

India-Comoros Relations

Political

The Union of Comoros, a former French Colony, is an archipelago of three islands (Anjouan, Moheli, and the largest island, Grande Comore). A fourth island, Mayotte, is claimed by the Comoros but administered by France. Mayotte officially became an overseas Department of France in March 2011. Comoros is predominantly a Muslim country with 98% population and Roman Catholics form 2% of the Population. The commonly used language is Shikomoro (Swahili dialect). French and Arabic are also widely spoken. Around 60% of the population is literate.

India established its diplomatic relations with the Union of Comoros in June 1976. Our Mission in Antananarivo is concurrently accredited to Comoros. India and Comoros have always enjoyed close and friendly relations. Both the countries have similarities of view on regional and global issues. Comoros is a supporter of India's permanent membership of the UNSC. India is looked upon as a role model of development in Comoros. A proposal to set up a vocational training centre (VTC) in Moroni to impart skills in plumbing, welding, electricity, civil works, IT, etc. is under consideration of the Government of India. EXIM Bank of India has offered a concessional credit of US\$41.6 million for setting up a power plant in Moroni and the same has been accepted by Comoros. An Agreement to implement the LOC has been signed on 22 February 2013 at New Delhi. Pan African E-network started its operations in Comoros in September 2010. Government of India had also granted exemption from ban on export of 25,000 tonnes of non-basmati rice to the Union of Comoros to help relieve the food crisis in Comoros in 2008. In December 2012, Government of India has provided US\$ 100,000/- as assistance to Comoros for losses suffered on account of Torrential Rains in April 2012. A number of VVIP/High-Level visits to Comoros to India took place during 2004 to 2013 which are listed at Appendix 'A'.

In October 2011, Shri Gurjit Singh, formerly AS (E & SA), Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, paid a visit to the Island to further strengthen the existing bilateral relations between the two countries and also promised to take necessary steps to increase the bilateral cooperation between the two countries. During the visit announcement of an offer was made for an additional concessional credit of US Dollars 35 million for projects to be chosen by the Government of Comoros.

Economy

The country has suffered from chronic political instability for a number of years with repeated coups and secessionist leanings among the islands, and this troubled political climate has hampered its economic and social development. The Comoros, with an estimated GDP \$ 741.4 mn with annual growth rate of 0.5% is one of the poorest nations in the world, and also economic growth is continually encumbered by a rapidly growing population, poor access to education, and scarcity of natural resources. Agriculture, including fishing, hunting, and forestry, contributes 40% of GDP and employs 80% of the labour force. Services (commerce and tourism) contributes 56% to GDP and industry the remaining 4%. The country largely depends on imports for food

security including the major staple, rice, which accounts for the primary import. Main exports are Vanilla, Cloves, Yalang Yalang (perfume, oil) and copra (kernel of coconut). Being a poor country, Comoros is heavily dependent on aid from World Bank, IMF, EU, and other international agencies and donor countries. Among foreign countries, France traditionally provides budgetary support.

The trade between the Comoros and India is increasing steadily. The bilateral trade between the two countries in 2011-12 was US\$ 13.89 million. During 2012-13 (April to December) India's export is US\$ 15.57 million and import during the same period is US\$ 4.81 million.

Indian Community

The Indian Diaspora comprises of 250 persons. The majority of them are engaged in trade and business. The role played by the Indian community in the overall development of Comoros is highly appreciated at all levels. Some of the Indian are very influential and their contribution to the total GDP of Comoros has also been significant. The Indian Diaspora has been playing significant role in promoting Indian culture and traditional values while living in a foreign land.

Cultural Relations

Due to small size of the Island and a tiny Indian Diaspora, there has not been significant exchange of cultural visits between the two countries.

June 2013

Annexure 'A'**Bilateral Visit from Comoros**

Sl. No.	Name of the Visitor	Date of visit	Purpose
1.	Mr. Souef Mohamed El-Amine, Minister of External Relations & Cooperation	August 2004	Bilateral visit
2.	Mr. Ahmed Ben Said Djaffer Minister of External Relations & Cooperation	July 2006	Bilateral visit
3.	Mr. Ahmed Abdullah Mohamed Sambi President of Comoros	4-8 November, 2007	To participate in the 4th International Conference on Federalism.
4	Mr. Fahmi Said Ibrahim Minister of External Relations & Cooperation	18-19 February 2011	To attend the LDCs Conference
5.	Mr. Mohamed Issimail Minister for National Education	01-02 March 2012	To participate in India- Africa Science & Technology Ministerial Meeting
5.	Mr. Mohamed Bakri Ben Abdoulafatah Charif, Minister of External Relations & Cooperation	02 November 2012	To participate in the Council of Ministers Meeting of Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)
7.	Mr. Mohamed Ali Soilihi Vice President in-charge of Finance Ministry	21-23 February 2013	To sign Agreement with EXIM Bank for grant of US\$ 41.6 million LOC

Annexure 'B'

India Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC)- participation

Comoros

Year	Number of slots allotted	Number Utilized
2009-10	05	00
2010-11	10	00
2011-12	20	03
2012-13	10	06

India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) – Participation

Year	Number of slots allotted	Number sanctioned
2010-11		
2011-12		
2012-13	---	2