

**EMBASSY OF INDIA
PARAMARIBO**

PRESS RELEASE

Visa waiver agreement for Diplomatic and Official Passport holders of the Republic of India and Saint Lucia signed today at Castries, Saint Lucia

A visa waiver agreement for Diplomatic and Official Passport holders, facilitating a visa free travel for holders of the diplomatic and official passports between India and St. Lucia was signed on 16 April 2024.

The Prime Minister of Saint Lucia, Honourable Mr. Philip J. Pierre and Dr. Shankar Balachandran, Ambassador of India to Suriname and concurrently accredited as the non-resident High Commissioner of India to Saint Lucia signed the agreement at the Parliament of Saint Lucia in Castries.

The High Commissioner thanked the Hon'ble Prime Minister for his generosity in accommodating the signing in the absence of his External Affairs Minister by taking time off from the Parliament session. The Hon'ble Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the agreement saying, though the signing was a bit delayed, it would strengthen the bilateral relations.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Mr. Guillame Simon, Permanent Secretary, Ms. Shannica Plummer - Antoine, Chief of Protocol, Ms. Maundy Lewis, Personal Assistant to the Prime Minister, Press Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister and Ms. Aisha Jn Baptiste, Legal Officer conducted the signing ceremony.

Both countries felt the need for the agreement as, while St. Lucian citizens could apply for an E-visa and obtain the same in less than three days, diplomats and officials needing to travel to India need to apply to the Embassy in Paramaribo to service their passports for a gratis diplomatic/official visa which could take about 30 days in transit time for the courier to work both ways. Besides the courier expenses and a long transit time, it was leading to an avoidable, extended window of planning for those travelling to India on official business. The ITEC scholarship slots offered by India to public servants of Saint Lucia also remained under-utilized due to this factor. The signing of this agreement thus would bring both countries closer than ever before with the travel of an important segment of the Government addressed.

This agreement will come into effect once ratified by both countries.

Representative photographs are attached.









