

India - Namibia Relations

Political Relations

India and Namibia enjoy warm and cordial relations. India was at the forefront of the liberation struggle of Namibia and was indeed among the first nations to raise the question of Namibian independence in the UN. The first SWAPO Embassy abroad was established in New Delhi in 1986 which was closed after independence of Namibia in 1990. This is warmly recalled by all Namibian leaders. Diplomatic relations with independent Namibia were established right from the moment of its independence, with the Indian Observer Mission being upgraded to a full-fledged High Commission on 21 March 1990. Namibia opened a full-fledged resident Mission in New Delhi in March 1994.

Bilateral, political interactions between our two countries have been at the highest levels. Prime Minister V.P. Singh visited Namibia in March 1990 for Namibia's Independence Celebrations, accompanied by Shri K.R. Narayanan, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and the then Leader of the Opposition, Shri Rajiv Gandhi; Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma, President of India visited in June 1995; Prime Minister Vajpayee in 1998; and numerous ministerial delegations. Col. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore (Retd.), AVSM, MoS for I&B visited as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister on 28 August 2015 to hand over IAFS-III invitations to Namibian dignitaries.

President Shri Pranab Mukherjee paid a State Visit to Namibia from June 15-17, 2016 at the invitation of Dr. Hage G. Geingob, the President of the Republic of Namibia. The delegation of the President of India included Shri Jitendra Singh, Minister of State (IC) in Prime Minister's Office, Members of Parliament Shri Surendrajeet Singh Ahluwalia and Shri Mansukh Lakhman Mandaviya.

President Mukherjee held a tete-a tete meeting with President Geingob, followed by official discussions between the two leaders on June 16, during which they exchanged views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. President Mukherjee addressed the Joint Session of Namibian Parliament on June 16, which was preceded by a brief meeting with Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia and Chairperson of the National Council. Founding President of Namibia Dr. Sam Nujoma and Former President Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba also paid courtesy calls on the President of India.

President's programme included address to the students and faculty members of Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) on June 17, visits to the Heroes' Acre & Independence Memorial Museum and address to the Indian community at a reception organized in his honour by the High Commissioner. Two MOUs/agreements were signed during the visit: (i) MOU on establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Information Technology in Namibia; and (ii) MOU between Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM) and Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. President Mukherjee invited President Geingob to visit India, which was accepted with pleasure.

From Namibia, Dr. Sam Nujoma, Founding President of Namibia visited India 13 times in the past since 1983 and the recent one being from 17-22 November 2015 under the Distinguished Visitors' Programme of ICCR; Prime Minister Dr. Hage Geingob visited India in 1995; President Hifikepunye Pohamba in 2009; and several ministerial delegations.

Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia, accompanied by the First Lady, visited India on 28-29 October 2015 to attend the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit

held in New Delhi. President Geingob met Prime Minister of India on 29 October 2015 and discussed bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The delegation from Namibia included Hon. Ms. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation; Hon. Tom Alweendo, Minister of Economic Planning in the Presidency and Director-General of the National Planning Commission (NPC); Hon. Obeth Kandjoze, Minister of Mines and Energy; and Hon. John Mutorwa, Minister of Agriculture, Water & Forestry.

Other important visits from Namibia in 2016 included: Minister of Health and Social Services of Namibia Dr. Bernard Haufiku - to attend India-Africa Health Sciences Meet from 1-3 September 2016, Hon. Sylvia Makgone, Deputy Minister of Rural and Urban Development and Hon. Priscilla Beukes, Deputy Minister of Poverty Eradication and Social Welfare from 1-12 September 2016 for studying India's experiences with poverty eradication and rural development, Secretary to Cabinet George Simataa for leading a delegation of Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM) from 27 January to 7 February 2016 - MOUs with ASCI, and IPE were concluded during the visit.

The third round of India-Namibia Foreign Office Consultations was held in Windhoek from 16-18 May 2016. The two delegations were led by Dr. Neena Malhotra, JS(E&SA), MEA and Dr. Panduleni-Kaino Shingenge, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation of Namibia respectively. Apart from exchanging views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest, the two sides also utilized the opportunity to assess and review the preparations for the forthcoming State Visit of the President of India to Namibia.

India's continued commitment to capacity building through the ITEC (Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation) and other bilateral programmes in Namibia has been a solid pillar of cooperation, which is very much appreciated in Namibia. Under the ITEC programme, more than 1,000 Namibian candidates have been trained in India so far. For 2016-17, India has allotted 200 civilian ITEC slots to Namibia. In addition, three ITEC experts, two from the Indian Army and one from civilian side are on deputation to the Namibian government. Since 1995, an Indian Air Force Training Team has been based in Namibia, providing training to Namibian Air Force. During the ITEC Day Celebrations on 14th November, 2016, more than 200 Namibian ITEC alumni participated and some of them shared their positive experiences.

Economic and Commercial Relations

Bilateral trade and investments, though small, have been increasing over the years. Bilateral trade (as of 2015-16) was USD 84 million with India's exports valued at USD 74 million, while India's imports stood at USD 10 million. Indian products from South Africa are also re-imported into Namibia via the SACU route and shown as imports from South Africa. Similarly, Namibian rough diamonds arrive in India via London and Antwerp and do not get reflected in the bilateral trade figures.

There has been a steady surge of investments by Indian companies in Namibia. Indian investments into Namibia include: (i) In May 2010, Vedanta Resources of India acquired Skorpion Zinc Mine (Namibia) for US\$750 million from Anglo-American Zinc; and (ii) Indian GPT Group of Companies has invested N\$18.75 Million (US\$2.68 million approx.) in 2010 in a joint venture with Trans Namibia for producing Concrete Sleepers.

India and Namibia established a Joint Trade Committee in 1995. The third session of India-Namibia Joint Trade Committee was held in New Delhi on September 7, 2016. The two delegations were led by Ms. Nirmala Sitharam, MOS(IC) for Commerce and Industry and Hon. Mr. Piet Van Der Walt, Deputy Minister of Industrialization, Trade and SME Development of Namibia respectively. The JTC reviewed the developments in bilateral trade, inter alia, noting that during 2015 India was the seventh largest country from which Namibia sourced its imports. The two sides also reviewed bilateral cooperation in specific sectors such as mining, sourcing of precious gems/stones, renewable energy, MSMEs, Tourism, Water Resources, Investment, etc.

The Joint Working Group (JWG) on geology and mineral resources met in New Delhi on 21st May 2012. Under the India-Africa Forum Summit decisions, India has offered to set up two institutes in Namibia - i) ICT Training Institute; and (ii) Africa-India Entrepreneurship Development Centre. Implementation is underway.

GOI made a donation of Rupees two crores (equivalent to Namibian dollars 3.364 millions) to Namibia towards drought relief in August 2013. On earlier two occasions, donations of Rs. 1 crore each time, were given for the flood relief. India granted USD 12.16 million to Namibia for the construction of twin faculties of Mining Engineering and Information Technology at University of Namibia's Ongwediva Campus, which has been named as India Wing. The project was completed and handed over to the University in June 2014. Grants-in-aid worth US\$10 million was announced during the visit of President Pohamba to India, under which India is supplying IT equipment to Namibian Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health & Social Services.

During the visit of President of India to Namibia in June 2016, India announced doubling of ITEC slots from almost 100 to 200; donation of 1000 tons of rice for drought relief; 100 tons of essential medicines over three years and announced a cash grant of US\$ 20,000 for the Indira Gandhi Maternity Clinic in Okahao, run by Dr Sam Nujoma Foundation. The Namibian side conveyed their sincere appreciation for these gestures.

With the encouragement of the Mission, an 'India-Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry' (INCCI) was established and registered in Windhoek in September 2016.

The High Commission of India organized a roundtable discussion on "India – Namibia Cooperation in Health and Medical Sectors" on February 29, 2016. Hon. Minister of Health and Social Services of Namibia Dr. Bernard Haufiku graced the event as the Chief Guest. Participants at the roundtable included health service providers, pharmaceutical companies, insurance companies, hospital representatives, health and ICT professionals.

A 2-member delegation comprising Shri B.N. Ramesh, Dy General Manager, and Shri Parveen Adlakha, Senior Engineer, International Operations Division, from Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), visited Namibia from 26-28 October 2015.

A business delegation from Namibian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) visited India to attend India Electronics Expo from March 17-18, 2016.

A 15-member Indian ICT delegation from the Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council (ESC) of India visited Namibia from 6-8 November 2016. In cooperation with the India-Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a buyer-seller meeting was organized by the High Commission of India on 7 November 2016, which was attended by several dozen Namibian business persons. The meeting was inaugurated by Hon.

Simataa Mutumba Stanley, Deputy Minister of Information & Communication Technology of Namibia. During the BSM that followed the meeting, several potential areas for cooperation were discussed / identified.

Cultural Relations

The multi-faceted relations between India and Namibia are complemented by cultural bonding. Yoga has a dedicated following in Namibia. The Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), Government of India offers 22 scholarships every year for students from Namibia to pursue undergraduate/postgraduate courses/research work in various Indian Universities.

The ICCR sponsored 'Bhangra & Giddha' troupe visited Namibia from 11-13 October 2015. The troupe rendered its performance at the Windhoek City Park Amphitheatre on 13 October 2015. Hon. Charles Namoloh, Minister of Safety and Security lit the traditional Indian lamp to formally inaugurate the event. A special performance was organized for the benefit of the Namibian students on 12 October 2015 at the International University of Management. The dance performances were widely welcomed in Namibia.

A newly refurbished and renovated Annexe Complex within the Chancery premises of the High Commission of India, Windhoek was inaugurated by Shri Amar Sinha, Secretary (ER) in the Ministry of External Affairs of India on 16 June 2016. Secretary (ER) also visited the recently refurbished Culture Centre in the Chancery, which is being utilised for holding Yoga Classes and other official, community and cultural events.

The 2nd International Day of Yoga 2016 was celebrated in Windhoek on 25 June 2016 at the Parliament Gardens, the bustling city centre housing major landmarks of the city. The Mayor of Windhoek, M. Kazapua led the Yoga Day event and practiced Yoga at the Parliament gardens along with hundreds of enthusiastic participants from the city. A series of Curtain Raiser Events including at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) on 13 May 2016 and at Dorado Park School, Windhoek on 21 June 2016 were also held leading up to the main event. The Mission participated in "Kalahari International Festival of The Arts" from 1-3 September 2016 at Goethe Institute, Windhoek with Special Yoga Sessions held for the visitors on September 3, 2016.

Mission showcased India Theme at various local fairs including International Food and Craft Bazaar at FNCC on 04 June 2016 and Windhoek International School (WIS) Annual International Fair at WIS Fairgrounds on 4 November 2016. India stall attracted many visitors thronging the gazebo for henna art motifs, Indian jewellery, traditional Indian cuisine and tourism information.

The 125th birth Anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar was celebrated at the Chancery Culture Centre on 13th April 2016. Indian community members and officials from the HCI attended the event. On this occasion, a Documentary on Dr. Ambedkar was screened and a quiz was organized on Dr. Ambedkar and on the Constitution of India.

The S.R.C.High School, Dobra in Namibia organized an event titled "Turning Challenges into Opportunities - The Journey Continues" on September 9, 2016 during which the students were briefed about the life and contributions of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Meritorious students from disadvantaged backgrounds were gifted academic books. The Mission also organised, in collaboration with Dorado Primary School CC in Windhoek, an event to celebrate the Constitution Day of India and the 125th Birth Anniversary of Dr. B.R.

Ambedkar on 25 November 2016 which was attended by faculty members and about 200 children from the school.

Prime Minister of Namibia Ms. Saara Kuugongelwa Amadhila attended the Indian classical dance performance on October 21, 2016 organized by the High Commission of India as part of 'India Week' celebrations from October 17-24, 2016. A six member Kathak dance troupe led by Ms. Pratima Roy Chaudhury was sponsored by the ICCR for this occasion, which also performed in Swakopmund apart from Windhoek. Other events organized as part of 'India Week' celebrations included Yoga/meditation sessions, Indian cuisine & henna classes, screening of Indian movies and documentary on Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan. Dance workshops for the Kathak Dance Troupe were organised at Namibian College of Arts, Windhoek on 22.10.2016 and at Indian Cultural Centre on 24.10.2016.

The High Commission of India in collaboration with the International University of Management (IUM) organised a seminar on India's Constitution Day (26 November) and 70 years of India's independence on 06 December 2016. In addition to the Vice Chancellor and senior academics from IUM and other universities, Hon'ble Peya Mushelenga, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, IUM Founder and Chairman of IUM Governing Council, Hon'ble Nahas Angula, senior politician & the Third Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia, Professor Joseph Diescho, famous writer, political Analyst and former Executive Director of NIPAM, members of diplomatic community and media persons participated in the event.

Indian Community

There are very few Indians or people of Indian origin in Namibia. Presently, there are around 225 Indians/NRIs/PIOs in Namibia. Some of them are doctors, professors, catholic priests and some involved in commerce, transport and services industry etc. Presence of Indian community in Namibia is growing steadily.

Useful Resources:

High commission of India, Windhoek website:

<http://hciwindhoek.in/>

High Commission of India, Windhoek Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/IndiainNamibia>

High Commission of India, Windhoek Twitter Page:

<https://twitter.com/IndiainNamibia>

December 2016