



India - Trinidad and Tobago Relations

For Prelims: [Trinidad and Tobago](#), [Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure](#), [Global Biofuel Alliance](#), [Most Favoured Nation](#), CARICOM

For Mains: India's engagement with the Global South, India - Trinidad and Tobago Relations, Strengthening of India-CARICOM relations, Indentured Labour System and Girmitiyas.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to [Trinidad and Tobago](#), marked the first Indian Prime Ministerial visit since 1999.

- During the visit, he was conferred with the country's highest civilian honour, **The Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago**, for his global leadership, strong diaspora engagement, and humanitarian efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Trinidad and Tobago

- **Geography & Location:** Trinidad and Tobago is located in the southeastern West Indies (Caribbean) and comprises two main islands Trinidad and Tobago, along with several smaller islands.
 - It lies **northeast of Venezuela and northwest of Guyana**, separated from **Venezuela by the Gulf of Paria** and narrow channels.
- **Capital:** Port of Spain (Trinidad).
- **Economic Aspects**
 - **Natural Resources:** Oil & gas, asphalt, agriculture (sugarcane)
 - **Key Economic Activities:** Petroleum refining, LNG exports, agriculture, tourism.
- **Environment & Biodiversity:** Trinidad has rainforests, swamps (Caroni, Nariva), and mangroves
 - **Notable species:** Scarlet Ibis (national bird), manatees, ocelots, caiman, agouti.
 - **Pitch Lake:** World's **largest natural reservoir of asphalt deposit (Trinidad)**.
 - **Mountain Range:** Northern Range, part of the Andes extension.



What are the Key Outcomes of the PM's State Visit to Trinidad and Tobago?

- **Cooperation in Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and Biofuels:** Trinidad and Tobago agreed to join India's global initiatives, the [Coalition of Disaster Resilient Infrastructure \(CDRI\)](#) and the [Global Biofuel Alliance \(GBA\)](#).
- **Indian Grant Assistance for Quick Impact Projects (QIPs):** India will fund up to five projects annually (each ≤ USD 50,000) for grassroots community development.
 - This will focus on addressing immediate developmental needs in the country.
- **Pharmaceutical Cooperation and Medical Treatment:** An MoU was signed to **enhance collaboration in the pharmaceutical sector**.
 - This agreement will improve access to affordable, quality generic medicines from India and enable the provision of medical treatment in India for people in Trinidad and Tobago.
- **Diplomatic Training and Capacity Building:** An agreement was reached for the **training of Trinidad and Tobago diplomats** in Indian institutes, as well as by Indian experts.
 - This initiative is expected to **enhance diplomatic skills and bilateral relations**.
- **Diaspora Engagement and Support for Education:**
 - India announced that the [Overseas Citizens of India \(OCI\)](#) card facility would be extended to the **6th generation of Indian diaspora members** in Trinidad and Tobago (previously available only to the 4th generation).
- **Digital Support:** Both sides agreed to collaborate on [India Stack](#) solutions such as **DigiLocker**, and **e-Sign**.
 - Trinidad and Tobago is the **first Caribbean nation to adopt the [Unified Payments Interface \(UPI\)](#)**.
- **Support to Agriculture and Healthcare:** India gifted the first batch of agro-machinery worth USD 1 million, as agreed under the 2024 MoU, to Trinidad and Tobago's **National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO)**, and extended support for millet cultivation, seaweed-based fertilizers, and natural farming.
- **Strengthening Regional Ties and Counterterrorism Cooperation:** Both leaders pledged to strengthen counterterrorism cooperation, deepen [India-Caribbean Community \(CARICOM\) ties](#), and enhance solidarity among Global South nations.
- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Two **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Chairs in Hindi and**

- Indian Studies** will be re-established at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad and Tobago.
- India has also extended help to train the Hindu religious priests (Pandits) of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean region.
 - This will promote cultural exchange and deepen understanding of Indian languages and culture.
 - PM Narendra Modi gifted holy water from the **Sarayu River and Mahakumbh**, and a replica of the Ram Mandir to Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago **Kamla Persad-Bissessar, honouring her Bihari roots**.

How are India - Trinidad and Tobago Relations Evolved Over Time?

- **Historical Ties:** India and Trinidad & Tobago share deep-rooted ties dating back to 1845, when the first Indian indentured workers (**mostly Bhojpuri Girmitiyas**) arrived aboard the '**Fatel Razack**'.
 - Their descendants now make up **40-45% of the population**, playing a vital role in the country's socio-economic fabric.
 - Bilateral relations, formally established in 1962, have remained warm and dynamic.
- **Economic and Commercial Relations:** India and Trinidad and Tobago signed a **Most Favoured Nation (MFN)** status trade agreement in **1997**, which continues to facilitate trade between the two nations.
 - The bilateral trade has shown growth post-pandemic, with major exports from India including **pharmaceutical products, vehicles, and iron**.
 - **India's Exports to Trinidad and Tobago: USD 120.65 million (2024-25)**
 - **India's Imports from Trinidad and Tobago: USD 220.96 million (2024-25)**
- **Development Partnership:** During the pandemic, a USD 1 million '**Bringing High and Low Technology (HALT)**' project was implemented in Trinidad & Tobago under the India-UNDP Fund.
 - It included 8 mobile healthcare robots, a telemedicine system, hand hygiene stations, and related equipment, and was completed in August 2024.

The Indentured Labour System and the Bhojpuri Girmitiyas

- **Indentured labour system:** It was introduced post-slavery, involving individuals agreeing to work for a fixed period in return for passage, food, and shelter.
 - While presented as a contract system, it was **exploitative**, with harsh working conditions, poor wages, and restricted mobility.
 - Workers often faced **penalties for absence**, lived under constant surveillance, and endured racial and physical abuse.
 - Women, recruited mainly to "balance" the gender ratio, faced **gendered discrimination and sexual exploitation**.
 - Mahatma Gandhi strongly opposed the indentured labour system. In 1917, after a bill for its abolition was rejected, he launched a nationwide agitation and met Viceroy Lord Chelmsford. The system was officially abolished in 1920.
- **Girmitiyas:** The term Girmitiyas (derived from 'agreement')) refers to **Indian indentured labourers** who were taken to British colonies like Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, Mauritius, and Guyana during the 19th and early 20th centuries under the indentured labour system.
 - Most of them came from Bhojpuri- and Awadhi-speaking districts such as Chhapra, Ballia, Ara, Banaras, Siwan, Gopalganj, and Azamgarh in present-day Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

How are India-CARICOM Relations?

- **About:** Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was established in 1973 through the **Treaty of Chaguaramas** in Trinidad & Tobago, CARICOM evolved from the **Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA)** to promote economic integration and cooperation.
 - The **CARICOM consists of 15 Member States and 6 Associate Members**.
 - The 15 members include: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize,

Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago.

- CARICOM's Chairmanship rotates every six months among member states. Its Secretariat, based in **Georgetown, Guyana**, is led by a Secretary-General.

▪ **India-CARICOM Relations:**

- **Capacity Building and Developmental Assistance:** India has provided continuous capacity building and developmental assistance to CARICOM countries.
 - India committed **USD 14 million grant for Community Development Projects (CDPs)**, with USD 1 million allocated for each CARICOM country.
 - **USD 150 million Line of Credit** was announced for projects on solar, renewable energy, and climate change.
- **Educational and Diplomatic Cooperation:** India offers higher education opportunities to students from Caribbean countries through the **Indian Technical and Economic Co-operation (ITEC) programme**.
- **India-CARICOM Summit:** The **2nd India-CARICOM Summit was held in 2024** in Georgetown, Guyana.
 - The partnership is built on seven key pillars: capacity building, agriculture and food security, renewable energy and climate change, innovation, technology and trade, cricket and culture, ocean economy, and healthcare.

Drishti Mains Question:

Examine India's bilateral and cultural relations with Trinidad and Tobago as part of its Global South strategy. Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year's Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q. Why indentured labour was taken by the British from India to other colonies? Have they been able to preserve their cultural identity over there? (2018)

Q. Indian Diaspora has an important role to play in South East Asian countries' economy and society. Appraise the role of Indian Diaspora in South-East Asia in this context. (2017)