

# India-Vanuatu relation boost

## India gives Vt20m for education, Vt21m assistance in energy

By Anita Roberts

**A CHEQUE OF USD 190,000,** over Vt20 million has been handed over by the government of India to support 76 schools in Vanuatu with the establishment of their ICT centres.

An additional assistance of LED light bulbs and EE equipment worth Vt21 million will be supplied from India to Vanuatu to help cut lighting cost and electricity use, the Minister of Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy and Mines for India, Piyush Goyal, has announced.

Minister Goyal and his heavy delegation were on tour to discuss and strengthen India-Vanuatu bilateral relations.

They came on Tuesday and have left yesterday afternoon after meetings with Vanuatu's foreign affairs minister, prime minister, deputy prime minister and the business community.

India is allocating these aid to Vanuatu from its annual grant.

Speaking to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Lengkon, during the cheque handover occasion, India's

Minister Goyal conveyed the opportunity for Vanuatu to send students to India for scholarship studies.

"We could start off with 15 students and then later boost the number," he added.

He said India can offer Vanuatu's human resource with high training and skills in different areas of employment.

This was the first ministerial visit Vanuatu has ever received from India.

It was noted that the relationship between India and Vanuatu is growing stronger since after the 'Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation' that was held in November 2014, attended by then Prime Minister, Sato Kilman.

The summit, initiated by India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, which was proposed to be held every year, aims to enhance India's greater engagement in the Pacific region, which is important for an economic standpoint.

The Vanuatu Government was applauded for supporting India to become a permanent member to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and also for non-permanent seat on UNSC for years 2021 to

2022.

Minister Goyal told Minister Lengkon: "I assure that we (India) will not be speaking for ourselves but will be the voice for you (Vanuatu), the Pacific and all developing countries".

He also commended Vanuatu's desire of joining the International Solar Alliance, a platform launched last year by India and France for countries to engage in promoting solar power.

"Joining the solar alliance will help Vanuatu build capacity on innovative financial mechanisms and modern technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions whilst ensuring a clean and cheap energy," he added.

Their visit, as they said will not be the last and has paved way for agreements in other potential areas such as trade. Before they left yesterday, deliberations were held on what was called the first 'India-Vanuatu Business Interaction Meeting' launched by the Deputy PM and Minister of Trades, Joe Natuman.

Seven representatives from the Indian public sector companies and several companies from the Vanuatu



Vanuatu's Foreign Affairs, Minister Lengkon, (right) receives the cheque of over 20 million vatu from India's Minister for Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines, Goyal (left). The money will be given to 76 schools in Vanuatu purposely to aid the establishment of their ICT centres

Chamber of Commerce discussed the opportunities that exist for trade between the two countries.

India has opened its door to export from Vanuatu, said Minister Goyal.

"Vanuatu exports to India

will be completely duty free," he said.

Vanuatu residents can also travel visa-free to India.