

India – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Relations

India has always had cordial and friendly relationship with the Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC]. India was among the first countries to establish a diplomatic mission in Kinshasa in 1962. India had sent its Gurkha troops to DRC during 1960-62, under ONUC [UN peacekeeping mission], for countering the rebellion in Katanga province. At present, around 3,600 Indian troops, military observers and police personnel are deployed under the largest ever UN Peacekeeping operation in the country [MONUSCO]. DRC has supported India's candidature at various international fora.

President, Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange visited India to participate in the 1st India-Africa Forum Summit on April 8-9, 2008. He also had bilateral talks with former Hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh.

Foreign Minister, Mr. Alexis Thambwe Mwamba visited Delhi from October 27-30, 2009 accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising Minister of Planning and Minister of Posts, Telephones and Telecommunications besides senior advisers from key Ministries. Minister of Planning Olivier KamitatuEtsu visited Delhi in April 2010 and signed a Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement on April 13, 2010. Deputy PM and Minister for Posts, Telephones and Telecommunications visited Hyderabad in May 2010 to take part in an international conference on telecommunications.

MOS for External Affairs, Mrs. Preneet Kaur visited Kinshasa on June 29-30, 2010 to represent India at the celebrations to mark 50th Anniversary of Independence of the DRC.

Foreign Minister, Mr. Alexis Thambwe Mwamba again visited New Delhi to participate in the India-Least Developed Countries Ministerial Conference held on February 18-19, 2011.

Vice Prime Minister in charge of Budget, Mr. Daniel Mukoko Samba led a 9-member delegation for Delhi Sustainable Development Summit on February 5, 2013. Mr. Felix Kabange Numbi, Minister of Public Health visited India in March, 2013 to explore cooperation in health sector. Mr. DismasSwanaEminaMonziaMagbengu, Vice Minister for International and Regional Cooperation visited India to participate in the 9th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India Africa Project Partnership held in Delhi from March 17-19, 2013.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr. Raymond TshibandaN'tungamulongo led a 9-member delegation to New Delhi from May 13-16, 2015. External Affairs Minister and the DRC Foreign Minister held wide ranging discussions on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest on May 14. He also met Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Minister of Mines.

Special Envoy of Hon. Prime Minister, Shri Manoj Sinha, MOS [Railways] visited Kinshasa on 14th-15th July, 2015. He met President, Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange and

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr. Raymond TshibandaN'tungamulongo on 15th July, 2015 and handed over invitations for the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi.

Mr. Raymond TshibandaN'tungamulongo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation attended and participated in 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi from 26-30th October, 2015.

A ten member delegation led by Mr. BoyambaOkombo Antoine, Deputy Foreign Minister attended the "Colours 2016 International Youth Fest" organized by M/s Aditya Group of Educational Institutions, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh from 4-5 February 2016.

Ms. Nefertiti NgudianzaBayokisaKisula, Minister of Trade had visited India in March, 2016 in connection with the CII-EXIM Bank Conclave held in New Delhi.

Mr. Jeannot Matadi Nenga, Minister of Energy & Water Resources, had visited India in April 2016 and held discussions relating to the ongoing Katende Hydroelectric Power Project.

Mr. BoyambaOkombo Antoine, Deputy Foreign Minister had again visited India in June 2016 to meet the Congolese diaspora (including students).

Mr. Raymond TshibandaN'tungamulongo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation visited New Delhi in August, 2016 to discuss Katende Hydroelectric Project.

Mr. Modeste BAHATI LUKWEBO, Minister of Economy, participated in the 12th CII EXIM Bank Conclave on India Africa Project Partnership 9 -10 March 2017.

Mr. KwetMwanKwet John, Minister for International Cooperation visited New Delhi in June 2017.

Bilateral Agreements/MOUs:

The following bilateral Agreements/MOUs exist between India and DRC:

- Foreign Office Consultations signed in March, 2010.
- Joint Commission for Political, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Socio-cultural signed in March, 2008.
- Cultural Cooperation Agreement signed in October, 2009.
- Agreement on Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments signed on April 13, 2010. GOI has carried out a review and revision exercise of the standard text. This has since been shared with the DRC side for re-negotiating with the DRC government - based on the revised Indian draft.

India's Economic Assistance to DRC:

Lines of Credit [LOC]: The following GOI LOCs have been extended to the DRC :

- US\$ 33.5 million for setting up a cement plant and acquisition of buses for transport sector (2005-06). The LOCs for supply of Tata and Ashok Leyland buses and spares, etc. have been completed. The work at the cement plant could not be started. In 2013, M/s. Jaguar Overseas Ltd., New Delhi conducted a feasibility study to restart the project.
- US\$ 25 million Rural Water Supply Project was completed in 2011.
- US\$ 42 million Kakobola 9.3 MW Hydro-Electric Power Project, Bandundu Province (2010). The work on the project started in January 2011 and is progressing well. Project has been completed and M/s Angelique International Limited (AIL) is ready to hand over the project to Government of DR Congo.
- US\$ 168 million Katende Hydro-Electric Power Project (64 MW), Kasai Occidental Province. The LOC was signed on July 11, 2011 and the contract awarded to a consortium comprising M/s Angelique International Limited (AIL) and M/s BHEL. In July, 2014, the GOI has extended additional US\$ 82 million for Katende Hydro-Electric Project Kasai Occidental Province. (Work on the project is currently halted after the GOI conveyed its inability to the Government of DRC to support the project as long as AIL remained involved with the project). GOI has decided to replace AIL, selection of the new contractor is in process.
 - Agreement for another LOC of US\$ 34.50 million for Development of Power Distribution Project for power generated at Kakobola Hydro-electric Project in Bandundu Province has been signed on 28th May, 2015. Tendering for the contract is under process.
 - Agreement for another LOC of US\$ 109.942 million for Transmission Line and Distribution System Project in Kasai provinces for evacuation of electricity from Katende Hydro-electric Project has been signed on 28th May, 2015. Tendering for the contract is under process.

Donation/grants:

- 60 "Sonalika" tractors with accessories & spares worth US\$ 0.66 million [2006-07].
- US\$ 1 million for supply of medicines [2008-09].
- Setting up an IT Centre of Excellence in Kinshasa [MOU was signed in October 2010], process is on to set up the centre.
- Tele-education and Tele-medicine projects have been implemented under the Pan African e-network project. The installation of VVIP connectivity project is awaiting clearance from the DRC government.

Capacity Building Programme:

- (i) 515 ITEC slots were utilized during 2007 to March 2016. 105 slots were utilized during 2016-17. 99 ITEC slots have been allocated for 2017-18 out of which 41 have been utilized till August 2017.
- (ii) 9 DRC officials benefited from various training courses offered under IAFS-I during 2010-11. 8, 5 and 2 officials attended training under IAFS-II during 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively.
- (iii) 7 Congolese women ('Solar Mamas') were trained in solar electrification and rooftop water harvesting course at Barefoot College, Rajasthan under ITEC Programme during 2010-11, 2013-14 and 2014-15.

(iv) 13 ICCR scholarships were utilized during 2012-13, 14 during 2013-14, 7 during 2016-17 and 7 during 2017-18.

(v) Two scholars availed of the prestigious CV Raman International Fellowship for African Researchers in 2014 and one in 2017.

Offers under IAFS Projects:

Establishment of a Human Settlement Centre in DRC (during IAFS-1); Setting up of an IT Centre of Excellence in Kinshasa (during IAFS-II); Setting up of a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) (IAFS-II); and Establishment of a Soil Water and Tissue Testing Laboratory (SWTTL) (IAFS-II)

Trade and Commercial Relations:

Trade and Commercial linkages between both countries are limited - distance and infrastructure being the main constraints. DRC is rich in natural resources such as cobalt, copper, diamonds, gold, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, germanium, uranium, radium, bauxite, iron ore, coal, hydropower and timber. In fact, it is believed to be the only country on Earth which has all elements mentioned in the Periodic table. There are considerable opportunities for enhancing bilateral cooperation. The economic sluggishness in the country – depreciation of local currency against the dollar; increase in prices; growing unemployment; indebtedness; lack of purchasing power - coupled with political uncertainty and instability have contributed to the plummeting of bilateral trade (in 2016-17) by a little over 45% over the previous year (2015-16).

There are a few Indian companies engaged in the mining (including manufacture of copper cathodes, cobalt chemicals etc.) of copper, cobalt and diamond in DRC. A large portion of DRC's pharmaceutical imports is sourced from India, some for re-export to neighbouring countries like Republic of Congo, Gabon and the Central African Republic.

Some Indian businessmen have invested/ been investing in DRC in sectors like logistics, education, restaurants, supermarkets/ departmental stores etc. Of late, some of the Indian businessmen have also started investing in sectors like hospitals and construction. Recently, an Indian investor (West African Cement) has invested in setting up a cement plant in DRC.

A 12 member delegation from Federation of Rajasthan Trade and Industry and 5 other prominent businessmen participated in the Private Sector Investment Conference (PSIC) for the Great Lakes Region of Africa held in Kinshasa from 24-25 February 2016. Companies like L&T, Apollo International etc. have evinced some interest in investing in the country.

Companies like KalpaTaruPower Transmission Limited and KEC International are executing/ have executed some of the power transmission projects in the country.

TATA Motors and Mahindra have distribution centres in the DRC. Bharti Airtel had acquired Zain Communications Network in 2010 and invested around US\$ 300

million to expand the services in the country. Presently, it ranks as the third largest telecommunication company in DRC.

Bilateral trade figures are given below:

(US\$ million)

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Exports	147.29	181.45	254.16	317.63	200.49
Imports	19.85	47.29	126.45	97.76	85.92
TOTAL	167.14	228.74	380.61	415.39	286.41

Main items of India's imports from DRC are ores, slag and ash; natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi precious stones etc.; copper and articles thereof; other base metals etc. Main items of India's exports to DRC are pharmaceutical products; vehicles other than railway or tramway; nuclear reactors, boilers etc.; plastic and articles thereof; electrical machinery and equipment; cotton etc.

Opportunities for India in DRC:

- **Railways:** DRC is a large country spread over 23,45,029 km². Inland transportation of goods within the country involves huge time lags often leading to cost over-runs and perishing of goods. A good and widespread railway network – clearly inadequate presently – would contribute in reducing time lags, cost overruns and also lead to a better and more effective and efficient transpiration system – not just for goods and services but also for people.

Total arable area (as per available information) covered by railway tracks in the country is presently 4772 kms. Since DRC is a country rich in mineral resources, there is an opportunity to undertake laying of railway tracks and also supplying railway wagons and coaches while seeking long-term leasing of mines by the DRC Government under some form of counter trade agreement.

- **Agriculture:-** DRC, it may be noted, is blessed with fertile land. Commercial cultivation of crops (including pulses) by Indian agriculturists/horticulturists would be a viable option. It may also be mentioned that DRC is rich in high quality wood which can be processed and used to make very good furniture etc.

- **Mining:** The enormous opportunity in this sector is almost self-evident. Since most minerals are readily available and in good quantity too, Indian mining companies would pretty much have their work cut-out for them.

- **Health Sector:** Good quality health care is a crying need in DRC. Although a couple of Indian businessmen have invested in setting up hospitals/diagnostic centres in Kinshasa, this is far from adequate in this rather huge country. There are ample opportunities for health care providers in India to set up hospitals in the country either independently or in collaboration with private entrepreneurs in DRC. Since top quality health providers are few and far between not just in Congo but in Africa as a whole, a good facility set up here (in the heart of Africa) could well become a centre of excellence in the entire continent. (It may be mentioned that there has been an increase in Congolese travelling to India for undergoing surgeries, treatments, etc. and preferring India as a medical destination even over nearby destinations like South Africa, Kenya

etc.) The pharmaceutical industry in India could also look at DRC as a good investment destination. The Congolese are already familiar with Indian pharma companies since most pharmaceutical products, APIs etc. are sourced from India.

- **Small and Medium Enterprises Sector (SMEs):** Since these are relatively low-budget enterprises, there is a scope for Indian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to develop/collaborate with local SMEs. A team from the Ministry of Small Scale Industries had visited DR Congo in December 2015 and met with concerned local officials.
- **Automobiles:** Public transport even in cities like Kinshasa is almost non-existent. There could be opportunities for transport operators (including auto-rickshaws) to augment the highly inadequate transport services in the cities of DR Congo.

Cultural Cooperation:

India and DRC signed an Agreement on Cultural Cooperation on 29 October, 2009. A dance and music group from the National Festival of Gungu [FESNAG] visited India from February 1-15, 2012, February 1-15, 2013 and February 1-15, 2016 to participate in the Surajkund Crafts Mela. A 12-member 'Rajasthani Music and Dance group' visited DRC from July 17-27, 2012 and performed in Kinshasa and FESNAG, Gungu, Bandundu Province. The performances of the group were attended in large numbers and well appreciated. A 15-member Manipuri Dance troupe from ICCR, along with local dancers, performed to packed audiences in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi in June 2016.

India's participation in Peace Keeping Mission under UN:

As of February 2017, India has 3628 troops in MONUSCO(280 Police Units, \$3 Experts on Mission and 3305 Contingent Troops) of the total troops of 18,728 in the mission.

Indian Community:

DRC has the largest concentration of Indians in this sub-region. There are about 9,000 Indians and PIOs [holding British, Canadian, Kenyan and Tanzanian nationalities], living in the country. They are engaged mainly in service sector, business, trading and manufacturing. Bulk of the Indian community is from Gujarat. Others are mainly from Kerala, other South Indian states and a small number from North India. Ismaili community, with an estimated number of 2,000 members, is the single largest Indian community in the DRC. A Hindu temple has been built by the Congo Hindu Mandal comprising Indian community in Kinshasa.

August, 2017