

Indians in Hong Kong

Currently there's an estimated 56,000 Indians in Hong Kong. Hong Kong has been the place of settlement for Indians for a long time. Some of them have lived there for many generations, and consider Hong Kong as their home. The history of Indians in Hong Kong can be traced back to the early days of British Hong Kong. When the Union flag of the United Kingdom was hoisted on 26 January 1841, there were around 2,700 Indian troops that participated and Indians played an important role in the development of Hong Kong in the early days. The most prominent contributions were the founding of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC). The Star Ferry was also founded by Indians in 1888. In 1952 business leaders of the Indian community founded the Indian Chamber of Commerce Hong Kong (ICCHK). It aims to promote and improve the image of Indian trade in Hong Kong and Southern China. Indians in Hong Kong include citizens of the Republic of India, British citizens, and a small number of stateless persons and naturalized citizens of the People's Republic of China. According to the statistics of the Republic of India's High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, among Hong Kong residents there are 22,000 Indian citizens and 28,500 non-citizen Persons of Indian Origin (people with origins in British India, including places which lie outside today's Republic of India, and having citizenships of countries other than the Republic of India). The occupations of Indians are generally divided according to the occupational history of different communities within the Indian population, which centered around the Indian caste. The earliest settlers who helped shape the identity of the Hong Kong province were Parsi and Gujarati merchants, such as Hormusjee Naorojee Mody, Dorabjee Naorojee Mithaiwala and Jehangir Hormusjee Ruttonjee who arrived independently in the course of trade from Bombay and Gujarat. Generally speaking, Sikhs arrived when they were recruited in the British Indian military force and today usually run private business and security, Bengalis are civil servants and professionals, while Gujarati's and Sindhis are often businessmen. In the pre-war period, most of the Indians took part in the army, and as security guards and policemen. Before the Second World War, nearly 60% of the police forces were Sikhs. Also, some Indians have established businesses in Hong Kong. The Harilela family runs one of the best-known business groups. After the war, the number of Indians taking up positions at government sections had declined as most of the Indians were no longer citizens of the British colony after India gained independence in 1947. Later Indian communities such as Marwaris and Tamil Muslims came to Hong Kong for trading. More Indians stepped into banking, Traveling sector, banking and finance and jewels business have also interested highly qualified Indians. In the 1950s, tailoring had become an industry that was popular with Indians and around 200 tailoring shops were owned by them at that time. After 2005, there have been a growing number of diamond merchants from Gujarat who have settled in Hong Kong and have formed groups like Sarjan Group, GGHK group and Gujarati Samaj for sports and cultural activities. Gujarati Diamond Merchants are one of the richest and most affluent groups among Hong Kong Indians who own costly properties such as hotels, houses and offices near Tsim Sha Tsui and Lagoona Verde in Hunghom. Due to different cultural backgrounds, Indians have their own languages

such as Gujarati, Sindhi, Bengali, Tamil, and Punjabi. But most of them are fluent in English, and some in Cantonese as well.