

Brief on India-Islamic Rep of Mauritania Relations

General: Situated in the north-west of the African continent, on the Atlantic coast, in the southern Sahara (almost 90% of its territory is desert) in the Maghreb/Sahel region, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is home to around 3.5 million people, mainly concentrated in the relatively greener southern part of the country. Mauritania is an Arabized African Islamic Republic, with almost cent percent of its inhabitants practicing Islam. The governance is strongly influenced by the Sharia. Nouakchott is the capital and the largest city, housing almost 1/3rd of the country's population. Nouadhibou and Kiffa are two other major cities. Arabic is the official language and Ouguiya (MRO) is the currency.

The Ledership:

Head of State H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani (since 1 August 2019)

Head of Government H.E. Mr. Ismail Ould Bedda Sheikh Sidiya (Since 5 August 2019)

Main Foreign Policy Priorities of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania:

- Consolidation of cooperation with neighboring countries.
- Peaceful solution to conflicts within the Arab world and Africa
- Revitalization of the role of regional organizations.
- Economic consolidation of the country based on direct foreign investment and domestic policies.
- Territorial status of Western Sahara

Bilateral Relations: Both the countries have Democratic governance and enjoy cordial and friendly relations. There is no bilateral geo-political clash of interests. Neither country has Diplomatic representation in each others' country. India, however, has a token representation in the form of an Hony. Consulate and has announced its plans to open mission in Nouakchott by 2021. India provides substantial developmental, human resource development and infrastructural aid to Mauritania. The Government of Mauritania looks forward to further multi-faceted strengthening of its relationship with India, especially in port/s development, oil exploration, mining, power, agricultural, pharmaceuticals, engineering and educational sectors. The country is developing its port city of Nouadhibou in a big way and is inviting investors with attractive incentives. Mauritania can make immense use of India's expertise in sectors such as oil exploration, port development, power, communications, IT, education, mining, agriculture, automobile and pharmaceuticals etc.

Bilateral Visits: No bilateral visit has taken place in the recent years. However, at the invitation of the Prime Minister of India, the President of Mauritania, accompanied by a high level Ministerial/official delegation attended the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit

(IAFS-III) in New Delhi in October 2015.

Lines of Credit: India has extended a Line of Credit (LOC) of value aggregating US\$ 21.8 million to Mauritania towards agro-industries and drinking water projects. The Government of India has approved another LOC of USD 65.68 million for a Solar-Diesel Hybrid Rural Electrification Project in Mauritania. The Contract for this LOC is yet to be signed. It appears that Mauritania is no longer interested in this project.

ITEC/ICCR Training Slots: The number of ITEC slots offered to Mauritania for 2019-20 is 5. Three ICCR scholarships have been offered to Mauritania for 2019-20. Utilization of these slots has been negligible due to lack of response.

Pan-African e-Network Project: The Pan-African e-Network Project, set up by Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL), was operational in Mauritania. The project remains underutilized due to language problem etc. The next phase of programme in the form of e-VidyaBharati and e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project has been offered to Mauritania.

Bilateral Trade and investment: There is vast potential for Indian investors in Mauritania, especially in the fields of oil exploration, port development, mining, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, machinery, human resource development and power generation. The Mauritanian Government's investment and development strategy emphasizes private sector development, which is seen as the main engine of economic growth. Privatization, liberalization, and investment incentives figure prominently in Mauritania's World Bank and IMF structural reform programmes. Foreign investment is welcome in most sectors. The Investment Code uses privatization and liberalization to encourage foreign investors and guarantees companies the freedom to transfer most capital and wages abroad. The volume and value of bilateral trade between the two countries is insignificant. However, there is tremendous potential for growth, especially when Mauritania is a resource-rich country, especially the extractive natural resources, including oil that await exploration, production and value addition. The Mauritanian Government has, on numerous occasions, conveyed its eagerness to increase bilateral economic cooperation with India. The Government of Mauritania has embarked on a programme for the large scale integrated development of Nouadhibou Free Zone for development of Nouadhibou Bay and is offering huge incentives.

Mauritania's Primary Exports/Imports : Major exports are Iron ore, fish and fish products, gold, copper and petroleum. Its major imports are machinery and equipment, petroleum products, capital goods, foodstuffs, consumer goods etc.

Bilateral Trade: India's main exports to Mauritania are cereals (and related products), tanning and dyeing extracts, plastic products, cotton, ceramic, Iron and steel articles, boilers and related mechanical appliances and non- railway vehicles etc.

Mauritania's main exports to India include iron and steel, ores, slag, ash, cotton and copper made articles, aluminum, electrical machinery etc. Total bilateral trade is of

US\$131 million.

Indian Investments in Mauritania: Indian mining, power and oil companies are reported to have some presence in the country. A number of Indian companies are also involved in LoC contracts execution. Indian origin commodities are commonly seen at market places. Indian fabric is particularly used for a popular traditional dress worn by Mauritanian women.

Mauritanian Investments in India: Mauritania has no known investment enterprises in India. It is amongst the poorest countries in the world, heavily reliant on foreign aid.

Indian Community in Mauritania: Currently, the number of Indians in Mauritania is estimated to be around 100-150. Indian presence is evident in the mining, power, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas exploration, construction and agro industrial sectors. Few Indian companies are also involved in projects executions under various LoC schemes extended to Mauritania by India and other international organizations.

Culture

Dubbed Indian Films/TV serials and north Indian dresses are popular in Mauritania.

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