

## **INDIA - SOLOMON ISLANDS BILATERAL RELATIONS**

### **Political Relations:**

Diplomatic relations between India & Solomon Islands(SIs) were established in May 1987. SIs established its Honorary Consulate in New Delhi in 2003. On 16 March 2023, SIs team arrived in New Delhi to start ground works for establishing its resident Mission in New Delhi. SI's relations with India are friendly, though low key. Bilateral political interaction is comprehensive in multilateral/international fora. Mission in Port Moresby is concurrently accredited to SIs. India's relationship with Pacific Island Countries(PIC) has deepened with evolution of Act East Policy, resulting in setting up of action-oriented Forum for India–Pacific Island Cooperation (FIPIIC). During FIPIIC Summits, PM Shri Narendra Modi articulated India's desire to be a close partner of PICs and its readiness to work closely to advance their developmental agenda.

On Sept 24, 2019 PM Shri. Narendra Modi attended meeting of India-Pacific Islands Developing States (PSIDS) Leaders, including SI, in NY on the sidelines of 74<sup>th</sup> UNGA. Leaders deliberated on issues including sharing of development experiences for attainment of SDGs, enhancing cooperation in renewable energy, joining Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure(CDRI), capacity-building, implementation of projects under India-UN Development Partnership Fund and a roadmap for future India-PSIDS cooperation. This was the first time PM had met the leaders of PSIDS on the margins of UNGA in plurilateral format. PM Modi emphasized that India and the PSIDS have shared values and a shared future.

EAM met FM Jeremiah Manele at CHOGM meeting in Kigali on 25 June 2022. FM Manele sought training, scholarship, IT, tech transfer, agriculture, renewable energy, medical support. EAM agreed to consider Solomon Islands national development priorities.

On 7 March 2023, Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, MoS, on the sidelines of LDC5 Summit held in Doha, met Mr. Jeremiah Manele, Foreign Minister, who confirmed their participation in FIPIIC-III meeting and also requested for the funding of Pacific games in SI and establishment of their High Commission in New Delhi

On May 22, 2023, Hon'ble PM Sh. Narendra Modi met PM of Solomon Islands H.E. Manasseh Sogavare at APEC House, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on the sidelines of FIPIIC-3 Summit, with Papua New Guinea PM James Marape in the backdrop.

### **Visits to India from Solomon Islands:**

Foreign Minister, Laurie H. Chan, of Solomon Islands, visited New Delhi in January, 2005. He was accompanied by Assistant Secy for Asia Pacific Division, and had discussions with EAM, Minister for HRD, MoS for Info Technology, MoS for Commerce & Industry and also had the opportunity to meet with senior Government officials and representatives from the Chambers of Commerce, Tourism, Trade, Banking, Aviation and financial institutions.

Minister of Foreign Affairs & External Trade of Solomon Islands Mr. Peter Shanel Agovaka, attended Ministerial meeting on 'Harnessing Positive Contribution of South-South Cooperation for Development of LDCs, held in Delhi on 18-19 Feb 2011. A 5-member delegation led by Dy PM & Minister for Home Affairs of SIs, Hon. Mr. Douglas Ete participated in 2<sup>nd</sup> FIPIIC summit held in Jaipur in August 2015. Joseph Atkin Tada, Asst Secy, MFAET participated in Distinguished Visitors Programme(DVP), organized by ICCR for 14 PICs in February 2016.

**Visits to SIs from India:** Sh. Piyush Goyal, MoS(IC) for Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy & Mines, visited Honiara in Oct 2016. This was 1<sup>st</sup> ever Ministerial visit to SIs from India, during which he called on SI PM Manasseh Sogavare, and also met Minister of Power & Mines, as well as interacted with Indian community. India offered support of energy efficient LED bulbs and renewable energy in the form of solar lighting to the country. Minister also showcased various ways India can aid SIs in the areas of IT skill development, healthcare, etc.

HC Sh. Inbasekar S visited Honiara from June 17-22, 2022 & presented his Credentials to Acting Gov-General of SIs H.E. Patterson Oti on June 20, 2022. HC paid a courtesy call upon PM Mr. Manasseh Sogavare, acting Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Peter Shanel Agovaka and Secretary to PM Dr. Jimmie Rodgers on June 20, 2022. HC invited PM Sogavare to visit Port Moresby for forthcoming FIPIIC-3 Summit, co-hosted by India and Papua New Guinea. Solomon PM thanked India's role as Development partner. On June 20, HC hosted dinner for Health Minister Dr. Culwick Togamana, Minister of Planning & Development Coordination Mr. Rex Ramofafia, Minister of Traditional Governance, Peace & Ecclesiastical Affairs Samuel Manetolia, and Minister of Public Service Mr. Makavio Tagani. HC met Permanent Secy of Health Pauline McNeil & discussed bilateral cooperation in health including Grants-in-Aid(GIA) for addressing shortage of medical infrastructure in SIs hospitals. HC met Permanent Secy, Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour & Immigration Mr. Riley Masepitu & discussed support for SMEs through National Small Scale Industries Corp(NSIC) under GIA access SI goods to Indian market. HC met Ethel Tebengi Frances, Permanent Secy, M/o Agriculture and and Livestock. HC discussed capacity-building in education with Mr. Franco Rodie, Permanent Secy of Ministry of Education & HRD.

HC Sh. Inbasekar S visited Honiara, from September 10-13, 2023 and paid courtesy calls upon Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare; Dr. Jimmy Rodgers, Secy to PM; Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele; Education Minister Ms. Lanelle Tanangada; Professor Transform Aqorau, Vice-Chancellor, SINU and also visited King George VI School and National Referral Hospital. On the 10th of September 2023, HC at a ceremony at King George VI National Senior School, Honiara, gifted four sets of CBSE(NCERT) books covering subjects such as English, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Science, and Information Technology for classes 6-12 to (i) King George VI National Senior School, (ii) Vura Community High School, (iii) Betivatu Community High School, and (iv) St. Nicolas College.

#### **Areas of cooperation :**

SI has been extending support to our candidates in international organizations. India has been offering assistance to SIs in capacity building by allocating 5 training slots p.a. in diverse fields under ITEC programme. SIs, however, did not fully utilize the slots in past years but in 2019-20, slots were fully utilized. India has offered 2 slots under ICCR Dance & Music Scholarships under Lata Mangeshkar dance & Music Scholarship Scheme (formerly ICCR Scholarship Scheme for Indian Culture) and 2 slots for "Atal Bihari Vajpayee Scholarship" (formerly General Scholarship Scheme) for the Solomon Islands for academic year 2022-23.

General Assembly of International Solar Alliance(ISA), in its first meeting held from 2-5 Oct 2018 adopted the proposal made by India for an amendment to the framework Agreement on the Establishment of ISA to expand the scope of membership of the ISA to all countries that are UN members. SI vide its NV dated 18 May 2023 has forwarded the Instrumentation for Ratification and Framework Agreement of ISA.

Consequent upon Tsunami which struck SI on April 2, 2007, GOI provided US\$ 100,000 as India's assistance for relief and rehabilitation of Tsunami victims. As part of GOI's Regional Assistance Initiatives for PICs, India offers an annual grant-in-aid of US\$ 200,000 for development projects in SI. SI Govt has been requested to provide details of projects to be undertaken by them.

An MOU for setting up Centre of Excellence in IT(CEIT) in Solomon Islands National University (SINU) was signed in Aug 2020. IT infrastructure & courseware reached Honiara in Aug 2022. CDAC is in process to dispatch CDAC e-Mentor (e-Learning & LMS) along with LILA (Learning Indian Languages through Artificial Intelligence) during Nov 2022 and will be installing it after IT Infrastructure is ready at site. Two CDAC experts have joined the IS-CEIT as Centre Head & Trainer on 31 July 2022 for 2 years upon operationalization of the Centre. Grants-in-Aid(GIA) proposal from SINU regarding 'Relocation of Forestry Certificate Program to Poitete Campus, Kolombangara, Western Province of SIs was approved by Ministry.

An MOU between GOI & SI Govt on Exemption from Visa Requirement for holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports was signed on June 21, 2022 between HC Sh. S. Inbasekar & Dr. Jimmie Rodgers, Secy to PM in Honiara- this is 1<sup>st</sup> ever bilateral MOU signed. On June 21, 2022, HC handed over 50,000 Covishield vaccines under bilateral initiative to Dr. Culwick Togamana, Minister of Health & Medical Services at Honiara airport on June 21, 2022. On July 1, 2022, India supplied US\$ 250,000 worth Covid-19 medicines, anti-virals & surgical equipment to SIs. HC met Members of Solomon Chambers of Commerce, discussed cooperation in agriculture, education, infrastructure, access of SIs commodities to Indian market. On July 1, 60 kgs of lentil seeds was supplied to SIs.

Trade Bilateral trade figures are as follows (US\$ million, Dept of Commerce, GOI statistics):

<b>Year</b>	<b>India's Exports</b>	<b>India's Imports</b>	<b>Total Trade</b>
2017-18	1.28	67.73	69.01
2018-19	2.57	58.81	61.38
2019-20	2.04	38.97	41.01
2020-21	1.65	33.86	35.51
2021-22	1.85	25.93	27.78
2022-23	2.69	33.09	35.78

### Cultural

In Dec 2018, Mr. Jonathan Auna, Singer and SI national sang and recorded a video of "Vaishnav Jan To" Gujarati poem as a part of celebrations of 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. On 14 June 2019, Mission, in collaboration with SINU, celebrated 5<sup>th</sup> International Day of Yoga at SINU Campus in Honiara in SI where Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele, was the Chief Guest. More than 500 persons actively participated in the event.

### Indian Community

There are presently about 20 Indian passport holders in Solomon Isls. (After coup of May 2000, 5 Indian families were evacuated from Honiara on Australian ship, these families later returned to SI following the signing of Townsville Peace Agreement). HC met Indian community in Honiara on June 18, 2022 over Consular camp and addressed issues of interest to diaspora.

\*\*\*