

6 CHAPTER

India and Fiji Relations

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Basic background
- Analysis of bilateral visits

BASIC BACKGROUND

Fiji, like India, is an erstwhile British colony. India's relations with Fiji go back to 1897 when the British started importing labour from India to work on the sugarcane fields of Fiji. In early 20th century, a lot of traders from India began to settle in Fiji. The indentured labour system was abolished in 1920. While India became independent in 1947, Fiji continued to be under British rule till 1970. When in 1970 it gained independence, India upgraded the post of commissioner in Fiji to a high commission and opened a proper Indian Mission. In 1971, the PM of Fiji, Ratu Mara, visited India, which was followed by a visit from Indira Gandhi to Fiji in 1981. Fiji, in 2004, established a High Commission in India. In 2005, the Fijian PM Laisenia Qarase visited India and signed agreements on health, tourism, IT and established a trade commission.

ANALYSIS OF PM'S VISIT—NOVEMBER 2014

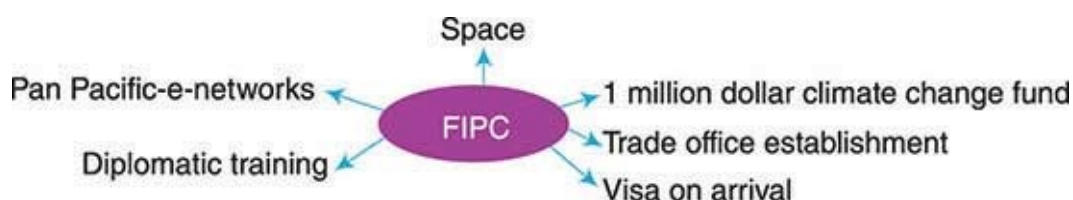
In November 2014, the Indian PM Narendra Modi visited Fiji in an official tour after a gap of 33 years. The visit of the PM coincided with a newly elected democratic government in Fiji led by Frank Bainimarama after a long military rule. India, in recent years, has assisted the democratic transition in Fiji. It has been a part of a multilateral observer group for democratic restoration. Modi also addressed the Fijian parliament. He announced a 5 million dollar fund for village entrepreneurship and small business development. The PM asserted that Fiji is a hub for India's engagement in the Pacific. India also approved Visa on Arrival for Fijians visiting India. India has decided to assist Fiji in disaster preparedness and disaster management.

Space Cooperation and Mangalyaan

In 2013, the ISRO sent a team of scientists to Fiji for tracking Mangalyaan. As of now, the ISRO has had to be dependent upon the Australian and the US stations to monitor Indian satellites over the Pacific. India decided to work with Fiji in this regard from 2015. In August, 2015, India hosted the second Forum for Indian Pacific Cooperation (FIPC-2) in Jaipur. The 14 heads of states of the Pacific Islands came to India to attend the conference. In the meeting, India offered that space cooperation be

explored and subsequently decided to establish a data collection hub for the Mangalyaan in Fiji for which the ISRO sent a team of 18 scientists to be stationed there. The ISRO wants to establish Fiji as a hub for space technology and intends to establish a permanent tracking station in the country. If, in future, it succeeds in so doing, this would open up the arena of space cooperation and ensure strategic presence of India in the Pacific.

In summation, the FIPC achieved the following:



The India–Fiji engagement by the Indian PM’s visit marks a major diplomatic outreach by India. India has gained space in Pacific Isles community. India now needs to have a proactive, aggressive diplomacy with respect to Fiji and foster development in Pacific Islands.



End of Part Questions

1. Australia and India can ensure that Indo-Pacific remains anchored to a resilient rules based order. Discuss.
2. Malabar exercises have a far reaching geopolitical impact on the Asia-Pacific regional order. Examine.
3. “India needs to take steps to avoid the ‘Thucydides trap’ by ensuring a favorable regional balance of power through cooperation, partnership and short term alliances if needed”. Examine the statement in the light of Indian engagement with states in South East and East Asia.
4. Malabar-2017 demonstrates a shared determination of India, Japan and USA to safeguard a free and open Indo-Pacific order. Examine.
5. For India to succeed in the negotiations of the RCEP, the key lies in driving domestic growth through productivity and innovation than merely emphasizing the rhetoric of low cost labor. Examine the major challenges faced by India in negotiating the RCEP.
6. India’s Act East Policy rightly seeks to realign Indian foreign policy along its

historical axis. Discuss.

7. Buddhist outreach is a key element of India's Act East Policy. Discuss.

8. The deepening of India-Taiwan relations is a mutually beneficial for both countries. Discuss the possibilities in economic and strategic realm.

9. Cooperation with like minded countries gives India more space to emerge as a key regional interlocutor. Examine the statement with respect to India as a pivot in the Indo-Pacific.

10. A deeper relationship with Singapore can ensure that India can use Singapore as a financial hub to internationalize the Indian Rupee and attract foreign investment. Discuss the possibility of India using Singapore as a financial hub and compare it with the Chinese model of Hong Kong.

11. Can India go beyond the diplomatic rhetoric and help Chinese neighbors enhance capabilities to stand up to Beijing? Examine the statement with respect to defense partnerships India is envisaging under the Act East Policy with respect to Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand and Singapore.

12. Is it wise for India to play the Taiwan and Xinjiang card and make China adhere to 'One India' policy? Examine the strategic implications.

13. India's financial aid to Philippines to fight the Islamic State (ISIL) signals a reworking of India's ASEAN outreach and attempts to burnish India's image as a Net Security Provider in the ASEAN region. Examine.