent & the Grenadines, MOIA also had a meeting with Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

PM-SVG again met Prime Minister Modi on the margins of UNGA on September 25, 2019 during PM Modi's meeting with CARICOM leaders. EAM met with SVG PM on 23 September 2022 on the sidelines of UNGA and co-hosted a high-level meeting of members of the L.69 group on "Reinvigorating Multilateralism and Achieving Comprehensive Reform of the UN Security Council". EAM met SVG Minister of State for Foreign Affairs & Foreign Trade, Ms. Keisal Melissa Peters during the 4th India-CARICOM Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held on the sidelines of UNGA in New York on 23 September 2022 and again during the India-COFCOR Meeting held in Georgetown on 21 April 2023.

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Rural Transformation, Industry & Labour of SVG Mr. Saboto Caesar visited India to attend the 9th CII India- LAC Conclave from 03-05 August 2023. Mr. Curtis King, Minister of Education and National Reconciliation of SVG virtually addressed the Education Minister Session of Voice of South Summit on 13 January 2023.

Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment H.E. Hon. St. Clair Prince also participated in Health Ministers' virtual Voice of Global South Summit 2.0 on 17 November 2023, hosted by Indian Health Minister. Non-resident High Commissioner S. Balachandran represented India at 8th Summit of CELAC on 1st March 2024. Speaker of OECS and former cabinet Minister of SVG Ms. Rene M. Baptiste visited India under ICCR's Distinguished Visitors Programme in March 2024 and had interactions with Minister of State Ms. Meenakshi Lekhi and Director General, ICCR Mr. Kumar Tuhin.

Commercial relations (Developmental and Economic Partnership)

India has handed over a cash donation of US\$500,000/- towards assistance in recovery and rehabilitation following flash floods in December, 2013. India had made a cash donation of US\$100,000/- towards recovery and rehabilitation following Hurricane Tomas in October 2010 and April 2011 flash floods and landslides. India provided an assistance of US 1.33 million to SVG in 2017 under UNIDO for modernization of Arrowroot Industry for climate change resilience and sustainable rural livelihoods for indigenous communities. Govt. of India provided as a token of solidarity lifesaving drugs and protective gear worth US\$ 100000 to Govt. and people of St.Vincent and the Grenadines to assist in their fight against Covid 19 pandemic, which were handed over to Govt. of SVG on September 3, 2020. As a gesture of solidarity, Gol donated 40,000 doses of Made in India Covishield vaccine to St. Vincent and the Grenadines on March 1, 2021.

India announce the grant of US\$14 mn (1 mn for each CARICOM country) for community development-related projects and a Line of Credit of US\$150 mn for projects relating to solar, renewal energy and climate change for CARICOM Member States announced during meeting of the Prime Minister of India with the CARICOM leaders in September 2019. EAM also offered SVG USD 1 Million for a grant project in the SME sector during India-COFCOR meeting held in Georgetown on 21 April 2023.

During the official visit to India in September 2019 of Dr. The Hon. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG), India announced a total grant of USD 200,000 for four Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in SVG – a first for the Latin and the Caribbean region. Subsequently, India and SVG signed an umbrella agreement on 13 November 2019 for implementing the projects. The four projects taken up for execution were: (1) Rehabilitation and Transforming the Derelict Chatuebelair Agriculture Depot into a processing and training facility at a cost of USD 40,740/-; (2) Refurbishment of the Old Calder Community Center at USD 40,863/- (3) “Community Development Project for Glenside Village Marriaqua” at USD 39,796/- and (4) Port Elizabeth Bequia Market Repairs and Restoration at USD 30,000/- The four projects were completed and officially opened on 2nd October 2023, coinciding with the Mahatma Gandhi’s 154th Birth Anniversary.

Trade ties with India are limited. Pharmaceuticals, machinery, plastics, Iron and Steel, printed books, fisheries, cotton and textiles are exported from India. There are negligible exports from SVG to India. However, in 2020-21, the bilateral trade figure was US\$ 12.80 million due to a spike in export of ships and boats from SVG to India (for breakage). SVG has requested for an Education Mission to India for staff training to create a suitable startup ecosystem and viable startup incubators for entrepreneurs and businesses. Trade figures of last four years are as follows:

	Financial Year	Export to SVG-India (US\$ Million)	Import from SVG (US\$ Million)	Total Bilateral Trade (US\$ Million)
1	2019-2020	0.69	0	0.69
2	2020-2021	0.63	12.17	12.80
3	2021-2022	0.85	0	0.85

4	2022-23	1.19	0	1.19
5	2023-24	2.38	0.10	2.48

Cultural relations

With the Community efforts, 1st June has been declared as Indian Arrival Day in St. Vincent whereas 7th October has been declared as Indian Heritage Day. A cultural troupe from ICCR had visited the Island and performed at Indian Arrival Day of St. Vincent in 2011. The Queens Baton for Commonwealth Games also toured the Island in March, 2010. An ICCR-sponsored six member Rajasthani folk group led by Gazi Khan visited SVG on 22nd February, 2019 and held performance in Kingstown. The event was attended by PM Ralph Gonsalves and several other dignitaries. 5th edition of International Day of Yoga was celebrated at Kingstown Cruise Terminal, Kingstown, SVG on June 23, 2019 in association with SVG Indian Heritage Foundation. Minister of Transport, Works, Urban Development, and Local Government Julian Francis was the Guest of Honour. Mission sent a cultural troupe from Suriname to participate in SVG Indian arrival day on June 1, 2019.

Indian Community

There are about 7700 persons of Indian origin residing in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and 50 NRIs including Doctors, professionals, medical students. The PIOs had come to SVG in the 19th century as indentured labourer between 1861 and 1885. Most of these PIOs have got completely assimilated in the mainstream local society and know very little about India, their forefathers and culture. Between 1861 and 1880, 8 ships arrived from India bringing a total of 2474 Indians, living on 23 estates.

PIOs in the Island established the St. Vincent & the Grenadines Indian Heritage Foundation in October, 2006 with an aim to revive and promote cultural and social links with India. SVG Indian Heritage Foundation has since been quite active and doing a good job to promote Indian soft power. 1st June has been declared as Indian Arrival Day in St. Vincent and 7th October has been declared as Indian Heritage Day. There are a few PIOs & Sindhi businessmen doing trading with India.

India regularly offers slots for SVG under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC). Two Foreign Service officials Affairs participated in the PCFD/CARICOM special diplomatic training programme at Foreign Service Institute in New Delhi in 2017, one in PCFD, 2019 and three under special training programme for CariCom Diplomats in June, 2019. Two senior-level customs officials participated in the India-Caricom special training programme in customs and taxes held in India on 10-14 June, 2019 under ITEC. SVG has sought expert visit to access local conditions for suitability of Millet production.

Useful Resources

Website: <https://www.indembassysuriname.gov.in/>

Facebook pages: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInSuriname/>
<https://www.facebook.com/iccr.suriname>

Twitter: <https://x.com/indembsur?lang=en>

Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoj4U_ST86i5GvkpwL8mbHA/videos