

Bilateral Brief: India-The Gambia

India established diplomatic relations with The Gambia in 1965, soon after its independence from the United Kingdom. India and The Gambia share warm and friendly relations. Former Deputy Minister for External Affairs, Shri Dinesh Singh, visited Banjul to participate in the Independence celebrations of The Gambia on 6 February 1965. The Gambia's resident High Commission in New Delhi was inaugurated in February 2009. The Indian Embassy in Dakar (Senegal) is concurrently accredited to The Gambia. In the initial decades of The Gambia's independence, the bilateral engagement was limited to capacity building and training programmes from Indian side. However, in the recent years, bilateral relations have witnessed a greater engagement and momentum.

Prominent High-level Visits/Meetings

Vice President of The Gambia Mr. Muhammad B.S. Jallow led a high-powered delegation comprising of 5 Ministers (Trade & Industry, Petroleum & Energy, Communications & Digital Economy, Tourism & Culture, Transport works & Infrastructure) to participate in the 18th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Growth Partnership, held in New Delhi from 14-16 June 2023.

Vice President of The Gambia Mr. Badara A. Joof led a high-powered 28-member delegation comprising of 4 Ministers (Finance, Health, Petroleum, and Public Service) to India from 18-23 July 2022 to participate in the 17th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Growth Partnership, held in New Delhi from 19-20 July 2022. During the visit, Vice President Badara had a brief joint meeting with Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu. In addition, Minister of State for External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan and Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms and Personnel Grievances (DARPG) Shri V. Srinivas called on Vice President Badara and discussed issues of mutual interest.

Hon'ble President Ram Nath Kovind paid the first ever State Visit to The Gambia from 30 July – 1 August 2019. During the visit, Hon'ble President reiterated India's commitment to support Gambia's development. Both sides also signed an MoU for cooperation in the field of Ayurveda and traditional system of medicine and homeopathy.

Hon'ble Prime Minister Modi met President Barrow on sidelines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London in April 2018.

A delegation led by the Vice President of The Gambia Ms. Isatou Njie-Saidy participated in the India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III), held in New Delhi from 26-29 October 2015.

Recent Ministerial Visits/Meetings

Minister of State for External Affairs Shri Rajkumar Ranjan Singh met the Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Gambia Dr. Mamadou Tangara on the sidelines of the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at Doha, Qatar on 6 March 2023.

Prof Pierre Gomez, Minister of Higher Education of The Gambia participated in the Education Session of the Voice of South Summit (VOSS) held virtually on 13 January 2023.

Minister of Defence of The Gambia Mr. Sering Modou Njie and Chief of Defence Staff Lt. Gen. Yakuba Drammeh participated in the 12th DefEXpo and 2nd India-Africa Defence Dialogue at Gandhinagar from 18-22 October 2022.

External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S. Jaishankar had a telephonic conversation with his Gambian counterpart Dr. Mamadou Tangara on 13 October 2022, and conveyed his condolences on the deaths of around 70 Gambian children (*allegedly linked to cough syrups made by an Indian manufacturer*) and stressed that matter is being seriously investigated by appropriate authorities.

Dr. Mamadou Tangara, The Gambian Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad met EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and also addressed the UNGA side event titled “India@75: Showcasing the India-UN Partnership in Action” on 24 September 2022.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri V. Muraleedharan paid an official visit to The Gambia from 1-2 November 2021. During the visit, a Framework Agreement on cooperation (*for institutionalization of Joint Commission Meetings*) and a visa waiver agreement for diplomatic/official passport holders were signed. The re-purposing, of the grant assistance of US\$ 500,000 extended during the visit of Hon’ble President of India, for purchase of dialysis machines was also announced.

Earlier, the Gambian Minister of Defence Mr. Sheik Omar Faye visited India to participate in DEFEXPO 2020 held in Lucknow, from 5-8 February 2020 and the India-Africa Defence Ministers Meet on the margins of the DefExpo.

Dr. Mamadou Tangara, The Gambian Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad visited India from 7-12 March 2019. Minister Dr. Tangara held a meeting with External Affairs Minister, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, in New Delhi on 7 March 2019. An MoU with FSI (on Foreign Service training) was signed.

The Gambian Minister of Petroleum & Energy, Mr. Fafa SANYANG participated in ISA Founding Conference in New Delhi in March 2018, the First ISA Assembly and 2nd Re-Invest in New Delhi in October 2018 and 2nd General Assembly Meeting in New Delhi in Oct 2019.

Recent Secretary level Visits/Meetings

Permanent Secretary for Higher Education Research, Science and Technology of The Gambia Dr. Yusupha Touray led the Gambian delegation to the UNESCO-India-Africa Hackathon held in Gautam Buddh University from 22-25 November 2022.

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture Mr. H.M. Jallow, attended the 1st Global Conference of the International year of Millets 2023 held on 18th March, 2023 in New Delhi.

Bilateral Institutional Mechanisms

Joint Commission Meeting (JCM): The Agreement to form a bilateral JCM was signed in November 2021.

Foreign Office Consultation (FOC): Both countries have signed a Protocol for Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) in August 2010.

Cooperation at Multilateral fora

The Gambia has been supporting India at various multilateral fora and has been voting in favour of India's candidature in organizations like UNHRC, UNESCO, WHC, IAEA (CAG), IMO etc.

Trade & Commerce

The bilateral trade between the two countries has been growing steadily, and registered at US\$ 168 million in 2020-21, US\$ 197 million in 2021-22 and US\$ 173.75 million in 2022-23. In 2022-23, India's exports to The Gambia registered at US\$ 122.60 mn and India's imports from The Gambia registered at US\$ 51.15 mn. The Gambia is a beneficiary of India's Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) scheme for export of their commodities to India and this scheme is encouraging to increase their exports.

The major items exported by India to The Gambia are rice, cotton yarn, fabrics & made-ups, plastics, cosmetics/toiletries, drugs & pharmaceuticals and semi-finished iron & steel products whereas Gambia's main items of exports to India are raw cashew, ferrous and non-ferrous scrap.

Value in US \$ Million

THE GAMBIA	India's Exports	India's Imports	Total Trade
2018-2019	156.61	45.05	201.66

2019-2020	132.33	40.95	173.28
2020-2021	129.59	38.41	168.00
2021-2022	153.27	43.49	196.76
2022-2023	122.60	51.15	173.75

Source: Export Import Database, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India

It is estimated that The Gambian off-shore prospects may have a combined reserves of 1.1 billion barrels of oil.

The Gambia has signed and ratified the ISA Framework Agreement and the instrument of ratification was handed over to the Indian side during the Presidential visit to The Gambia in July 2019.

Development assistance

Lines of Credit (LOCs)

The Gambia, being an LDC country, has been a recipient of India's development assistance through Lines of Credit and Grants aimed at building productive capacities, institutional strength, infrastructure development and technical expertise to create long term sustainability. The assistance has been extended for developmental projects in the fields of agriculture, construction, water and power.

Grants

Under IAFS-I Scheme, a Vocational Training Center (VTC) cum Incubation Center (IC) was set up in Banjul with a full grant from GoI and handed over to The Gambian authorities in September 2017. The Centre is imparting training in disciplines such as plumbing, welding, electrical, construction sector, carpentry, craftsman-ship, survey, plastic technology demonstration cum training, ICT, agro and food processing, gem-stones cutting and polishing etc.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, India donated a large quantity of medicines to the Republic of the Gambia. Gambian Foreign Minister Dr. Tangara took over the donation and thanked profusely for the generous support. In March 2021, India also provided 36,000 doses of Made-in-India Covid-19 Vaccine to The Gambia under the COVAX facility.

National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) of the Gambia, in partnership with UNESCO Regional Office for West Africa, Sahel, secured funding of US\$ 1.2 million from the India-UN Development Partnership Fund to implement a project on the “Using of Drones and Early Warning system for Pre and Post-Floods Disaster Management in The Gambia. Due to Covid-19 related disruptions, project got delayed and is being implemented now.

ITEC and other training programmes

The Gambia is benefiting from capacity development programmes such as ITEC and ICCR Scholarships. For 2023-24, 60 slots have been allocated under the ITEC programme.

Under ICCR scholarships for long-term UG/PG/Ph.D courses, for academic year, 2022-23, The Gambia has been allotted 33 slots.

The Gambia had signed an MoU for participation in the e-VBAB Network Project in March 2020. Since then, 246 scholarships have been awarded to Gambian students for pursuing online UG/PG/Diploma courses under e-VBAB.

A Special Training Programme was organized by Foreign Service Institute for 20 Gambian Diplomats from 20 June to 20 July 2018. A second Special Training Course for 30 Gambian Diplomats at the SSIFS was organised from 14-27 November 2021.

10 Solar Mamas (illiterate women) from The Gambia were trained at Barefoot College in India during March-September, 2019, in solar electrification, solar panel & light installation/maintenance and entrepreneurial skills for a period of six months.

In July 2021, an MoU was signed between DARPG and Public Service Commission, Office of the President of The Gambia on refurbishing personnel administration and governance reforms. The first JWG meeting under the MoU took place on 22 Nov 2022, and an Action Plan has been drawn for further collaboration.

25 Senior Civil Servants including Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries from The Gambia participated in a Special Training Programme organised at National Centre for Good Governance, Mussoorie from 10-21 June 2019 under ITEC+ programme. Another Special Capacity Building Programme for 25 Senior Government Officers (Permanent Secretaries and Deputy PS) of the Gambia was organised at the National Centre for Good Governance, New Delhi from 16-21 May 2022. The 2nd batch of 30 Senior Government Officers participated in the ITEC training program on public policy and governance from 18-23 September 2023 at National Centre for Good Governance.

Culture/People-to-People

President Adama Barrow of The Gambia, on India's request, had written an anthology on “What Gandhi Means to me” as part of the celebrations of 150th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

ICCR Bollywood troupe Dance Smith gave two performances in Banjul in January-February 2020.

The approximate number of Indian nationals in Gambia is 1600. They are mostly engaged in trading and private businesses including in construction sector.

Oct 2023