

High Commission of India

Suva

India – Tonga

BILATERAL RELATIONS

Historical Background: Tonga and India have traditionally enjoyed a close relationship. Late King Tupou IV and Queen paid state visits to India in 1971 and 1976. Indian Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Tonga in 1981. Several Tongans, including members of the Royal family, have received training in India in defence and other courses under ITEC programme. In July 1972, the Late Prince Tu'i-pelehake became the first Tongan to attend the Indian Military Academy in India.

The interaction between India and Tonga has gradually increased since the reopening of High Commission of India, Suva in 1999. The then Tongan PM/Foreign Minister visited India in May 2002 and had called on the PM, EAM and Agriculture Minister. Defence Advisor based in High Commission of India, Canberra is accredited to Tonga.

Recent Visit from India: In a historic first Ministerial visit to Tonga, Mr. Mansukh L Mandaviya, Hon'ble Minister of State for Road Transport, Highways, Shipping and Chemicals and Fertilizers visited Tonga on 25-26 April 2018. During the visit, Hon'ble Minister handed over a cheque of US\$ 500,000 to Tongan PM as immediate relief assistance (out of US\$ 1mn announced assistance).

Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC)-I: Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi hosted the India-Pacific Island Countries Forum Summit in Suva (Fiji) during the visit on 19 November 2014 with the participation of 14 Pacific countries. Tongan delegation, led by the Prime Minister Lord Tu'ivakano, attended the Summit.

Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC)-II: A Tongan delegation led by Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests & Fisheries, visited India to attend FIPIC-II held at Jaipur on 21 August 2015.

Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC)-III: A Tongan delegation led by Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Tonga, visited Port Moresby (PNG) to attend FIPIC-III summit held at Port Moresby on 22 May 2023.

India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPI-SDC): Under the umbrella of FIPIC, Government of India organized the India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPI-SDC) which was held at Suva, Fiji on 25-26 May 2017. Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. (Dr.) V.K.Singh (Retd.) hosted the event. Mr. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests & Fisheries led the Tongan delegation for the IPI-SDC.

Voice of Global South Summit (VOSS): Foreign Minister of Tonga, Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu participated at Foreign Ministers' session in the 'Voice of the South Summit' on 13 January 2023.

Earlier Visits

From Tonga:

- Late King George Tupou-V visited India on a private visit from 11-30 September 2009.
- Ms. Alisi Kelini Tuita, Executive Officer, Ministry of Education, Women's Welfare and Culture, visited India during 21-26 February 2010 to participate in the 10th Commonwealth India Small Business Competitiveness Development Programme at Jaipur.
- Dr. Amanki Fakakovi, Executive Board member of Tonga National Olympic Committee participated in Chef-de-Mission seminar held at New Delhi from 8-12 March, 2010.
- Tongan delegation led by Mr. Ponepate Taunisila, Deputy Director, Ministry of Education and

Training visited India in connection with the Second High Level Meeting (HLM) on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific, held in New Delhi on 23-25 October 2013.

- Minister for Internal Affairs Hon Fe'ao Vakata, and Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Elsie Fukofuka, attended Distinguished Visitors Programme for Pacific Islands Countries, from 7-17 February 2016 in India.
- Ms. Gloria Louise Guttenbeil from Tonga visited on 16-18 February 2018 to attend the 6th Conference of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) India Region in Patna, Bihar.
- 3-member delegation His Majesty's Armed Forces (HMAF) Tonga visited India to attend the Indo-Pacific Armies Chiefs Conference Delhi, from September 25-27, 2023.

From India:

- EAM's Special Envoy on UN reforms visited Tonga in August 2005.
- Indian naval ship INS 'Tabar' paid a goodwill visit to Tonga in July 2006. A reception held on board was attended by PM, Cabinet Ministers, diplomatic corps, senior officers and members of the Indian community. A large number of Tongans visited the ship. The CO and DA in Canberra called on the Crown Prince.
- MOS (EA) led the Indian delegation for the Post Forum Dialogue Partners' Meeting in Tonga on October 18-19, 2007. MOS (EA) paid a courtesy call on late King George Tupou-V.
- High Commissioner represented India at the funeral of late King George Tupou-V on 27 March 2012.
- Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha Smt. Meira Kumar visited Tonga from 17-20 April 2012 to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly Mid-Year Executive Committee Meeting. Hon'ble Speakers of the Legislative Assemblies of Nagaland, Shri Kiyanielie Peseyie and Rajasthan, Shri Dependra Singh Shekhawat also attended the meeting. Hon'ble Speaker launched the Kolomotu'a Solar Project on 19 April during her stay in Tonga.
- High Commissioner of India, based in Fiji, attended the coronation of King Topou-VI, on 4 July 2015.

Cooperation at International Forums:

Tonga supported the following Indian candidatures at various international forums:

- (i) Election for the International Law Commission (ILC) for the term 2023-27 held on 12 November 2021 in New York for India's candidate Professor Dr. Bimal Prasad.
- (ii) Election for the post of Vice-president /delegate for Asia in the executive committee of the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO-INTERPOL) for India's candidature of Mr. Parveen Sinha, Additional Director, CBI held in Istanbul, Turkey from 23-25 November 2021.
- (iii) Tonga gave verbal support for India's "Observer Status" for International Solar Alliance at the 76 Session of UNGA.

International Solar Alliance: Paula Pouvalu Mau, CEO, Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communication, visited Marrakech, Morocco in November 2016, to sign Framework Agreement of International Solar Alliance (ISA). His visit was sponsored by Government of India. Tonga has also ratified the Framework Agreement of ISA on 08 January 2021 vide their NV no. 29/5/1.

Participation in Founding Conference ISA at New Delhi:

- Mr. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Agriculture from the Kingdom of Tonga attended the Founding Conference of International Solar Alliance (ISA) in New Delhi on 11 March 2018.
- Mr. Sione Pulotu Akauola, CEO, Ministry of MEIDECC, and Mr. Ofa Sefana, Acting Director for Energy Department, attended the 6th Session of the Assembly of the International Solar Alliance, New Delhi from 30th Oct - 1st Nov 2023.

Indian Assistance:

- GoI has provided support for road construction projects and contributed funds for up-gradation of jetty in Hunga, Tsunami Alert System, Upgrading IT infrastructure in the Office of the Public Service Commission, etc.
- On 28 August 2020, Government of India approved funding US\$1,018,844 for support response to COVID-19 pandemic.
- On 7 December 2022, a modern Bio-molecular Laboratory set up in Nuku'alofa was inaugurated by the High Commissioner. The laboratory equipped with the latest testing and diagnostic equipment, is part of the USD 1,018,844 support package provided to Tonga through the India- UN Development Partnership Fund to strengthen the nation's Covid-19 response system and health care sector in general.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)

- I. On 16 February 2018, Prime Minister of India announced an assistance of US\$ 1mn to Tonga in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Gita which hit Tonga on 12 February 2018. Dr. Satya Pal Singh, Minister of State for HRD met Mr. Penisimani Epenisa, Minister of Education of Tonga on 21 February 2018 on the sidelines of the 20th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CEEM) and conveyed Prime Minister's message to Mr. Epenisa who appreciated the Government of India's assistance. Mr. Mansukh L Mandaviya, Minister of State for Road Transport, Highways, Shipping and Chemicals and Fertilizers visited Tonga on 25-26 April 2018 and during visit handed over a cheque of US\$ 500,000 to Tongan PM as immediate relief assistance (out of US\$ 1mn announced assistance), the remaining amount has been allocated for a project entitled "Repair and Reconstruction of its Export Building and Fumigation Facility" in Tonga under the India-UN Development Partnership Fund. This project has been implemented by UNDP Pacific Office in Fiji in collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry of Tonga.
- II. On 25 January 2022 Government of India announced an immediate assistance package of USD 200,000 aftermath the 15 January volcanic eruption and tsunami in Kingdom of Tonga. A consignment of 272 packages of Disaster Relief Supplies which includes Family Ridge Tents (100), Blankets (1000), Solar Lamps (1000), Dignity Kits (200) and Tarpaulins (250) worth US\$ 40,000.00 was airlifted from India for the disaster affected people and reached Tonga on 23 May, 2022 onboard a RAAF Aircraft.

Solarisation of Head of State Residences: A regional Solarisation Project to improve resilience in the Pacific was signed on 1 June 2020 in Suva between United Nations Resident Coordinator and Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF). The two-year project, costing US\$1.31 mn has been largely funded by Government of India – US\$ 400,000 from UN Development Partnership Fund and US\$700,000 from India-UN Development Partnership Fund Commonwealth Window. Under the project, Photovoltaic (PV) systems will be installed on buildings of national significance, such as the executive administrative residence of 11 countries (Fiji, Federated States Micronesia, Palau, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu). The Photo voltaic (PV) systems will be installed on the building of National Women Council of Tonga. The project is expected to complete by end of February 2024. The equipment have reached the site and work has been awarded.

Human Resources Development

Tonga was provided 5 slots per year under the ITEC programme which was reduced to 2 in the year 2021-22 due to non utilisation. In 2022-23 , 3 slots were allocated to Tonga , all three were utilised. From 2023-24 the no. of slots were increased to 10 , out of these 6 slots have been utilized by Tonga till date.

Tongan Defence Service personnel who availed of defence training in various training institutions in India were seven during 2011-12, 04 during 2012-13 and 10 during 2013-14, one during 2014-15, 06 during 2015-16 and 03 during 2016-17, 04 during 2017-18. 02 in 2019-20 , and one in 2021-22.

Two experts from Tonga had attended the TERI Workshop on Sustainable Development in March 2007 in Suva. Four 'solar mamas' attended a training course at the Barefoot College, Tilonia.

One diplomat from Tonga attended the training for diplomats of Pacific Island countries organised by the Foreign Service Institute held in Nadi, Fiji in May 2015.

Mr. J. Somasekharan, Indian 'Coconut Development Expert' was on deputation to the Government of Tonga for a period of seven months from March-October 2017.

Culture:

- A 5-member cultural troupe from the Indian Cultural Centre, Suva visited Tonga from 17-21 July 2012 to participate at the Heilala Festival.
- Under the 'Namaste Pacifika', Indian Cultural Festival, Ministry of Culture sponsored 'Mrs. Meera Das' Odissi classical dance group performed in Tonga on 3 November 2017.

International Day of Yoga

- 8th International Day of Yoga was organized by the High Commission in Tonga in association with Sports Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Government of the Kingdom of Tonga. 70 T-shirts were gifted on this occasion.
- 9th IDY was organised in Tonga on 24 June 2023 in collaboration with the Amar Katha Ramayan Manadli (Tonga) and Ministry of Health, Government of the Kingdom of Tonga. 80 T-shirts were gifted on this occasion. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu was the Chief Guest and Minister of Internal Affairs of Tonga, Lord Vaea was the guest of Honour for the event.

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