

## 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 Comoros but administered by France. Mayotte officially became an overseas Department of France in March 2011. Comoros is predominantly a Muslim country at 98% of the population and Roman Catholics constitute 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 diplomatic relations with the Union of Comoros in June 1976. The 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. A number of VVIP/High-Level visits from Comoros to India have taken place during 2004 to 2013:

### Visits 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	02 November 2012	To participate in the Council of Ministers

	External Relations & Cooperation		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

### **Visits from India:**

In October 2011, Shri Gurjit Singh, former 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 to further enhance the bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

### **Bilateral Developmental Cooperation:**

India is looked upon as a role model of development in Comoros. Government of India through the EXIM Bank of India extended a Line of Credit (LOC) of US\$41.6 million for setting up a power plant in Moroni. An Agreement to implement the LOC was signed on 22 February 2013 at New Delhi between EXIM Bank and the Government of Comoros. The Government of India had, in 2008, granted exemption from the 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 December 2012, the Government of India provided US\$ 100,000/- as assistance to Comoros for losses suffered on account of Torrential Rains in April 2012.

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. The Pan African E-network started its operations in Comoros in September 2010 for providing Tele-education and Tele-Medicine services. India is actively engaged in training Comorian people in capacity building and other high skilled/technical fields through courses offered through ITEC and India Africa Forum Summit. However, these courses are not being utilized fully due to language constraints. A detailed chart of the courses availed by the Comoros is given below:

### **India Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC)**

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

### **India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of slots allotted</b>	<b>Number Utilized</b>
2010-11	---	---
2011-12	---	---
2012-13	---	2

### **Economy**

The country had 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 to some extent. The Comoros, with an estimated GDP \$ 741.4 mn with an annual growth rate of 0.5% is one of the poorest nations in the world, and economic growth is further encumbered by a rapidly growing population, poor access to education, and scarcity of natural resources. Agriculture, including fishing, hunting, and forestry, contributes to 40% of the GDP and employs 80% of the labour force. Services (commerce and tourism) contribute 56% to the 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 the World Bank, IMF, EU, and other international agencies and donor countries. Among foreign countries, France traditionally provides budgetary support.

**Bilateral Trade:**

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 bilateral trade was US\$ 29.11 million with India's exports at US\$ 20.74 million and imports by Comoros were at US\$ 8.37 million.

**Indian Community/Dispota:**

The Indian Diaspora comprises of 250 persons with around 50 Indian passport holders. The majority of them are engaged in trade and business. The role played by the Indian community in the overall development of Comoros is appreciated at all levels. Some of the Indian (or PIOs) are very influential and their contribution to the total GDP of Comoros has also been significant. The Indian Diaspora has been playing a significant role in preserving and promoting Indian culture and traditional values.

**Cultural Relations**

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

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**July, 2013**

