



Report of the Speaker's Parliamentary Delegation to India and Bhutan

May-June 2023

August 2023

Legislative Assembly

Parliament of Western Australia

Delegation Members

Hon Michelle Roberts MLA	Speaker of the Legislative Assembly Member for Midland
Dr David Honey MLA	Shadow Minister for State Development; Water; Hydrogen; Small Business; Science; Innovation & ICT Member for Cottesloe
Dr Jagadish Krishnan MLA	Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance; Commerce; Women's Interests Member for Riverton
Cassie Rowe MLA	Government Whip Member for Belmont
David Scaife MLA	Member for Cockburn
Kirsten Robinson	Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

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Buddha Dordenma in Kuenselphodrang, Thimphu

Presented by

Hon Michelle Roberts MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Laid on the Table of the Legislative Assembly on 31 August 2023

Delegation Visit to India and Bhutan

28 May to 11 June 2023

Delegation Membership

The delegation was comprised of:

- Hon Michelle Roberts MLA, Speaker (Leader of the delegation)
- Dr David Honey MLA (Member for Cottesloe, Liberal)
- Dr Jagadish Krishnan MLA (Member for Riverton, ALP)
- Ms Cassie Rowe MLA (Member for Belmont, ALP)
- Mr David Scaife MLA (Member for Cockburn, ALP)
- Ms Kirsten Robinson, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr Greg Roberts accompanied the delegation.

In India and Bhutan, the delegation was accompanied by Ms Nashid Chowdhury, Investment and Trade Commissioner, India-Gulf; Ms Cleona James, Director Investment and Trade, India from the Government of Western Australia's Mumbai Office; and Mr Vikram Walia, Business Development Manager, India-Gulf from the Chennai Office. In addition, further support was provided by Ms Jane MacDonald, Director Ministerial Missions and Delegations and Ms Ngor Tan, Manager Ministerial Missions and Liaison from Investment and Trade Western Australia in the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation in Perth.

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, Speakers of the Legislative Assembly have led delegations of members of the Legislative Assembly to visit Western Australia's major trading partners. These visits have included China, Japan, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Gulf Region trading partners, and South Africa. The Speaker decides on the destination, timing and composition of the delegation, and funding is provided from the budget of the Department of the Legislative Assembly. The principal aims of these visits have been to:

- introduce members of the Legislative Assembly to our major trading partners and involve them in discussions with corporations and others with significant interests in Western Australia;

- broaden the understanding of Western Australian members of political, governmental, economic, educational and cultural matters in those countries and to pursue the aims of sister-state arrangements where they exist;
- develop friendship and understanding at a high level between the Western Australian Parliament and Western Australia's partners and neighbours; and
- in some cases, facilitate assistance at a Parliamentary level.

Reciprocal visits are made to Western Australia from time to time.

The purpose of this visit to India and Bhutan was to provide an opportunity for the parliamentarians to gain a greater knowledge and understanding of these countries' economy, culture, government, political and industry sectors; to examine trade and other links; and to reinforce stronger ties between Western Australia and the two countries. The themes explored during the visit were education, critical minerals, creative industries, and cultural connections.

Specific areas of interest to the members included:

- exploring opportunities for Western Australia and India to partner in the critical minerals, battery manufacturing, and METS sectors (as identified in the Economic and Industry Standing Committee's Western Australia/India Report from the previous Parliament);
- understanding India's arts culture, including opportunities of successful cultural exchange between Western Australia and India;
- engaging with alumni from Western Australian universities based in Indian cities;
- gaining insights in the success India has had with its film industry and incorporating those practices and learnings in continued development of the film industry in Western Australia; and
- strengthening ties between Western Australia and Bhutan, given the 50th anniversary in 2019 of the first Bhutanese arrivals in Western Australia, and the 20th anniversary in 2022 of diplomatic relations between Bhutan and Australia.

Significance of India and Bhutan to Western Australia

The Government of Western Australia (GoWA) has had an office in Mumbai for 26 years, being the first Australian state to establish an official permanent presence in India.¹ It was also the first Australian state government to open an office in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, in December 2023. Together with an office in Dubai, the three offices provide assistance and advice to Western Australian businesses looking to export to or invest in South Asia, including India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal, and in the Gulf, Middle East and Africa. They also promote Western Australia as a place to invest, work, live and study.

India

India is the world's largest democracy and one of the fastest-growing major economies, with an estimated population of 1.45 billion.² It is a federal republic, with 28 states and eight union territories. Its Prime Minister is Narendra Modi. The following statistics from the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation illustrate the importance of India to the Western Australian economy:

- India is Western Australia's 9th largest trading partner, with \$5.1 billion of goods traded in 2022. Non-monetary gold accounted for 45% of Western Australia's goods exports to India in 2022, followed by petroleum (24%) and alumina (11%).
- India is Western Australia's 9th largest import market for goods, accounting for 4% of the State's goods imports in 2022. Petroleum accounted for 63% of Western Australia's goods imports from India in 2022, followed by manufactured goods (16%) and machinery and transport equipment (7%).
- India was Western Australia's 4th largest market for international visitors in 2022, with 23,835 visits (6% of the State's total international visits).
- People born in India were the 3rd largest overseas-born resident population in Western Australia in 2021.
- India is Western Australia's largest market for international students, comprising 20% of the State's total international student enrolments in 2022.³

¹ 'Building WA's links with India opens up many opportunities' by Roger Cook, *The West Australian*, 31 March 2003, p.57

² Estimated in November 2022, 'Country Details for India, Speaker's Parliamentary Delegation', Culture and Business Guide, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation

³ WA Trade Profiles: India – June 2023, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, pp19-20



Bhutan

The Kingdom of Bhutan is bordered by China and India, and has a population of nearly 800,000 people. It is a democratic constitutional monarchy, having transitioned in 2008 from an absolute monarchy. The head of state is His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the Fifth King (Dragon King). The Parliament is comprised of a 47-member National Assembly and a 25-member National Council. Bhutan's economy is largely based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and hydropower.

According to the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation statistics:

- Bhutan is Western Australia's 150th largest trading partner, with \$0.44 million of goods traded in 2022. Telecommunications equipment accounted for 38% of Western Australia's goods exports to Bhutan in 2022, followed by special transactions and commodities (17%) and automatic data processing machines (16%).
- Bhutan is Western Australia's 151st largest import market for goods, accounting for 0.00003% of the State's goods imports in 2022. Chemicals accounted for 76%

of Western Australia's goods imports from Bhutan in 2022, followed by manufactured goods (24%).

- Bhutan was Western Australia's 61st largest market for international visitors in 2022, with 240 visits (0.1% of the State's total international visits).
- People born in Bhutan were the 36th largest overseas-born resident population in Western Australia in 2021. It should be noted that the largest Bhutanese community outside of Bhutan live in Australia, of which approximately 50% are based in Western Australia.⁴
- Bhutan is Western Australia's 3rd largest market for international students, accounting for 7% of the State's total international student enrolments in 2022.⁵ Western Australia has the largest share of Bhutanese student enrolments in Australia.⁶



⁴ India-Gulf Team Briefing for Speaker's Delegation, Bhutan Background, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, May 2023

⁵ Bhutan Trade Profile – April 2023, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, pp1-2

⁶ India-Gulf Team Briefing for Speaker's Delegation, Bhutan Background, Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation, May 2023

Principal meetings

The delegation departed Perth on Sunday, 28 May 2023 and travelled to Chennai, Coimbatore, Ooty, Mysuru, Bengaluru, Mumbai and Kolkata in India, followed by Paro and Thiampu in Bhutan, before returning to Perth on Sunday, 11 June 2023.

CHENNAI (MADRAS)

Chennai, formerly known as Madras until 1996, is the capital of Tamil Nadu. The city is a major administrative and cultural centre, and is also known as the health capital of India, with the third highest number of medical colleges in India. It is the 4th largest city in India with a population of 11 million (as of November 2020).

While in Chennai, the delegation held the following meetings:

- Dinner hosted by Dr Palanivel Thiagarajan MLA, Minister for Information Technology and Digital Services at his residence.



Members of the delegation with Dr Palanivel Thiagarajan MLA, Minister for Information Technology and Digital Services (centre), at his residence

- Meeting with Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority: Ms Pavithra Sriram, Team Lead Project Management Consultancy (CMDA) and representatives from Mac n Arc and Sponge Collaboratives. The CMDA is a planning body responsible for town planning in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The CMDA was established as a statutory body in 1974 and its board comprises a range of senior government officials, including the Minister for Housing and Urban Development.



Meeting with Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority

- Meeting with the Hon Muthuvelayudha Perumal Appavu, Speaker of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly; Hon K Ramachandran, Minister for Tourism; and Mr B Subramaniam, Additional Secretary, Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. The delegation also undertook a tour of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly.



Hon Michelle Roberts MLA, Speaker takes the Chair in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, with Hon Muthuvelayudha Perumal Appavu, Speaker (left) and Mr B Subramaniam, Additional Secretary (right)

- Meeting with Hon Udhayanidhi Stalin, Minister for Youth Welfare and Sports Development.

- Meeting with Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation: Mr Udhayachandran IAS, Principal Secretary and Ms Innocent Divya IAS, Managing Director. The Tamil Nadu Skill Development Corporation was started in 2009 and provides demand-based and industry-relevant skills to unemployed youth to enhance their employability and transform the State into the skill hub of India.
- Engagement with iTNT Hub: Mr Vijay Anand, Chief Executive Officer. The Tamil Nadu Technology Hub (iTNT) is India's First Emerging and DeepTech Innovation Network. It works with entrepreneurs, innovators, researchers and industry, with the support of government, acting as a catalyst that engages, activates, and brings together diverse industries.
- Setup as a Public-Private Partnership, established and funded by the Government of India and Government of Tamil Nadu and supported by Industry, iTNT Hub is building India's first Deeptech Innovation Network connected to the world.



The delegation discussing the activities of the iTNT Hub

- ICT Academy, Government of Tamil Nadu: Mr Hari Balachandran, Chief Executive Officer; Mr S Ganesh, Vice President (Industry and Strategic Alliance); and Mr V Srikanth, Associate Vice President (Government Initiatives). ICT Academy is an initiative of the Government of India, in collaboration with state governments and industry. It is a not-for-profit organisation which trains higher education teachers and students.

COIMBATORE

Coimbatore is the second largest city in Tamil Nadu and is heavily influenced by information technology, engineering and textiles.

The delegation met with:

- PSG College of Technology and Institute of Advanced Studies: Dr L. Gopalakrishnan, Managing Trustee; Dr JS Bhuvaneshwaran, Director PSG Hospitals; Dr V Srividya, Director in Charge, PSGIM; Dr T Subba Rao, Principal, PSGIMSR; and Dr J Kanchana, Deputy Director, PSGIAS. PSG College of Technology was established in 1951 and today has about 8,518 students and 505 research scholars, with 15 engineering and technology departments, as well as computer applications, management sciences, basic sciences and humanities departments.

OOTY

Ooty is a town in the Nilgiris District in Tamil Nadu.

Meetings included:

- IBS Tea Plantations Pvt Ltd: Mr Shiv, Managing Director. IBS Tea Plantations is located in Kotagiri in the Nilgiri district and was established in 1990. It is one of the leading tea manufacturing businesses in the region.



Mr Shiv explaining about tea production to Dr Honey



Different blends at the IBS Tea Plantation

- Welcome ceremonies and ceremonial exchanges in several villages. The delegation members were overwhelmed by the warm reception they received and hospitality shown by villagers when they arrived in Coimbatore and in a number of villages in the Nilgiris.
- Meeting and open forum with Judges and Barristers, Ooty District Court.

MYSURU (MYSORE)

Mysuru is the second largest city in the state of Karnataka and is noted for its culture. Tourism and IT are the major industries in Mysuru.

The delegation held the following meetings:

- Meeting with and dinner provided by His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Shivarathri Deshikendra Mahaswamiji, Sri Suttur Math. His Holiness is the 24th pontiff of Sri Suttur Math, a pilgrim centre established in the 10th century.



Welcome reception outside Sri Suttar Math

- JSS Medical College and Hospital, including visit to JSSAHER Skill and Simulation Lab: Dr H Basavanagowdappa, Dean, Faculty of Medicine JSSAHER; Dr Praveen Kulkarni, Vice Principal, JSSMC; DR CP Madhu, Medical Superintendent and Director, JSS Hospital; and Dr Archana S, Coordinator, JSSAHER, Skills and Simulation Centre. JSS Medical College was established in 1984 and was affiliated to the University of Mysore from 1984 to 1995 and later to the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore. From 2008 it has been a constituent college of JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research.



Viewing the neonatal training resources at the JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research Skill and Simulation Lab

- JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research (JSSAHER): Dr Suma MN, Dean Faculty of Biomedical Sciences, JSSAHER; Dr Surinder Singh, Vice Chancellor JSSAHER; Dr CG Betsurmath, Executive Secretary, JSS Mahavidyapeetha; Dr B Suresh, Pro Chancellor, JSSAHER; Dr Vishal Kumar Gupta, Dean (Academics) JSSAHER; and Dr Manjunatha B, Registrar JSSAHER. JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research was established in 2008 and was ranked among the top 50 universities of the country for the last four consecutive years. It is made up of six faculties: Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Bio-medical Sciences, Life Sciences, and Health System Management Studies.



BENGALURU (BANGALORE)

Bengaluru is the capital of the southern state of Karnataka.

The delegation met with:

- Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, Hon UT Khader MLA.



Discussions with the Speaker, Hon UT Khader MLA



Outside the Karnataka State Legislature

MUMBAI (BOMBAY)

Mumbai is the capital city of Maharashtra and serves as the financial, commercial and entertainment hub of the country. Mumbai is the largest economy in India, with a total population over 18 million.

In Mumbai, the Speaker added to her delegation a number of Western Australian education providers, who were also visiting India and Bhutan. They included representatives from university, VET and other sectors in the Western Australian education system. They were to have been led by the Minister for International Education, Hon David Templeman MLA, but he had to withdraw due to the resignation of the Premier, Mark McGowan.

Meetings in Mumbai included:

- Visit to Mumbai Film City, also known as Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagari (Bollywood): meetings with directors, actors and producers and representatives from the Cine and TV Artistes' Association (CINTAA), including Dr Avinash Dhakane, Managing Director, Maharashtra Film, Stage and Cultural Development Corporation Limited and Mr Amit Behl, Secretary of CINTAA. The delegation also visited India's biggest indoor film set – Prime Focus Studio; a reality show set – 'India's Best Dancer'; a big set – Heera Mandi (Sanjay Leela Bhansali); and a tour of the Whistling Woods art college, one of the pioneering acting schools in India.



On the set of 'India's Best Dancer'

- Meeting with Australian Acting Consul General, Ms Majell Hind, Mr Michael Brown, Deputy Consul-General, and Australian Deputy High Commissioner, Sarah Storey.
- Meeting with Hon Minister Lodha, Minister for Women and Child Development Department.
- Visit to the Bombay Stock Exchange (now known as the BSE): Mr Ambarish Datta, Managing Director and CEO, BSE Institute Ltd. The Bombay Stock Exchange was established in 1875 and was the first in Asia. It is the fastest stock exchange in the world with a speed of 6 microseconds.



Hon Michelle Roberts MLA, Dr Jagadish Krishnan MLA and Mr Ambarish Datta at the BSE Institute

- Meeting with Hon Speaker Rahul Narwekar of the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly.



Hon Michelle Roberts MLA and Hon Speaker Rahul Narwekar

- Invest and Trade WA WA Day Event, which was a networking opportunity for the ITWA team to showcase Western Australian capabilities, to position Western Australia as a tourism, study and investment destination, and to connect the delegation to key representatives of Indian industry.



Western Australian display at the ITWA WA Day event

- Meeting with leaders from the Gujarat State Government: GIFT City (Gujarat International Finance Tec-City) and Gujarat Maritime Cluster: Mr Dipesh Shah, Executive Director (Development), International Financial Services Centres Authority and Mr Madhvendra Singh, Chief Executive Officer, Gujarat Maritime Cluster. GIFT City is a greenfield project using 1,000 acres of land to create a

global IT and financial services hub. The Gujarat Maritime Cluster is the only such Cluster in India and the Global Hub for shipping activities. The aim is to bring together maritime / shipping industry players, along with relevant government regulatory agencies, in GIFT City.

- Visit to Datta Meghe World Academy (DMWA), where the delegation witnessed the MoU signing between DMWA and Emotional Literacy and Mindfulness Academy (ELMA): Shama Dattatray Meghe, Trustee Datta Meghe Group and Martin Graham, Director ELMA. Datta Meghe World Academy has been operating for more than 30 years and offers a wide range of educational programs from pre-primary to upper secondary levels. ELMA delivers 'culturally specific' social and emotional learning tools for children. Datta Meghe piloted the ELMA program across 37 teachers and 1,000 students and the program is now being rolled out across 27 schools.

KOLKATA (CALCUTTA)

Kolkata is the prime business, commercial and financial hub of eastern India. Kolkata is the third largest economy in India.

The delegation held the following meeting:

- Australian Consul-General in Kolkata: Ms Rowan Ainsworth

BHUTAN

In November 2022, both Western Australian Presiding Officers met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs for Bhutan, Dr Tandi Dorji, who was visiting Australia to celebrate the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Bhutan and Australia. He expressed interest in strengthening ties between Bhutan and Western Australia, which led the Hon Michelle Roberts, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, to include Bhutan as part of her delegation visit.

Meetings in Bhutan included:

- Visit to Paro College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan: Mr Karma Yeshey, Dean of Academic Affairs and Ngawang Phuntsho, Dean of Student Affairs. As a constituent College of the Royal University of Bhutan, Paro College of Education provides teacher education and training, including undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in such areas as early childcare, creative arts and music, primary education, health and physical culture, special education, and educational leadership.



Prayer room at Paro College of Education

- The delegation was invited to attend the Official Opening of the 9th Session of the Third Parliament on Thursday, 8 June 2023.
- View Archery program: Archery is the national sport of Bhutan. Bhutan has an Olympic archery team and hosts tournaments nationwide.



Bhutanese archery showmanship

- Various meetings and a dinner function with Hon Wangchuk Namgyel, Speaker of the National Assembly of Bhutan; Mr Tshencho Wangdi, Deputy Speaker; Mr Tandin Tshering, Secretary General; and Bhutan parliamentary members.



Hon Michelle Roberts MLA with Hon Wangchuk Namgyel, Speaker

- Audience with His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.



Members of the delegation with His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck (centre), at His Majesty's Palace in Thimphu, Bhutan

Photograph reproduced with permission from the Royal Office for Media, Bhutan

- Call on His Excellency Lyonpo Dr Tandi Dorji, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade.
- Invest and Trade WA Networking Event in Thiampu.



Networking with members of the Bhutan Parliament, business and industry representatives

- Meeting with Druk Holding and Investments Ltd, which is the commercial and investment arm of the Royal Government of Bhutan: Mr Ujjwal Deep Dahal, Chief Executive Officer.
- Meeting with the Ministry of Education and Skills Development: Ambassador Tshewang C Dorji, Acting Secretary; Mr Norbu Wangchuk, Director, Department of Workforce Planning and Skill Development and Ministry of Education and Skill Development; and Mr Tashi Namgay, Director, Department of Education.
- Dinner with the Minister for Health, Her Excellency Lyonpo Dechen Wangmo and women members of the Bhutan Parliament.

Cultural Aspects

While in Bangalore, the delegation had an opportunity to visit the 240 acre Lalbagh Botanical Garden, which has India's largest collection of tropical and sub-tropical plants, including trees that are several centuries old. In Kanneri Mukku, two kilometres from the centre of Kotagiri, the delegation visited the John Sullivan Memorial. John Sullivan, who died in 1855, was an English civil servant who championed the cause of the people and was a strong force behind tea cultivation in the Nilgiris district.

The delegation visited the Mudumalai National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary, which is a declared tiger reserve. The Park is located on the north-western side of the Nilgiri Hills in the Nilgiri District, about 150 kilometres north-west of Coimbatore. In Mumbai, the delegation had a guided tour of the Nita Mukesh Ambani Cultural Centre, which is a multi-purpose facility designed to promote and showcase various forms of art and culture. As part of the tour, the delegation was fortunate to view the 'India in Fashion' exhibition featuring designers from all over the world.

In Bhutan, the delegation visited the CSI (Cottage and Small Industry) Market, which is Bhutan's largest dedicated marketplace for products made and grown in Bhutan. The delegation also visited the Buddha Dordenma, a gigantic Buddha statue near Thimphu, which was built to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck.



Lalbagh Botanical Garden, Bangalore

Organisational matters

The delegation acknowledges the excellent assistance and support provided in India and Bhutan by Ms Nashid Chowdhury, Investment and Trade Commissioner India-Gulf, Cleona James, Director Investment and Trade India, and the Investment and Trade WA team from the Mumbai, Chennai and Dubai offices. We are also grateful for the logistical support and assistance provided by officers from the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation in Perth. The delegation also appreciates the support and guidance provided by Mr Sonam Tobgay, Protocol Officer in Bhutan.

In addition, the delegation thanks Sally Dawkins, Director Western Australia State Office, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and staff for the pre-departure briefing and travel advice.

Costs

The cost of the visit was \$123,597*, paid by the Department of the Legislative Assembly, and is detailed as follows:

Table 1.1: Expenditure items of the delegation's visit

Expenditure item	\$
Airfares	72,905
Accommodation & meals	29,126
Ground transportation	10,820
Allowances	2,190
Visa costs	3,415
Courier costs	3,143
Gifts	1,986
Miscellaneous	12
TOTAL	\$123,597

* Mr Roberts paid for his own travel costs.

Conclusion

The delegation's visit to India and Bhutan was very successful and provided a unique opportunity to learn more about these interesting countries. The members greatly appreciated the warm and generous reception they received throughout India and Bhutan. At the end of the visit, delegation members had gained a greater knowledge and understanding of the importance of India and Bhutan to Western Australia in terms of trade, business, education, tourism and other links.

We hope that this visit will promote further business, education and other connections between India, Bhutan and Western Australia and expand opportunities for linkages and collaboration. We are hopeful, too, that the visit was successful in conveying to India and Bhutan the ongoing support of Western Australia and its Parliament for our trade and business exchanges and continuing educational and cultural links.



HON MICHELLE ROBERTS, MLA
SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

