

India-Mauritius Relations

Diplomatic relations between India and Mauritius were established in 1948. Mauritius maintained contacts with India through successive Dutch, French and British occupation.

From 1820s, Indian workers started coming to Mauritius to work on sugar plantations. From 1834, when slavery was abolished by the British Parliament, large numbers of Indian workers began to be brought to Mauritius as indentured labourers. November 2, 1834 marks the day when the ship 'Atlas' docked in Mauritius carrying the first batch of Indian indentured labourers. This day is now observed in Mauritius as 'Aapravasi Day'. In all, about half a million Indian indentured labourers are estimated to have been brought into Mauritius between 1834 and the early decades of the 20th century, out of whom about two-thirds settled permanently in Mauritius.

A brief stopover by Mahatma Gandhi *en route* to India from South Africa (October 29 to November 15, 1901), while awaiting departure of his ship *SS Nowshera*, is still etched in the consciousness of Mauritius. Barrister Manilal Doctor, who came to Mauritius in 1907 on the suggestion of Gandhiji, helped the Mauritian Indian community to organise themselves and laid the foundation for their struggle for political and social rights. As a tribute to Gandhiji and the Indian freedom struggle, the National Day of Mauritius is celebrated on March 12 (the date of launch of Dandi Salt March).

Political Relations

Following Mauritius' independence on March 12, 1968, the first Prime Minister and the Father of the Mauritian Nation Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam accorded centrality to India in Mauritius' foreign policy. Subsequently, successive Mauritian leaders ensured that India occupies a position of significance and importance in the foreign policy orientation and activities of Mauritius.

High level visits have been one of the significant aspects of bilateral relations. Mauritian Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam paid a four-day State Visit to India from 6-12 February 2012. Five Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were signed in areas of S&T, education, sports and youth, textiles and for setting up of a hybrid planetarium at Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre. A new economic package comprising a Line of Credit (LOC) of US\$ 250 million and a grant of US\$ 20 million was announced.

Mauritian President Rajkeswur Purryag paid a State Visit to India from 3-10 January 2013. He was the Chief Guest at the 11th PBD Convention from 7-9 January 2013 in Kochi, where the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman was conferred on him.

Hon'ble President Pranab Mukherjee paid a state visit to Mauritius from 11-13 March 2013, during which he was the Chief Guest at the country's 45th Independence Day celebrations. Three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) relating to cooperation in the fields of health and medicine; persons with disabilities and senior citizens; and tourism were signed.

Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam was the only non-SAARC leader to be invited to witness the swearing in ceremony of the new Government in New Delhi in May 2014. During his visit, Prime Minister Ramgoolam held wide-ranging discussions with Hon'ble PM on matters of mutual interest. PM Ramgoolam also called on Hon'ble President Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

Hon'ble External Affairs Minister Smt Sushma Swaraj visited Mauritius from 1-3 November 2014, to attend, as Chief Guest, the national level celebrations commemorating the 180th Anniversary of the arrival of Indian indentured labourers. Other elements of her visit included a Civic Reception, Reception onboard visiting Indian Naval Western Fleet Ships, a Business Meet organised by Board of Investment and Mauritian Chamber of Commerce and inauguration of International Conference on Indentured Labour Route at Mahatma Gandhi Institute.

Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Housing and Lands of Mauritius, Mr Showkataly Soodhun headed the Mauritian delegation to the 13th PBD in Gandhinagar, Gujarat from 7-9 January 2015, and had meetings with Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister Smt Sushma Swaraj, and other senior Ministers. He also participated in the World Hindi Day celebrations in New Delhi on 10 January 2015.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Mauritius from 11-13 March 2015, as Chief Guest at the Mauritian National Day celebrations. During his visit, PM Modi commissioned the OPV Barracuda, built by an Indian shipyard and financed by a GoI Line of Credit, into the Mauritian Coast Guard. He also launch the construction works of the World Hindi Secretariat and addressed a large and enthusiastic public gathering at a Civic Reception held in his honour. He also held wide ranging discussions with President Rajkeswur Purryag, Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and other senior Mauritian leaders. Five agreements in various areas of mutually beneficial cooperation, including Ocean Economy and Traditional Systems of Medicine, were signed. A Line of Credit of USD 500 million to finance civilian infrastructure projects was announced during the visit.

India and Mauritius have signed a wide range of **bilateral agreements** and MoUs. Some of them are the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC-1982), Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPA-1998), MoU on Air Services (2005), Agreement on Cooperation in Information Technology (2000), MoU on Cooperation in Biotechnology (2002), Extradition Treaty (2003), MoU on Cooperation against Terrorism (2005), MoU on Cooperation in the field of Environment (2005), Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty in Criminal Matters (2005), Agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons (2005), MoU for Cooperation in the field of Hydrography (2005), MoU for Cooperation on Consumer Protection and Legal Metrology (2005), MoU Concerning Cooperation in the Exchange of Finance Intelligence Related to Money Laundering & Financing of Terrorism (2008), Protocol on the Sale of Navigational Charts; Agreement on Cooperation for the establishment of telemetry, tracking and tele-command station for satellites and launch vehicles and for cooperation in the fields of space research, science and applications; Supply Contract for the Coastal Radar Surveillance System (2009), Agreement on Early Warning of Coastal Hazards (2010), MoU on Science and Technology Cooperation (2012), MoU on Sports and Youth Affairs (2012), Educational Exchange Programme (2012), MOU on Textiles (2012), MoU between RGSC Trust Fund and NCSM for setting up a hybrid planetarium (2012), MoU on Cooperation in Election Management and Administration (2013), MoU on cooperation in MSME Sector (2013), MoU on cooperation in Communication and Broadcasting between Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation and Prasar Bharti (2014), MoU on Cooperation in Ocean Economy (2015), and MoU in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine (2015). In addition, Cultural Exchange Programmes have been regularly concluded since 1971.

Commercial Relations

India is Mauritius' **largest trading partner** and has been the largest exporter of goods and services to Mauritius since 2007. In FY 2014-2015 India exported goods worth US\$ 1.9 billion to Mauritius and imported goods worth US\$ 21.19 million from Mauritius. India's exports to Mauritius comprise largely of petroleum products. A three-year Agreement between the

Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) and the State Trading Corporation of Mauritius for supply of all petroleum requirements of Mauritius was renewed in July 2013. Besides petroleum products, main items of India's exports to Mauritius are pharmaceuticals, cereals, cotton, electrical machinery, apparel and clothing accessories. Main items of Mauritius' exports to India are iron and steel, pearls, precious/semi-precious stones and optical, photographic and precision instruments.

Cumulative **FDI** equity inflows from Mauritius to India during the period April 2000-March 2015 amounted to USD 87.55 billion (35% of total FDI inflows over this period), thanks largely due to the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention. Mauritius was the single largest source of FDI into India during the financial year 2014-15, with FDI equity inflows amounting to USD 9.03 billion - 29% of total inflows in 2014-15.

Eight Indian **Public Sector Enterprises** are currently functioning in Mauritius. The Bank of Baroda (BoB), Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), and New India Assurance Corporation (NIAC) were the first to establish operations, followed by other PSUs including India Handloom House, Telecommunications Consultant India Ltd (TCIL), Indian Oil (Mauritius) Limited (IOML), Mahanagar Telephone (Mauritius) Ltd. and State Bank of India (Mauritius) Limited. Besides their core activities, the PSUs have also contributed to various activities in Mauritius under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) schemes.

Some high-visibility Indian-assisted projects in Mauritius include the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, the Upadhyay Training Centre, the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, the Subramania Bharati Eye Centre, the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre and the Rabindranath Tagore Institute. Prestigious symbols of recent Indian assistance include the Cyber Tower at Ebene and the Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre (SVICC).

The Offshore Patrol Vessel Barracuda, built by an Indian shipyard under a GoI Line of Credit, was commissioned into the Mauritian National Coast Guard during the visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in March 2015. India also provides extensive capacity building and training inputs to the Mauritian armed forces, besides carrying out regular joint patrolling/surveillance exercises and in the Mauritian EEZ. India has also provided assistance in the setting up of Mauritius's National Hydrographic Unit.

Over the past forty years, India has extended several **Lines of Credit** to Mauritius to assist in the development of its infrastructure, human resource, skills development, capacity building, project appraisal, etc. In March 2015, a new Line of Credit of USD 500 million for civilian infrastructure projects was announced by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during his visit to Mauritius.

Cultural Relations

The **Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture** (IGCIC) at Phoenix is one of the largest centres of ICCR, which from March 2000, has emerged as an important venue for promotion of Indian cultural activities in Mauritius. The IGCIC holds classes in disciplines of Hindustani music, Kathak, Tabla and Yoga for Mauritian students. A Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) (2015-2018) was signed in March 2015.

The Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) was established in 1970 as a joint venture between the Government of India and the Government of Mauritius for the promotion of Indian culture and education. It also hosts the ICCR Chair in Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy. The Rabindranath Tagore Institute was established with the assistance of the Government of India in 2000 as a Centre of Studies on Indian culture and traditions. Mauritius also hosts the World Hindi

Secretariat. Yoga and traditional Indian systems of health (AYUSH) are extremely popular among the general public in Mauritius, the first International Day of Yoga will be commemorated in the country on a grand scale. An active network of local socio-cultural organisations and language unions add further strength and vitality to the vibrant people-to-people contacts.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) has been India's flagship capacitybuilding programme since its inception in 1964 and has acquired a strong brand name in India's development partnership with Mauritius. Mauritius is one of the largest beneficiary countries of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. Mauritian nationals have taken advantage of large number of scholarships offered by India on civilian and defence related training courses at Indian institutions.

The **Pan African e-Network Project** was inaugurated on February 26, 2009 in Mauritius, which connected it other African countries and India through a satellite and fiber-optic network. It has benefited Mauritius with sharing of India's expertise in education and health care. All three modes - VVIP, telemedicine and tele-education - are currently operational.

Around 100 **ICCR scholarships** are extended annually to Mauritian students for higher education in India. Another about 200 Mauritian students enrolls themselves in Indian Universities every year on a self-financing basis. India ranks fourth in terms of Mauritian students studying in overseas tertiary education institutions.

Indian Community

There are nearly 11,000 Indian nationals in Mauritius. There are around 750 OCI Card holders and about 3500 PIO Card holders. To increase tourism inflow from India, Mauritian Government had introduced a **visa-free** regime for Indian tourists in October 2004, wherein Indian tourists visiting Mauritius for a period up to 60 days do not require a visa, provided they can show sufficient funds to cover their stay.

Useful Resources:

High Commission of India, Port Louis website:

<http://indiahighcom-mauritius.org/>

High Commission of India, Port Louis Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/indianmauritus>

India Global- AIR FM Gold Program featuring India and Mauritius Relations:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8oyjsa4PYA>

June 2015