

**Embassy of India**  
**Wellington, New Zealand**  
**India- New Zealand Bilateral Relations**

**INDIA - NZ: BILATERAL BRIEF**

India and New Zealand (NZ) have historically shared close and cordial ties. Similarities such as membership of the Commonwealth, common law practices and pursuing shared aspirations of achieving economic development and prosperity through democratic governance systems for diverse communities in both countries (NZ prides itself as one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world with 213 ethnicities officially recorded) provide an excellent backdrop for deepening the friendly ties. Both countries became independent in the same year and diplomatic representation of India was established in 1950 with the opening of a Trade Commission, which was later upgraded to High Commission. Tourism and sporting links, particularly in cricket, hockey and mountaineering, have also played a significant role in fostering goodwill between the two countries. Both countries are fellow travellers in their commitment to disarmament, global peace, North-South Dialogue, human rights, ecological preservation and combating international terrorism. People-to-people contacts have flourished since migration from India began at the turn of the last century. NZ has approximately 2,50,000 persons of Indian origin & NRIs, a vast majority of which has made NZ their permanent home. India is the second largest source of international students in NZ pursuing higher education in various disciplines such as information technology, hospitality, science, engineering and architecture.

2. Leadership of both the countries have shown significant interest in raising all aspects of the relationship to the next level. This is reflected in a series of high-level bilateral visits and meetings. PM Jacinda Ardern and PM Shri Narendra Modi had a bilateral meeting in New York on the side lines of UNGA on 25 September 2019, during which they discussed steps to intensify political, economic, defence, security and people to people relations. PM Ardern also participated in the special event commemorating 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi in New York and delivered a keynote speech at the event titled “Leadership matters: Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi in the contemporary world”, underlining the three Gandhian values of tolerance, equality and sanctity of non-violence as most relevant to the contemporary world. PM John Key visited India in October, 2016 during which institutional mechanisms such as Foreign Office Consultation and cooperation on cyber security were established that substantially enhanced the bilateral relationship and agreements were signed on food safety and cooperation in the field of youth affairs and sports. Late Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the then President of India paid a State visit to NZ from 30 April-2 May 2016 and had substantive meetings with PM Sir John Key and Leader of Opposition Mr Andrew Little. An Air Services Agreement was signed between the two countries. An MoU between ICCR and Victoria University of Wellington to extend the Indian Chair in Wellington was signed at Auckland University of Technology in his presence.

NZ identified India as a priority country in its “Opening Doors to India” policy notified in October 2011, which was reiterated in 2015. In 2011, NZ launched the NZ Inc. India Strategy, aiming to make India a core trade, economic and political partner for NZ. On the eve of the visit of DPM / Foreign Minister of NZ to India from 25-28 February, 2020, NZ released the Strategy Paper “India-NZ 2025 – Investing in the Relationship”, which builds on earlier policy papers and envisions a more “enduring strategic relationship” with India over the next five years.

3. The then DPM & FM Winston Peters led a high-level delegation to India from 25-29 February, 2020 that included Minister for Trade and Export Growth David Parker, Labour MP Priyanca Radhakrishnan, ex-MP Mahesh Bindra, CEO of Asia NZ Foundation Simon Draper, senior officials from MFAT and 18 business representatives. DPM & FM Peters met EAM and reviewed the state of bilateral relations. Trade Minister Parker met C&IM Shri Piyush Goyal, Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change and Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant. He attended India-NZ Business Forum organised by FICCI and also visited Azadpur, Asia’s largest fruit and vegetable market. EAM hosted dinner for DPM & FM which was also attended by Trade Minister Parker and CIM. He also inaugurated the ‘NZ Centre’ at IIT Delhi on 26 February, 2020 that will serve as a nodal point of academic collaboration between all the eight NZ universities and Indian Universities and institutes of higher learning. On 1 March, External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S. Jaishankar had an introductory telephonic conversation with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs of NZ Hon. Nanaia Mahuta during which both leaders discussed all aspects of bilateral relations and exchanged updates on Covid-19.

4. Other significant recent visits / meetings include those of the then Leader of Opposition Simon Bridges in September, 2019, meeting of NZ Minister of Agriculture and Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth Damien O’Connor with Hon’ble Commerce and Industry Minister of India Shri Piyush Goyal in Bangkok in September 2019 and subsequently in Delhi in November 2019, visit of a four-member delegation from NZ Parliament’s South and South East Asia Parliamentary Friendship Group to India in November, 2019; visit of Admiral Karambir Singh, Chief of Indian Navy to NZ in September, 2019; meeting of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh with NZ Defence Minister Mr. Ron Mark in Bangkok in November 2019; visit of NZ Chief of Defence Force to India in February 2018; visit of MoS (VKS) to NZ in June 2017 and visit of the then Lok Sabha Speaker Hon’ble Mrs. Sumitra Mahajan in September, 2016.

5. The Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) Tarini docked at Lyttleton Port in NZ from 29 Nov to 12 December 2017 in the second leg of its maiden voyage to circumnavigate the globe. The all-women crew of the world circumnavigation was welcomed by Deputy Mayor of Christchurch with a traditional Maori performance.

6. Bilateral institutional mechanisms: On 25 May 2021, India & NZ held 3rd round of Foreign Office Consultations virtually. The Indian side was led by Smt Riva Ganguly Das, Secretary (East) MEA while the New Zealand side was led by Mr. Mark Sinclair, Deputy Secretary, Americas and Asia Group, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Both sides discussed steps to be taken to enhance cooperation in defence and security, trade and investment, space, counterterrorism, cyber security, disarmament and climate change and people-to-people ties. Response to Covid-19 and access to vaccines and medicines for

containing the pandemic were also discussed. Both sides also exchanged views on various regional and global issues. The inaugural India-NZ Cyber Dialogue was held in New Delhi in November 2017. The seventh round of India-NZ Economic Dialogue was held in New Delhi on 28 November, 2019 and discussions focused on current economic conditions, global economic environment, infrastructure and tax reforms.

7. Cooperation on Covid-19 pandemic: Both countries cooperated extensively both bilaterally and as part of a group of like-minded countries in fighting against the pandemic by ensuring continuity of supply chains of essential commodities, medicines and vaccines. Both countries also facilitated repatriation of each other's nationals stranded in the wake of closure of international borders. Under the Vande Bharat Mission, 11 Air India and an equal number of private chartered flights repatriated almost 4000 Indians from NZ and about 3000 Kiwis from India. NZ government and people showed strong solidarity with India during the second wave of the pandemic.

8. Cooperation in education sector: On 11 February 2020, The Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi signed a MoU with NZ universities to establish a NZ Centre at the Institute, which was inaugurated by the then DPM and Foreign Minister of NZ Winston Peters. The Centre will be a hub of collaboration between the academic institutions of two countries in areas such as cancer, waste management, cyber security, robotics, autonomous vehicles and medical technology. During the visit of PM John Key to India in June 2011, the two countries set up an India-NZ Education Council. NZ India Research Institute, a national centre of Indian studies in NZ was launched in August, 2013. It is a consortium of scholars actively engaged in research on India in seven prominent NZ universities. There is an MoU between ICCR and Victoria University of Wellington for a Chair of Indian Studies, under which a professor is deputed for one semester. The NZ Excellence Award programme, established in 2016 as a partnership between Education NZ and Universities NZ, allocated 35 scholarships of NZ\$5000 each for Indian students across all eight major NZ universities. In November 2018, the University of Auckland, NZ's largest university and IIT Kharagpur signed an MoU as part of Government of India's SPARC initiative, to advance academic exchange and research collaboration. In December 2019, both universities signed an agreement to offer joint PhD programmes in areas such as computational modelling, cyber-security, advanced materials, precision-driven medicine and cancer research.

## **ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL RELATIONS**

9. India is NZ's 11th largest two-way trading partner with total two-way trade valued at US\$1.80 bn during the year ending September 2020. Education and tourism are NZ's growth sectors with India. Indian students numbering approximately 15000 (before the pandemic) are the 2nd largest source of international students for NZ. The number of Indian visitors to NZ in 2018 was the 9th largest at 67,953 (+10.60%). India primarily imports logs and forestry products, wood pulp, wool and edible fruit & nuts from NZ. Indian exports to NZ mostly are pharmaceuticals/medications, precious metals and gems, textiles and motor vehicles and non-knitted apparel and accessories.

10. **Bilateral Trade in the last 5 years (in US Dollars):**

	Indian Imports from NZ		Total Imports	Indian Exports to NZ		Total Exports	Total Trade (US\$ billion)
	Goods	Services		Goods	Services		
2020	0.34b	0.6b	0.93b	0.51b	0.26b	0.74b	\$1.67b
2019	0.51b	0.70b	1.22b	0.56b	0.20b	0.75b	\$1.97b
2018	0.51b	0.77b	1.28b	0.49b	0.20b	0.69b	\$1.97b
2017	0.50b	0.85b	1.35b	0.43b	0.20b	0.63b	\$1.98b
2016	0.49b	0.86b	1.35b	0.43b	0.17b	0.60b	\$1.94b
2015	0.47b	0.64b	1.11b	0.41b	0.16b	0.57b	\$1.68b

*\*Source: Statistics NZ*

Both sides are committed to work towards a high-quality, comprehensive and balanced bilateral FTA, which is being negotiated since 2010.

11. All major Indian IT companies are present in NZ. Bank of India, Bank of Baroda and New India Assurance have commercial operations in NZ. Indian IT giant HCI, which already has a significant presence in NZ, opened a delivery centre in Hamilton to service Fonterra, one of world's biggest dairy cooperative. In 2020, it won \$ 20 million annual contract from Fonterra. In September 2018, Indian cab services company, Ola, launched in NZ and has been gradually expanding its operations. Mahindra Motors, Tech Mahindra Ltd, Infosys, Dr. Reddy Laboratories and Royal Enfield Motors have presence in NZ. In October 2020, Tech Mahindra announced the acquisition of Melbourne based consulting company Tnzing Ltd for \$ 29.5 mn. In October 2016, Zindia Limited (the largest exporter of NZ logs to India) signed a MoU with Adani Port and SEZ Limited to promote a Timber Industrial Park at Mudra Port in Gujarat.

12. In 2019, Fonterra, NZ's biggest milk producing cooperative, entered into a joint venture with Future Retail Group and has launched a range of premium dairy products using Indian raw material. Several other NZ companies have been successfully operating in India, reaping the advantage of scaling up that the large Indian market offers.

Civil Aviation Cooperation: Given the large Indian diaspora in NZ and increasing two-way tourism flow, there is a strong case for a direct air connection between the two countries which might prove to be a game-change for all aspects of bilateral relations. In September 2019, a high-level delegation including stakeholders in aviation and tourism sector of NZ visited India to explore the possibility of direct air connectivity between the two countries. The direct flights operated between the two countries under the Vande Bharat Mission have strengthened the prospects of a direct weekly flight as and when the possibility becomes commercially feasible for airlines.

13. India NZ Business Council (INZBC) and India NZ Trade Alliance (INZTA) are the two prominent organizations working to promote India-NZ trade and investment relations. The

'India-NZ Business Summit' organized by INZBC in partnership with the Indian High Commission is its annual flagship event drawing participation from the highest level of leadership in government, business and academia from both countries to deliberate on ways and means of strengthening bilateral trade and investment. INZBC, in association with the High Commission of India, organized the 7th India-NZ Business Summit in Auckland on 23-24 June in a hybrid format. The flagship event brought together key stakeholders from political leadership, business and academia. The Summit was jointly inaugurated by NZ FM Nanaia Mahuta and MoS(VM) Shri V. Muraleedharan. CEO NITI Aayog and CEO Invest India were other significant participants from India. In his keynote address, High Commissioner underlined the importance of relationship building, looking beyond FTA and reviving a regular bilateral trade consultation mechanism like Joint Trade Commission to reinvigorate the trade and investment relationship. INZTA was founded in 2015 and offers a range of services to companies seeking to enter markets in both countries and liaises with all major business chambers of India including CII, ASSOCHAM, etc.

## **PEOPLE TO PEOPLE LINKS**

14. Indians started arriving in NZ in the late 18th century on British East India Company ships, bringing supplies to Australian convict settlements. Most of the initial immigrants were from Gujarat followed by Punjab. In 1920, they formed the Auckland Indian Association, which celebrated its centenary last year. Initially, most Indians settled down in the North Island, especially Auckland, although there were communities in Wellington, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Manawatu, Wairarapa and Christchurch. After the Second World War, Punjabi Sikhs who often had farming experience, settled mainly in the Waikato district and took up dairy farming. During 1970s, with the opening of supermarkets and dairies (convenience stores), Indian immigrants started working in retail, video stores and restaurants. The hard-working Indians, with the habit to save, soon prospered and brought their families to lead a more settled life. In the last decade, most of the new immigrants came as students and settled down in jobs and professions after completing their education and as per the 2018 census, number about 2,50,000, making 5% of NZ's total population. Hindi is the fourth most spoken language in NZ. There are Indian Associations in all major towns, which help the community nurture its cultural heritage. NZ India Central Association, founded in 1926, is the umbrella organisation of all Indian associations in NZ and will celebrate its centenary in a few years' time. The presence of large Indian diaspora in NZ acts as a strong 'living bridge' between the two countries. Indians have integrated themselves well with the local communities while preserving their Indian identity.

15. Be it business or sports, academics or politics, Indians have flourished and made a mark for themselves in their chosen trades and professions. As per a recent study conducted by an Indian association, by a conservative estimate, PIOs contribute \$ 10 bn to the NZ economy.

16. In the 2020 general elections, Hon'ble Priyanca Radhakrishnan and Dr. Gaurav Sharma became the first ever PIOs to be elected to NZ Parliament by popular vote and Hon'ble Priyanca Radhakrishnan became the first ever PIO to be appointed a Minister in the NZ government. Dr. Gaurav Sharma also created history by being only the second PIO to have taken his Parliamentary oath in Sanskrit. Ms. Priyanca Radhakrishnan has recently been

awarded with the Pravasi Bhartiya Samman, becoming the 7th person from NZ to do so. Six earlier recipients of the award are Ms. Sukhi Turner (2004), Judge Ajit Swaran Singh (2008), Sir Anand Satyanand (2011), Dr. Satendra Kumar Singh (2013), Mr. Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi (2015) and Mr. Bhav Dhillon (2019). Ms. Priyanca Radhakrishnan also participated online in the Youth PBD Convention as a Special Guest on 8 January, 2021. Since 2018, Shri Bhav Dhillon has been appointed as the Honorary Consul in Auckland and in September 2020 he became the first PIO to be appointed Chairman of the influential community trust Foundation North which controls assets of over \$ 1 bn. There are several ethnic Indian print and digital newspapers and a few radio and TV channels, prominent among them being Indian Weekender, Indian Newslink, The Indian News, Radio Tarana, Humm FM and Apna TV.

17. All Indian festivals including Diwali, Holi, Rakshabandhan, Baisakhi, Guruparvs, Onam, Pongal, Annakut etc are celebrated with much enthusiasm all over NZ. 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and the 550th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev were celebrated all over NZ and the historic occasions were marked by NZ government by releasing commemorative postal stamps. Independence Day, Republic Day and International Day of Yoga are also celebrated with much enthusiasm both officially by the High Commission as well as by various community associations in all big cities of NZ. Traditional Maori cultural troupes occasionally visit India and perform at various prestigious venues. There are several schools all over NZ that teach Indian traditional art forms such as Kathak and Bharatnatyam as well as contemporary Bollywood dance styles. There are several schools teaching and promoting Hindi and other Indian languages in NZ. The Ministry of Culture of India decided to hold **Festival of India** in 2020 with a series of events across NZ but which had to be postponed because of Covid-19.

18. Both countries enjoy close sporting links, particularly in cricket, hockey and mountaineering. In the field of mountaineering, Sir Edmund Hillary, who is considered a NZ hero, is also an iconic name in India. He served as NZ High Commissioner to India from 1985 to 1988. In the field of cricket, both countries started playing at test level in 1950s and enjoy a friendly rivalry. Indian cricket team has toured NZ consecutively in the last two years. Indian Women's hockey team also toured Auckland from 23 to 26 January, 2020.

19. While India has a High Commission in Wellington and an Honorary Consulate in Auckland, New Zealand has a High Commission in New Delhi and a Consulate General in Mumbai. Coordinates of HCI, Wellington and Honorary Consulate in Auckland are as follows:

Website: [www.hciwellington.gov.in](http://www.hciwellington.gov.in)

Facebook page: @highcommissionofindiannewzealand

Twitter handle: @IndiainNZ

**Source: Embassy of India, New Zealand Web site July 2021.**