

## **Brief Embassy Report on Bilateral Relations – ITJ Division, DGCI&S, Kolkata.**

### **India-Benin Bilateral Relations**

#### **A. Introduction:**

1. Indian Trade Journal (ITJ) division of the Director General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS) brings out weekly publication on Embassy Profile Report providing information on recent policy changes and happenings in other countries that may be of interest to the Indian trading community. This is the Embassy Profile Report depicting the Embassy of Benin.
2. India and Benin have friendly ties characterized by democracy and secularism. Benin as a shining example of a tolerant, progressive multi-ethnic and multi-religious society with a multi-party democracy, is a natural partner to India, being the world's largest democracy.
3. Benin as a member of several international forums, including the United Nations, works closely with India. During the visit to India of the then President of Benin Dr. Boni Yayi in March 2009, Benin extended its unflinching support to India in her bid for a Permanent Seat in an expanded UN Security Council. Benin expressed solidarity with India in its efforts to tackle the scourge of terrorism, which has become the biggest threat to international peace and security in the current times.

#### **B. Commercial Relations (Trade and Foreign Investment) – Recent facts & figures**

4. India has emerged as the largest trading partner of Benin with two-way trade touching US \$ 1.34 billion in 2022-23. Lead items of India's exports were rice, pharmaceutical products, electrical machinery, cotton, and automobiles particularly two and three-wheelers etc.

**The Export-Import statistics as per India's Ministry of Commerce data bank from 2019-20 to 2023-24 are as follows :**

#### **The Export-Import statistics from 2019-20 to 2023-24**

**(US Dollar million)**

S.No		2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
1.	Export	326.62	555.20	716.41	892.81	752.54
2.	Import	358.94	325.97	402.12	452.58	214.57
3.	Total Trade	685.56	881.17	1118.53	1345.39	967.11

*(Source: Doc, Ministry of Commerce & Industry)*

#### **C. Other Major Areas of Co-operation:**

- India and Benin have signed multiple Agreements/MoUs covering areas such as Education, R&D, Tourism, Defense Production, Environment, Telecommunication etc.
- India-Benin relations were placed on a firm footing with the State visit of the then President Boni

Yayi accompanied by five Cabinet ministers to India from 3 to 7 March 2009. In addition to delegation-level meeting with the then Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, President Boni Yayi held meetings with the President, Vice President, and External Affairs Meeting. India announced a Line of Credit (LoC) of US\$ 15 million for Benin during the visit. Two grants of one million dollars each for mutually identified projects in Health & Education sectors as well as the setting up of an IT Centre for Excellence and a Centre of Demonstration of Technology (both on grant basis) were also agreed to. The visit concluded with five bilateral agreements with Benin including an MOU on setting up an Information Technology Centre of Excellence (CETI) in the Republic of Benin.

- His Excellency Mr. Ram Nath Kovind, President of the Republic of India, paid a State visit to Benin on July 28-30, 2019, heading a high-level delegation and met his counterpart His Excellency Mr. Patrice TALON, President of the Republic of Benin. He also visited the Benin National Assembly where he had discussions with the Speaker of the Benin Parliament and addressed Beninese MPs during a regular session of the Parliament. This visit is an historic visit, very first to Benin at the level of Head of State/Government. During the visit, the two Heads of State held a tete-a-tete, at the Palace of the Republic, for discussions relating to bilateral cooperation, India-Africa partnership, and global issues. President Kovind announced a soft Line of Credit of USD 100 million to Benin for its national priority projects. President Kovind also announced the inclusion of Benin in India's e-visa regime. Four (4) Agreements/MoUs were signed during the visit - Cultural Exchange Programme between Benin and India for 2019-23; MoU on Tele-medicine and Tele-education; Agreement on mutual exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic, official/service passports; and MoU on cooperation in the field of export credit and investment insurance.
- Ms. Medesse Veronique Tognifode, Hon'ble Minister of Social Affairs and MicroFinance of the Republic of Benin visited India in Jan 2020, to attend the Peer Exchange-“Accelerating Digital Social Protection Payments” organized in New Delhi.
- Beninese Armed Forces have been attending training/courses in defence institutions in India under the ITEC program. The focus of the training is on specialist areas like counter terrorism and anti-piracy. India is also looking at capacity building of the Beninese Armed Forces. Vacancies in UN courses are also being provided.
- Benin is part of the Pan African e-Network project. An MoU on e-VBAB (Tele- education and Tele-medicine) was signed between the Republic of Benin and TCIL, during the State Visit of President Ram Nath Kovind to Benin from 28-30 July 2019.
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- **IBSA's Salt Farming Project:** An India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) project on Saltfarming in the Republic of Benin was announced on 16 July 2021 in Djegbadji villagenear Ouidah, Benin. The Salt Project is under implementation and commercial production of the prototype machinery is likely to start by the end of 2023. The Salt Farming Project aims to provide improved technology, capacity building and distribution support to the local population (mainly women) in the efficient, cost-effective, and

environmentally safe production of salt.

- In February 2023, Mr. Romuald WADAGNI, Minister of Economy and Finance & Mr. Dona Jean-Claude HOUSSOU, Minister of Energy visited India. During this visit they met EXIM Bank officials.
- **ICCR Scholarship:** Every year there are 5-10 scholarships offered by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) for Beninese Students to pursue undergraduate/post graduate courses in India.
- **C.V Raman International Fellowships:** Beninese Nationals are regularly availing the C.V. Raman International Fellowships offered by Government of India in doctoral and post-doctoral research training.
- **e-Vidya Bharati and e-Arogya Bharati MoU:** The Government of the Republic of Benin and Nigeria and Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL) signed the e-VBAB MoU in 2019 and India has been offering various free online courses (tele- education and free tele-medicine) to Benin under this MoU. Beninese students regularly availing scholarship under e-VBAB.
- India and Benin signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 2019-23 during the State Visit of President Ram Nath Kovind to Benin from 28-30 July 2019.
- The Indian Community in Benin is estimated at 1500 persons. About 90 Indian companies mainly in trading and retailing are in Benin, dealing in textiles, rice, cashew scrap, electronics and supermarkets. Indian experts are working in the West Africa Rice Development Centre (WARDA). Indian community is generally respected in the country and has been engaged in various socio-economic charitable activities including education, health care, potable water supply etc., especially in rural areas. A school for local rural children has been opened and is being run by the community. Cotonou has an Indian Cultural Association as well as a Hindu Temple to anchor cultural activities.

*Source:* [www.mea.gov.in](http://www.mea.gov.in)