

India – Mauritania: Bilateral Brief

Both the countries have a democratic form of governance and enjoy cordial and friendly relations. India has opened its Embassy in Nouakchott in June 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, education, mining, agriculture, textile, automobile and pharmaceuticals etc.

Bilateral Agreements: Nil

Bilateral Visits:

The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania joined the virtual Voice of Global South Summit hosted by India on 13 January 2023.

On the invitation of our Hon'ble Defence Minister, the Defense Minister of Mauritania participated at the India-Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) on the sidelines of Def Expo from 18-22 October 2022 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Both the Ministers held bilateral discussions.

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 (milk processing plant) and drinking water projects.

ITEC/ICCR Training Slots: The number of ITEC slots offered to Mauritania for 2023-24 is 7, two for defence and five civilian slots. One ICCR scholarship is offered to Mauritania every year.

Pan-African e-Network Project: The Pan-African e-Network Project, set up by Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL), was operational in Mauritania. 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 hydrogen, solar and wind energy, hydrocarbons, oil

exploration, fishing, mining, phosphate, gold, iron ore, lithium, uranium, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, machinery, human resource development and power generation.

In mining, Mauritania has potential with more than 900 mining and mineral indices listed, particularly for iron, copper, gold, phosphate, quartz, diamond, chromium, gypsum, manganese, lithium, lead, zinc, uranium, platinum group elements, rare earths, black sands, salts and peats.

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 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 Government of Mauritania has embarked on a programme for the largescale integrated development of Nouadhibou Free Zone for development of Nouadhibou Bay and offers many incentives.

Mauritania's Primary Exports/Imports: Major exports are Iron ore, fish and fish products, gold, copper. 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), pharma, plastic products, cotton, ceramic, Iron and steel articles, boilers and related mechanical appliances, electrical, chemical products, and non-railway vehicles etc. Mauritania's main exports to India include iron and steel, copper, aluminum, electrical machinery etc.

Total bilateral Trade – US\$ 378.24 million (2022-23)

India's Import from Mauritania–US\$ 231.68 million (2022-23)

India's Export to Mauritania – US\$ 146.57 million (2022-23)

Indian Investments in Mauritania: Indian companies have presence in mining, power, vehicles, fishing, iron and steel in the country. Some Indian companies are also involved in projects executions under LoC/Buyer's Credit schemes extended to Mauritania by India and other international organizations. 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 a least developed country (LDC) heavily reliant on foreign aid.

Indian Community in Mauritania: Currently, the number of Indians in Mauritania is estimated to be around 300 (mostly expatriates). Indian presence is evident in the mining, power, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas exploration, construction and agro industrial sectors. Majority are expats working in Indian and foreign companies in Mauritania.

Culture

The culture of Mauritania is a confluence of many influences, both indigenous (the ancient Berber people, the Moors) and external (the French) , specially visible in music and cuisine.

Mauritanian music is a tradition carried down by the Moors. In the earlier times, musicians formed the lowest rung of society and performed for anyone who paid them. Today, the music arena is more refined, but the use of Moor instruments such as the four-stringed lute and the kettle drum continue.

Similarly, Mauritanian cuisine is an amalgamation of several influences. While many dishes and ingredients like dried meats, grilled goat, sheep and couscous clearly point at Berber and Moorish origins, there are also more modern formulations like baked goods and French pastries.

Arabic is the official language of Mauritania; Fula, Soninke, and Wolof are recognized as national languages. The Moors speak ?assniyyah Arabic, a dialect that draws most of its grammar from Arabic and uses a vocabulary of both Arabic and Arabized Amazigh words.

The composition and recitation of poetry, both in classical forms and in the ?assaniyyah dialect, have traditionally been amongst the distinguishing marks of high culture in Saharan desert society.

One strong feature of Mauritanian society is that it is composed of a community of diverse ethnic groups that are hierarchical in social structure and strongly differentiated. Islam as a religion is shared by all ethnic groups in the country and has served as a centripetal force in creating a national culture.

Indian Films/TV serials and Indian dresses are popular in Mauritania. Some Indophiles from Mauritania follow Bollywood stars and their films. There are many similarities between Mauritanian and Indian culture. Some example are: dressing is very similar especially of women; ancestors are honored; cemeteries are respected and feared; strong family ties. Joint families; institution of marriage is strong; the entire community engages in teaching social values to children as they grow up. Respect for the elders, maintenance of the family honor, good hospitality, patience, virtue, belief in God, are some of the values taught to the children.

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