

## **India-Djibouti Bilateral Relations**

Historical linkages, cultural affinities and people to people contact between Djibouti and India dates back prior to India's independence in 1947 and Djibouti's independence in 1977. Indian seafarers and traders from Gujarat and Kerala frequently visited the port of Adulis for trading in spices and silk for gold and ivory. The Honorary Consul of India started functioning in Djibouti in 1969 before Djibouti's independence in 1977. While Djibouti opened its Embassy in New Delhi in 2004, India opened its resident Mission in Djibouti in 2019.

**Djibouti extended extraordinary support during Operation Rahat in April 2015 in the evacuation of Indians and other nationals from war-torn Yemen.**

### **Padma Vibhushan Samman**

Government of India conferred its second highest civilian honour, the Padma Vibhushan on the President of the Republic of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh in March 2019.

### **High-Level visits to Djibouti from India**

President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind paid a State visit to Djibouti from 3-4 October 2017. This was the first-ever visit at the level of HOS/HOG from India to Djibouti. The visit gave an impetus to bilateral relations between the two countries. Various issues of mutual interest such as terrorism, renewable energy, maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region, technical and capacity building assistance by India to enhance employment opportunities for Djibouti's youth, cooperation in multilateral fora were discussed. During the visit, both countries signed an MoU on Foreign Office Consultations.

General (Retd.) V.K. Singh, then MoS (EA) led 'Operation Rahat' from Djibouti in April 2015 to evacuate Indians and other foreign nationals from the war-torn Yemen. In July 2015, MoS for External Affairs Gen V.K. Singh visited Djibouti as the special envoy of PM Narendra Modi to invite the President of Republic of Djibouti for the IAFS -III Summit held in New Delhi in October 2015.

A delegation led by Dr. B. Balabhaskar, Joint Secretary (WANA) visited Djibouti 18-20 December, 2016 to discuss various aspects of bilateral relations between the two countries.

### **High-Level visits from Djibouti**

Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh (IOG) visited India thrice – in 2003, 2015 and 2018. He led a high level delegation to participate in the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) held in New Delhi on 11 March 2018. In October 2015, President Guelleh led a 30-member delegation to New Delhi for attending the 3<sup>rd</sup> India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS III). President Guelleh, accompanied by a large delegation, which included Djibouti's Foreign Minister, Minister of National Defense, Minister of National Education,

Minister of Equipment and Transport and several Djiboutian business-persons visited India on 18-23 May 2003.

As regards Ministerial level visit, Mr. Rifki Abdoukader Bamakhrama, then Minister of Trade and Industry attended the CII-Exim Bank Meeting in New Delhi on 19-21 March 2008. Minister of Economy, Finance & Industry Mr. Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh attended the India-Africa Trade Ministers Meeting, on the margins of IAFS-III in October 2015. Minister of Energy and Natural Resources visited India to participate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly of International Solar Alliance from 28 October to 2 November, 2019.

### **Defence Cooperation**

To combat the menace of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and in the Red Sea, India has been regularly sending naval ships since November 2008 for OTRs during counter-piracy patrolling. Indian ships also make regular calls at the Port of Djibouti on transit.

A 3-member Defence delegation led by Colonel Moustapha Ali Handouleh, Defence Advisor to the President of Djibouti visited Lucknow to attend the DEFEXPO 2020 followed by their visit to the Goa Shipyard Ltd. Djibouti was extended invitation to participate in MILAN – 2022. Djibouti's Ambassador to India represented his country in MILAN – 2022.

### **Economic & Commercial Relations**

Bilateral trade between India and Djibouti stood at US\$ 367.23 million in FY 2020-21, out of which India's exports to Djibouti was US\$ 347.06 million and imports were US\$ 20.16 million. Exports from India consists mainly of rice, engineering goods, fruits & vegetables, paper and plastic products, machinery, metals, yarns and fabrics, and food items. India's exports to Djibouti during April 2021 to January 2022 was US\$ 619.03 million (117% growth). India's imports from Djibouti during April 2021 – January 2022 has been US\$ 34.57 million (133% growth).

### **Grant for Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Leadership and Entrepreneurship**

Government of India extended a grant of US\$ 5 million to build Mahatma Gandhi Centre for Leadership and Entrepreneurship (MGCLE) in January 2017. The project was completed and inaugurated on 22 November 2018 by President Guelleh. The Centre is being run successfully and various training courses are conducted there. It is being utilized by the budding entrepreneurs. To mark the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, a bust of Mahatma Gandhi was also installed at the Centre in January 2020. The Djiboutian leadership is happy with this centre and India's assistance in establishing it.

### **Lines of Credit (LOC)**

EXIM Bank has extended four GOI supported LOCs aggregating US\$ 50.39 million to the Government of Djibouti in four tranches for the construction of Cement Plant at Ali Sabieh.

### **ITEC/ICCR Scholarship**

Under ITEC programme, India is extending support to Djibouti for capacity building; about 50 professionals from Djibouti have benefitted from it so far. Similarly, ICCR scholarships are extended to Djiboutian students for pursuing higher education in India. So far about 66 Djiboutian students have benefitted from ICCR scholarships.

### **Food Aid & Donation of medicines**

India provided 50 Metric Tons of food aid (Sugar, Rice and Wheat Flour) to Djibouti on 11 November, 2020. The shipment was delivered by INS AIRAVAT.

A consignment of medicines, consisting of 428 packets weighing 5954 kg, was gifted to the Ministry of Health of the Government of Djibouti on 12th April 2021.

### **Artificial Limbs (Jaipur Foot) Fitment Camp**

The Embassy, in collaboration with the Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti, Jaipur and ANPH, Djibouti organized an Artificial Limbs Fitment Camp in Djibouti during the month of December 2021. 192 persons benefitted from the Camp with 197 artificial limbs fitted by the BMVSS team.

### **Quick Impact Project**

The Embassy is presently implementing a QIP for providing vocational training to underprivileged women at the Center for Social Action & Women's Empowerment (CASAF). The project is under implementation.

### **Other capacity building and development assistance**

Three doctors from the Government hospitals of Djibouti underwent Mid-career training in advanced fields of medical science from 5-24 August, 2019 at Fortis Hospital, New Delhi under IAFS-III.

Two Indian agriculture scientists visited Djibouti on the invitation of Government of Djibouti to support the Green Djibouti Plantation drive inaugurated by President Guelleh on 16 October 2019. They provided expert advice on the type of plants suitable to Djibouti's weather, soil and water conditions.

### **Indian Community**

Indian Diaspora in Djibouti is relatively small with about 800 persons. The oldest Indian community consists of Gujarati traders and entrepreneurs from Rajkot and Jamnagar. The community grew after Djibouti's independence when the country started economic & business relations with rest of the world. Most of the community members are engaged in blue collar jobs, some of them are working in companies engaged in port and shipping activities; some in Free Trade zones, some Indians also work for the US military base.

India's former Honorary Consul Shri Nalin Kothari (Djiboutian national) was awarded the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman in 2017.

(Updated on **15<sup>th</sup> March 2022**)

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