

## **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, a 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 Manillal 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 yearly 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 was on 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.

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), MoU on the supply of an Offshore Patrol Vessel; 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), and MoU on cooperation in MSME Sector (2013). 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 to Mauritius since 2007. In FY 2012-2013, India exported goods worth US\$ 1.31 bn. and imported goods worth US\$ 28.49 mn. Petroleum products are the principal commodity of export to Mauritius. 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. In Financial Year (FY) 2012-13, besides petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, cereals, cotton, electrical machinery and apparel & clothing accessories were main items of India's exports to Mauritius while iron and steel, pearls, precious/semi-precious stones and optical, photographic and precision instruments were main items of Mauritius' exports to India. In Q<sub>1</sub> of FY 2013-14, India's export was US\$ 295 mn., representing over 25% of total import of Mauritius.

Mauritius has been a largest source of FDI equity flow to India. The cumulative FDI equity inflows from Mauritius to India during April 2000-May 2014 reached US\$ 80,808 bn., amounting to 36 % of the total FDI flows into India over this period. During FY 2012-13, FDI equity inflows were US\$ 9.497 billion. However, Singapore has taken over Mauritius as largest source of FDI inflows to India in 2013-14. Indian companies have invested over US\$ 200 million in Mauritius in the last five years.

Eight Indian Public 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 SubramaniaBharati Eye Centre, etc. Projects enjoying a high degree of visibility are the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre and the Rabindranath Tagore Institute. The most prestigious symbols of recent Indian assistance are the Cyber Tower at Ebene and the Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre (SVICC).

Over the past forty years, India has extended eleven LOCs to Mauritius to assist in the development of its infrastructure, human resource, skills development, capacity building, project appraisal, etc. The Mauritius Police Force has shown interest in utilizing a substantial portion of the most recent economic package announced in 2012 (comprising credit line of US\$ 250 mn. and a grant of US\$ 20 mn.) for the purchase of defence and security related equipment. These proposals are being processed by the Government of India.

## **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) (2010-2013) was signed in July 2010. 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. 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.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) has been India's flagship capacity building 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. In recent years, the participation by Mauritius professionals have increased in Civil and Defence training courses at ITEC institutes across India – 155 slots in Civilian & 109 slots in Defence were utilized in 2013-14.

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.

Over 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 over 10,000 Indian nationals living in Mauritius, including 6865 work permit holders and 696 professional occupation permit holders. In the calendar year 2013, 18,499 visas, 381 PIO and 148 OCI cards were issued. In 2014 (till 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014), 8911 visas, 146 PIOs and 49 OCI cards have been issued. 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:**

For more information and latest updates please visit

High Commission of India, Port Louis website:

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

High Commission of India, Port Louis Facebook page:

[https://www.facebook.com/hciportlouis?ref=tn\\_tnmn](https://www.facebook.com/hciportlouis?ref=tn_tnmn)

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

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

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