

India-St. Vincent and the Grenadines Relations

OVERVIEW

1. St. Vincent and the Grenadines and India enjoy cordial relations and have interacted actively in the U.N., Commonwealth and NAM. However, direct bilateral, political and economic contacts have remained limited. As the population of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is very small (approximately 1,17,000 as per the latest census), the scope for bilateral interaction is limited.
2. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is an active Commonwealth member and is also a member state of regional groups such as CARICOM, Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). St. Vincent has always supported India at UN and other international forums and had extended support for India's candidature to Non Permanent Seat at UNSC. It has also committed support for India's bid for Permanent Membership of UN Security Council.

Political

3. St Vincent and the Grenadines is a parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth of Nations. Control of government rests with the Prime Minister and the cabinet. The Parliament is a unicameral body (House of Assembly with 21 seats, out of which 15 are elected representatives and six are appointed senators). The Governor-General appoints Senators, four on the advice of the Prime Minister and two on the advice of the leader of the opposition. The parliamentary term of office is five years, although the Prime Minister may call elections at any time.

The main political parties are United Labour Party (ULP) and New Democratic Party (NDP). In the December, 2010 Parliamentary elections, the ULP of Prime Minister Ralph E. Gonsalves won a third term, though with a slender majority of 8 seats to 7 over its rival NDP. Earlier, in December, 2005 and in March, 2001, the ULP had won 12 seats out of the 15 seats in the Parliament.

VISITS

4. There have been no high level visits from either side between the two countries in the recent past. However, on 1st June, 2007, Mr. Vayalar Ravi, 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, MOIA also had a meeting with Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent & the Grenadines. Recently a cultural troupe from ICCR

had visited the island and performed at Indan Arrival Day of St. Vincent. The Queens Baton for Commonwealth Games also toured the island in March, 2010.

BILATERAL COOPERATION

5. The Government of India has donated US\$ 100,000/- to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in assistance in the wake of damage caused by the double-barreled assaults of October 2010's Hurricane Tomas and the April 2011 flash floods and landslides.

6. India's Economic and Technical Cooperation with SVG has been very limited. SVG wants India's help in the development of its food processing sector. As the production of agricultural items, including fruits and vegetables in SVG is very small, they need technologies suitable for small scale and tiny sector.

7. Recently St. Vincent's Minister of Telecommunications, Science, Technology and Industry has made a request for Technical Assistance and Support for ICT Centre for Excellence and Innovation. The proposal is being examined by Indian authorities and a draft MOU has been given to the Government of St. Vincent & Grenadines for approval.

ITEC PROGRAMME

8. India provides ten number of ITEC slots to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. There is a request from the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for some scholarships for its students to study in higher educational institutes in India. MEA has also approved the deputation of an ITEC expert in Food Technology for a period of one month to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

TRADE

9. Bilateral trade between India and St. Vincent and the Grenadines has not been very significant. According to available figures, trade from 2007-08 to 2010-11 was as follows:

	(Value in US\$ Millions)			
	Year 2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
TOTAL TRADE	36.84	7.84	1.40	0.41
%Growth	1,267.82	-78.71	-82.19	-70.39
Exports to India	36.37	7.02	1.04	0.00
Imports from India	0.47	0.82	0.36	0.41

INDIAN COMMUNITY

10. There are some Indian medical doctors in St. Vincent and the Grenadines who are very highly respected. Many of them work in the Government hospitals as well as have their private practices. There is an offshore Campus of a Medical College in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in which majority of faculty members and students are of Indian origin from the United States of America as well as some faculty members from India. There are two prominent Sindhi businessmen in St. Vincent and the Grenadines who are engaged in importing, duty free shops and trading.

11. There are about 3,000 persons of Indian origin who came to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the 19th century as indentured labour. Most of these PIOs have got assimilated in the mainstream local society. They have also changed their religion and names. However, there is a renewed interest among these PIOs and they want to preserve their heritage with pride.

12. PIOs in the island established the St. Vincent & the Grenadines Indian Heritage Foundation in October, 2006 with the aim to revive and promote cultural and social links with India. They also have an active website. Due to the efforts of the Foundation, 1st June has been declared as Indian Arrival Day in St. Vincent whereas 7th October has been declared as Indian Heritage Day.

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