



Briefing Note: Meeting with Indian Minister of State for External Affairs 28 September 2023

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister of Education		
Cc:			
Date:	22 September 2023	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	Restricted	METIS No:	1317914
Drafter:	Wendy Hart	DDI:	s9(2)(a)
Key Contact:	Daniel Tasker	DDI:	s9(2)(a)
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- note** the information provided in the briefing to support your meeting with Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, on Thursday 28 September 2023, 11.30am-12.00pm in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.
- note** that Grace McFarlane, Private Secretary from your office, Lisa Futschek, General Manager International, Education New Zealand and Liam Finnigan, Senior Policy Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will accompany you.

Noted

Noted

Proactive Release

- agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing following the visit, with information pertaining to the bilateral relationship with the Republic of India withheld under Section 6(a) of the Official Information Act as the information it contains may prejudice the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.

Agree / Disagree

Daniel Tasker
Senior Manager
Te Pou Kaupapahere

Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education

22/09/2023

28/09/2023



Summary

1. On Thursday 28 September 2023 you will be meeting with Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, 6(a) to highlight the mutual value of the education relationship between New Zealand and India.
2. Minister Singh will be in New Zealand for the India Business Summit (co-hosted by the Indian High Commission and the Auckland Business Chamber). The Minister will be accompanied by Indian High Commissioner to New Zealand, Her Excellency Neeta Bhushan, and other officials.
3. This briefing outlines the different elements of New Zealand's relationship with India and situates education cooperation as a key pillar in our approach to develop a long-term broad-based bilateral partnership that encompasses political, defence and security, people-to-people, cultural and economic components.
4. India is currently our second largest source country for international students; 6(a)
6(a)

.
5. Your meeting with the Indian Minister will support Government efforts to cultivate a long-term broad-based relationship with India, including sustaining high-level Ministerial engagement following Minister O'Connor's recent visit to India, and the meeting between Prime Minister Hipkins and his Indian counterpart that took place in May in Papua New Guinea.

Agenda

11.25am	<i>Approximate arrival time of Minister, Grace McFarlane, and Lisa Futschek at Cordis Hotel, 83 Symonds Street, Grafton, Auckland CBD. Met by Liam Finnigan (contact s9(2)(a)) and guided to meeting room</i>
11.30am	Meeting with Minister Singh <i>Accompanied by:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High Commissioner of India, Ms Neeta Bhushan• 6(a)
	Opening remarks by each Minister, followed by open discussion
	Photograph and gift exchange
12.00pm	<i>End of meeting and departure</i>

9(2)(g)(i)

Proactively Released

Background

Bilateral Context

1. The Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, will be in New Zealand for the India Business Summit. This political engagement builds on meetings in the past year between our Trade Ministers, Foreign Ministers, and Leaders, and provides an opportunity to reinforce our commitment to lift our engagement for mutual benefit.
2. The argument for closer relations with India is compelling. India recently became the world's most populous country, estimated to have one-fifth of the world's working-age population. As the fifth-largest economy in the world today and growing at a faster rate than any other G20 country, India could be second only to China in economic scale by 2050.
3. Minister O'Connor's visit to New Delhi (late August 2023) demonstrated the benefits of adopting a 'whole of government' approach to our engagement with India. His visit presented a joined-up, committed "NZ Inc." approach, and secured political endorsement to lift relations through increased sectoral cooperation. Through this approach, New Zealand's engagement with India will have an initial focus on four sectors to progress:
 - Primary sector partnerships in agriculture and horticulture;
 - Air connectivity, supported through the recently upgraded Air Services Agreement;
 - Improved India-New Zealand Ministerial and business-to-business relationship architecture; and
 - Optimised benefits derived through strengthened education cooperation.

India New Zealand Business Council report

4. The India New Zealand Business Council presented *India & New Zealand, A Relationship Ready For Its Next Phase* as a submission to the New Zealand Government, on the subject of taking the current trade relationship between New Zealand and India on a journey to its next (successful) phase. It included some ambitious recommendations around education. Responses were formulated by education agencies and included in the letter from Minister Mahuta and Minister O'Connor to the Council, a copy of which was referred to your office. These recommendations contributed to the 'whole of government' approach to lifting our

engagement and informed the sector cooperation approach and the four priority focus areas identified above in paragraph 3.

Education Cooperation

5. India has played, and continues to play, a significant role in New Zealand's international education sector. Students from India account for the second largest group of international students that choose to study with New Zealand. In 2019 there were 17,306 enrolments. Immigration New Zealand (INZ) visa data notes that in the first six months of 2019, approximately 5,400 offshore international student visas were decided with a 70% approval rate. In 2022, student enrolments from India had dropped to 3,985. In the first six months of 2023, approximately 4,400 offshore international student visas from Indian students were decided, with a 57% approval rate.
6. To encourage outbound student mobility, Education New Zealand (ENZ) administers the Prime Minister's Scholarships for Asia (PMSA) for New Zealand students. Since 2013, India has received 305 PMSA students, representing the second largest cohort of New Zealand students through the programme. In 2019, India cohorts received nearly 12% of the total funding for the PMSA awards. India will welcome three PMSA groups in 2023.
7. In April 2023, ENZ hosted the 'India-New Zealand Education Week', bringing together academics and education experts from both countries, across the education and business landscapes.
8. During the week, ENZ and all eight New Zealand universities launched the New Zealand Excellence Awards (NZEA). The NZEA is a scholarship programme exclusively available for Indian students who wish to study at New Zealand universities. These scholarships are jointly funded by ENZ and all eight New Zealand universities, amounting to approximately NZD\$320,000. This programme has supported over 200 Indian students to pursue undergraduate or post-graduate programmes across a range of disciplines. These include STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), Law, and Business, which ultimately lays the groundwork for further collaboration, especially in science and tech.

6(a)

10. 6(a)

New Zealand is shifting its focus towards being a bilateral education partner of choice and supporting India's education sector. This approach fits with India's National Education Policy 2020, which supports foreign tertiary institutions partnering with Indian institutions as well as New Zealand's International Education Strategy's (NZIES) Goal 3 - building global connections.

11. The New Zealand Centre at the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi (IIT Delhi) provides an existing platform for cooperation. The centre is co-funded by all New Zealand universities and IIT Delhi. The centre supports joint research and fellowship opportunities for academics from both countries. Projects being funded from July 2022 include genetic research, agriculture and wildlife conservation utilising drones, and behavioural research utilising virtual reality.

6(a)

Visa processing

13. There have been some concerns raised about visa processing for prospective students from India. INZ data shows that while most student visa applications are processed and decided within 30 business days, applications from Indian students take longer at approximately 39 business days. There may be pockets where there are problems with applications taking longer. This is often due to incomplete or poor-quality applications. Issues with financial evidence are noted in applications, and this is something that partner countries are also noting.
14. As at 16 September 2023, students from India are among the three highest volume groups applying for study at PTEs (55.3% approval rate), Te Pūkenga (65.2% approval rate) and universities (86.4% approval rate). In total, 9,817 learners from India have applied to study at these institutions since the borders reopened to international travel.
15. ENZ will continue to work with INZ to offer training for in-market stakeholders to support quality, bonafide applications.

Recognition of Qualifications

16. Following India's recent qualification recognition arrangements with Australia and UK for admission to higher education institutions (HEIs) in Australia and UK, the India-New Zealand Business Council proposed that New Zealand pursues a similar arrangement.
17. Tertiary institutions in New Zealand make their own admission decisions, accepting qualifications awarded by Indian HEIs that meet their criteria. An arrangement similar to that of Australia and UK may be possible if it is restricted for entry to HEIs.
18. New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) evaluates overseas tertiary and vocational qualifications to determine how they compare in New Zealand, primarily for immigration purposes. In the 2022/23 financial year, 94% of qualifications awarded by Indian higher education institutions were recognised by NZQA. This evaluation is not undertaken within a qualification recognition arrangement because NZQA evaluates individual qualifications.

Annex: Biography of Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh, Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India



Dr Rajkumar Ranjan Singh was born on 1 September, 1952 at Kongba Nandeibam Leikai, Imphal East, Manipur. He was sworn in as a Union Minister of State by the President of India on 7 July 2021. He officially took charge as Minister of State for External Affairs and Education on 8 July 2021.

Dr Singh is a Postgraduate in Geography and earned his Ph.D. from Gauhati University. He served in different capacities including as a Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Deputy Registrar and Registrar. He also served as Director in-charge of the UGC Academic Staff College and College Development Director of Manipur University till his superannuation in 2012.

He was a Senior Visiting Fellow in the Department of Geography in Manipur University, until he joined electoral politics in 2013. He has published 8 books and made numerous contributions to various national and international journals, and publications. During his academic career, Dr Singh also participated in several national and international consultative meetings on Human Resource Management, Security Sector Reforms and Land and Livelihood Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Since his election as a Member of the 17th Lok Sabha in 2019, Dr Singh has actively participated as a Member to the Parliamentary Committees on Central Council of Health and Family Welfare; Standing Committee for Science & Technology; Environment & Forest and Climate Change; Consultative Committee for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) and Parliamentary Rules Committee.

Dr Singh is married to Ch. Debala Devi, and has two sons. He dearly cherishes the memories of his daughter.