India Zimbabwe relations

Political relations

India and Zimbabwe have a long history of people-to-people interaction dating back to era of Munhumutapa Kingdom when Indian merchants established strong links with Zimbabwe, trading in textiles, minerals and metals. India supported Zimbabwe’s freedom struggle and assisted post-independent Zimbabwe in telecommunications, railways and power sector. Former Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi attended Zimbabwe’s independence celebrations in Harare in 1980. There were frequent exchanges of high level visits until 1996, both bilateral or to attend Summits such as NAM, CHOGM and G-15. Former President of Zimbabwe, (Late) Robert Gabriel Mugabe visited India several times, in 1981, 1983 [CHOGM & NAM Summits], 1987 [Africa Fund Summit], 1991 [to receive Nehru Award], 1993, 1994 [G-15 Summit] and 2015 to attend IAFS-III. Vice President Gen(Rtd) Dr.C.G.N.Chiwenga visited India in March 2018 as a Special Envoy of President E.D.Mnangagwa and also attended CII-Exim Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership.

Vice President Shri Venkaiah Naidu, accompanied by a high-level delegation, visited Zimbabwe from November 2-4, 2018. This was the first ever visit by an Indian Vice President and a high level visit from India to Zimbabwe in the past 22 years. A large business delegation visited Zimbabwe separately. During the visit, 5 MoUs on (i) Arts, Culture & Heritage, (ii) Geology, Mining and Mineral Resources, (iii) Traditional Medicines and Homeopathy; (iv) Broadcasting collaboration between Prasar Bharati and Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and (v) Reciprocal Exemption of Visa Requirements for holders of Diplomatic Passports and an Action Plan on ICT were signed. Ministerial visits from Zimbabwe to India have taken place on a regular basis. Minister of Industry & Commerce, N.M.Ndhlovu visited India in March 2019 to attend the CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership. Minister of SMEs, Sithembiso Nyoni visited India to attend the 6th India International MSME Expo and Summit held in Delhi in August 2019.

Foreign Office Consultation

The First Foreign Office Consultation between India and Zimbabwe was held on 20th March 2017 in Harare. The delegation on Indian side was led by Dr. Neena Malhotra, Joint Secretary (E&SA) and on the Zimbabwean side by Amb. Jonathan Wutawunashe, Director (Africa, Asia & Pacific).

Capacity Building Programmes(ITEC & ICCR Scholarships)

Assistance under the ITEC programme has been a regular feature of India’s assistance to Zimbabwe for capacity building. ITEC and ICCR scholarships are much sought after by Zimbabweans. During the last three years, 528 officials from Zimbabwe have availed of this programme. For the current year, a total of 217 ITEC slots have been allocated to Zimbabwe. Through various MoUs entered with 16 institutions of great repute in India, the Harare Institute of Technology [HIT] is sending its students to various Universities to get degrees in Master of Technology.

Assistance/Aid extended
India set up three ‘Hole-In-The-Wall’ computer learning stations in 2012. India gave an assistance of 500 tonnes of rice in March 23, 2015 and granted US $ 5 million for promoting SMEs project which was completed in February, 2013. India approved two LoCs in 2015, one for Upgradation of Deka Pumping Station (USD 28.6 million and additional LOC of US$ 19 million) and another for Renovation of Bulawayo Thermal Plant (USD 87 million and additional LOC of US$ 23 million). A formal offer was also made in June 2019 for LOC of US$310 million for repowering the Hwange Thermal Power Station. Under the EXIM Bank Buyer’s Credit Agreements in October 2015, worth USD 49.92 million, M/s. Ashok Leyland Ltd. supplied around 635 vehicles and spare parts to the Ministry of Tourism & Hospitality Industry and BEML supplied mining equipment and blast hole drill and spare parts worth USD 13.03 million to Hwange Colliery Company Ltd. India extended a grant of US$1 million and announced an aid of 500 tons of rice in August, 2016 and again extended a grant of US $ 1 million in June, 2017 in response drought/ flood disaster international appeals.

Ambassador handed over the first tranche of donation of medicines worth US$250,000 in June, 2019 to the Zimbabwe Minister of Health and Child Care in pursuant to the announcement made during the visit of Vice President of India to Zimbabwe in November 2018. HMT machines [mostly computer numerical controlled (CNC)] under Phase-2 of the US$ 2.91 million Indo-Zim Technology Centre, was handed over by the Ambassador to the Zimbabwe Government in September 2019.

Commercial relations

Zimbabwe has, of late, started following ‘Look East Policy’ and India is now looked upon as an important trading as well as business partner. India and Zimbabwe signed Joint Commission Agreement in January 1987. Four meetings of the Joint Commission have been held so far – first in New Delhi in April 1987; second in Harare in February 1989; third in New Delhi in October 1990 and the fourth in Harare in January 1996.

Trade & Investment: Bilateral Trade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (April-March)</th>
<th>Exports to Zimbabwe (in million US$)</th>
<th>Imports from Zimbabwe (in million US$)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>223.96</td>
<td>32.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>205.08</td>
<td>24.45</td>
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<td>2016-17</td>
<td>109.08</td>
<td>60.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017-18</td>
<td>163.54</td>
<td>62.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018-19</td>
<td>181.72</td>
<td>7.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source : DGFT)

Business Delegations

The frequency of visits by business delegations from Zimbabwe has gone up in the last few years and a probable turn-around in the Zimbabwean economy in the future can open up considerable opportunities for Indian companies in agro-processing, mining, telecommunications, power and pharmaceuticals.

Several Indian business delegation visited Zimbabwe and attended Conferences organized by the Embassy [ICT Conference] and Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries in 2018 and 2019. B2B sessions during the conferences resulted in the striking of several
deals, the agreements for which were signed during the visit of Vice President to Zimbabwe in November 2018. Indian companies Mahindra and Sonalika Tractors participated in the Zimbabwe Agricultural Show in August, 2019 and showcased their products. India has strong presence in pharmaceutical sector in Zimbabwe and Indian medicines are readily available in the local market. Officials from India Tourism Dubai participated in the Sanganai/Hlanganani World Tourism Expo in September 2019. Ambassador of India inaugurated the ‘Incredible India’ pavilion which was awarded first runner-up. More than 12 buyers from India including 10 travel agents and two travel writers participated in the Expo.

With abundance of natural resources including precious metals and diamonds, there are plenty of opportunities for Indian companies in Zimbabwe. Varun Beverages (Zimbabwe) Ltd, Surface Wilmar (Pvt) Ltd, ZimGold, Raha Cooking Oil, Paroan Vista are some of the companies owned by Indians or PIOs having presence in Zimbabwe. Many more Indian mining companies have shown interest in Zimbabwe and are in the process of setting up their business and have have made investments mainly in the food processing sector, pharmaceuticals and agro-processing industries, mining, retail, paper and healthcare.

Cultural relations

An MoU on Cooperation in the field of Arts, Culture and Heritage between the two countries was signed on November 3, 2018 during the visit of Hon’ble Vice President of India to Zimbabwe. Several cultural exchanges have taken place between the two countries. Zimbabwe cultural troupes participated in Surajkhund Mela, Ahmedabad International Dance and Manipur Sangai Festivals. Indian music and dance troupes performed in festivals such as Sunshine City Festival and Harare International Carnival.

Indian Community

The beginning of Indian presence in Zimbabwe goes back to about 1890 when Indian plantation workers in apartheid South Africa crossed over to the then Southern Rhodesia. At present the number of PIOs, who are predominantly from the province of Gujarat, is estimated at about 9,000. The community has formed societies on religious lines, though they live in harmony. This PIO community has mainly engaged itself in retail trade or export-import business, while the younger generations have mostly moved out of the country for better opportunities as professionals. A few hundred PIOs hold British/Australian passports. Expatriate Indian community number around 500. Some of them are on long term business/work permits while most are professionals engaged in computer software, accountancy, banking, etc. By and large, the Indian community is well respected and maintains cordial relations with the majority community. Some of the members have served as Senators and Judges. In September 2018, Mr Raj Modi has been appointed as Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce upon his election as an MP.

Useful Resources:
For more information and latest updates please visit
Embassy of India website : eoi.gov.in/harare
Embassy of India, Harare Facebook page: https://facebook.com/embindia.harare, Twitter handle: @IndiainZimbabwe.

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