

India - Mali Relations

General: The Republic of Mali achieved its independence from France on September 22, 1960. It is a proclaimed secular state. A landlocked country, Mali is located in West Africa in the southern sub Sahara region. Almost 60 percent of the country is desert (northern – eastern part). The estimated population is 16-18 million; overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims (around 95 %). Most of the high density population centers are located in the South which is blessed with two perennially flowing rivers Niger, the lifeline of the country and the Senegal in the west. Mali is the 8th largest country in Africa and 24th in the world. The lingua franca is Bambara (with around 80% speakers). The currency is CFA (1 US \$ is roughly 560 CFAs). French is the official language. The capital city is Bamako..

Borders: Mali borders Algeria (1,376 km) on the North, Niger (821 km) on the east, Burkina Faso (1,000 km) and the Cote d'Ivoire (532 km) on the south, Guinea (858 km) on the south-west, and Senegal (419 km) and Mauritania (2,237 km) on the West.

Weather: The weather in Bamako during July is rainy with the temperature hovering around 30 degrees centigrade. The rains are torrential and bring the temperature down significantly whenever they occur. The heat during the month is quite bearable.

The Leadership:

President: H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (since 4/9/2013)

Prime Minister: H.E. Mr. Modibo Keita (since 8/1/2015)

Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration and Int. coop: H.E. Mr. Abdoulaye Diop (since 11/4/2014)

Main bilateral relationships:

i. Bilateral agreements between India and Mali:

- Protocol on Foreign Service Consultations.
- Agreement on Political, Economic Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation.
- MOU on Cooperation in Geology and Mineral Resources

ii. Bilateral Visits: No high level bilateral visit has been exchanged for over three years now. The last high level visit to India was by the former President H.E. Mr. Amadou Toumani Toure in January 2012, who, incidentally, was deposed in a military coup soon after his return from India.

iii. Direct and indirect assistance: Apart from direct bilateral assistance, Mali has availed Indian assistance through TEAM-9 (Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement aimed at 9 West African States), NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Bank.

iv. Lines of Credit: India has so far extended Lines of Credit worth US\$ 303.62 million to Mali for rural electrification, tractors and tractor assembly plant, railway coaches and locomotives, power-grid interconnection between Cote d' Ivoire and Mali and power distribution, agriculture and food processing. A major power transmission project from the city of Sikasso to Bamako via Bougouni, for which India has extended LOC of US dollars 100 million, is at the final tendering stage and is expected to take off soon.

v. Pan-African e-Network Project: This project is operational in Mali. This project, which aims to connect all the Africans through a satellite and optical fibre network with a view to providing educational programmes, is operational in Bamako, Mali with the assistance of Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIC), the implementing agency.

vi. Bilateral Trade (Mali): In monetary terms, the value of Indian exports to Mali is less than .5 % of Mali's global imports and Mali's exports to India are less than .5 % of India's global imports.

vii. Offer of DFPT: India had offered Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme to Mali. Mali has completed required formalities and Indian importers are already availing the benefit of this dispensation.

viii. Training Assistance: The number of slots offered to Mali under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme is 30 this year.

ix. Other Scholarships:

- i. Under various initiatives of the India-Africa Forum Summits I and II.
- ii. Agricultural scholarships are administered through the African Union.
- iii. Scholarships for higher studies under the Africa Scholarship Scheme (ASC).
- iv. C. V. Raman Fellowship scheme - 8 slots offered to Mali. Two already availed.
- v. Two Malian military officers have participated in the training programme conducted by the Centre for UN Peace - Keeping in Delhi.
- vi. ICCR has offered 8 slots to Mali under its educational scholarship schemes.

Offer of Food Processing Business Incubation Center: India has offered to develop a Food Processing Business Incubation Center in Mali. A team of experts from India is expected shortly for preliminary negotiations.

Indians /Indian enterprises in Mali:

- i. The number of Indians in Mali is estimated at 200 to 250. Mainly in business, mining, power, steel, and cement, pharmaceuticals and agro industry sectors.
- ii. LOC project employees.
- iii. Contractors / employees for UN force, MINUSMA in Mali.

Main foreign policy priorities for the country

- i. Strengthening of good neighborly relations, bilateral relations with non-border African countries and promotion of world peace.
- ii. Promotion of economic integration of the sub-region, unity and development of Africa.
- iii. Contribution towards the economic and social development of Mali
- iv. More effective and coordinated management towards better and effective representation of Malians at International fora.

Partnership in alliances or major groupings-

Mali is a member of most of the International / regional Organizations and has no geo-political conflict of interests with India.

Economic Indicators: Mali is amongst the poorest countries in the world, heavily reliant of external aid. Gold, livestock and agriculture account for 80 % of Mali's exports. Mali has a liberal and friendly investment and trade policy. Tremendous investment opportunities exist in the field of agriculture (cotton food processing, abattoirs and tanneries), automobiles (two wheeler segment), mining (gold, iron ore, phosphates, uranium, bauxite, zinc, manganese, tin and copper) and pharmaceuticals (generic drugs). The country has proven existence of other minerals like granite, gypsum, kaoline, limestone, lithium, rock salt, silver etc, waiting to be exploited.

The volume and value of **bilateral trade between the two countries is insignificant.**

Indian exports to Mali – Equipment for electricity transmission, cotton fabrics and made ups, cycle parts, machinery, machine parts, transport equipment, drugs and pharmaceuticals, construction material and processed food items.

Malian exports to India: Raw cotton wood products and some agricultural products like shea nuts.

Current political and security situation in Mali:

Mali had been enjoying stable democratic governance since 1992. However, just when the next general elections were due; there was a military coup in March 2012. The democratically elected President was deposed. The reason advanced by the coup leader was that the then existing Government's failure to effectively face the rebellious Tuareg challenge in the north. The light-skinned minority northerners, mainly Tuaregs and people of Arab descent, inhabitants of the vast stretch of deserted land, feel marginalized and discriminated against by successive black majority governments in the southern capital, Bamako. They are demanding an independent state Azawad for themselves. Taking advantage of the situation arising from the military coup, first the Tuareg rebels, and later the Jihadis (who later forcibly displaced the Tuaregs), occupied vast territory in the north in the regions of Kidal, Gao and Toumbuctu.

The Jihadists comprised extremist elements of al- Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar al-Dine, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad (MUJAO), and al-Murabitun. They destroyed precious manuscripts at the famous city of Toumbuctou and imposed their own version of harsh shariat laws. The events resulted in wide spread chaos, anarchy, displacement of populations and inflicted huge social problems on the people. However, with the intervention of French forces and stationing of United Nations peacekeepers of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in the country, the Jihadists eventually were routed to the fringes. The rebellions Tuarges then filled in for the Jihadi groups in the region and continue to wield effective control in disregard of central authority.

In the meantime, under tremendous pressure from UN, International community, regional powers and financial blockage, the coup leader was forced to hand over power to a constitutionally elected government which took office in September 2013 and started a peace process with the rebellious Tuaregs. Thus, democratic order has been restored in the country which has also led to restoration of international aid, which was suspended consequent upon the military coup in March 2012.

A peace deal, brokered by the Government of Algeria has finally been signed on June 20, 2015 between representatives of Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA), the main Tuareg rebel outfit and the constitutionally elected Government of Mali. The deal grants greater autonomy to sparsely populated northern Mali in a bid to end a cycle of four uprisings since independence from France in 1960.

The deal has, however, left the issue of Azawad's political identity for a national debate between Malian parties. The government has said it is prepared to devolve more authority under Mali's existing decentralized structure, but rejects demands for full autonomy within a federal system.

Previous deals with northern rebels have failed to secure a lasting peace. Analysts say that the current deal differed from previous pacts because it would be monitored by the international community. The 11,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) would also support the deal's implementation. Algeria would head an independent commission charged with monitoring of the deal.

The region, however, remains susceptible to attacks by jihadist groups. Around 150,000 Malians continue to be refugees in the neighboring countries. Analysts say some northern factions vie for control of smuggling routes to North Africa. While the security situation in Bamako and southern Mali had enjoyed relative calm, on March 7, there was an armed attack on a nightclub in which two expatriates and three Malian citizens were killed. Another incident resulted in the death of two MINUSMA soldiers in Bamako. Given these challenges, a lot of resilience and accommodation on the part of both parties is essential.

The signing of the deal has brought in lot of hope and optimism regarding prospects of peace and stability in Mali. Now it depends on both the parties to demonstrate their sincerity and intent to implement the deal in letter and spirit to ensure unity, peace, stability, development and prosperity for all the people of Mali.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Bamako website:

<http://www.amb-inde-bamako.org/>

Embassy of India, Bamako Facebook page:

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

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