

Bilateral 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. It has a democratically elected President H.E. Mr (Gen) Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz since August 2009. He was re-elected with a landslide victory in June 2014. 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 Abdel Aziz

Head of Government H.E. Mr. Mohamed Salem Ould Bechir

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 a Hony. Consulate. 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 Agreements: Nil

Bilateral Visits: No bilateral visit has taken place during 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 recently concluded 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III) in New Delhi in October 2015.

Direct and Indirect Assistance: Apart from direct bilateral assistance, Mauritania is entitled to Indian assistance through NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and through other IAFS initiatives.

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.

ITEC Training Slots: The number of slots offered to Mauritania for 2017-18 is 5.

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 which will provide free tele-education courses in various academic disciplines and free Continuing Medical Education to doctors/nurses/para-medical staff including free medical consultancy.

Offer of English Language Training Centre: Under the IAFS initiative, India has offered a Centre for English Language Training Centre to Mauritania. Modalities are being finalized.

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 and exploitation. 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 are Iron ore, fish and fish products, gold, copper, petroleum. Its major imports are machinery and equipment, petroleum products, capital goods, foodstuffs, consumer goods etc.

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

Mauritanian Exports to India: Mauritania's main exports to India include iron and steel, ores, slag, ash, cotton and copper made articles, aluminum, electrical machinery etc.

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.

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. However, Indian origin commodities are commonly seen at market places. Indian fabric is particularly used for a popular traditional dress worn by Mauritanian women.

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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