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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AEX-01	ACQ-00	CEA-01	SMEC-00
	COME-00	CTME-00	INL-01	DOEE-00	ITCE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EAP-00	EB-00	EXME-00	E-00	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-01
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	LAB-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NEA-01	DCP-01	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01
	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00	IRM-00
	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	SA-01
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/015W	

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R 160556Z MAR 00
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5092
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY DHAKA
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMCONSUL MUMBAI
AMCONSUL CHENNAI
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL KARACHI
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
SECDEF WASHDC
JOINT STAFF WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT LOUIS 000435

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL, OVIP, ETRD, MP, IN, US
SUBJECT: INDIAN PRIME MINISTER VISITS MAURITIUS

REF: PORT LOUIS 418

1. SUMMARY: INDIAN PRIME MINISTER ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE
VISITED MAURITIUS MARCH 10-12 TO ATTEND MAURITIUS' MARCH 12
INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION. WHILE VAJPAYEE COMMENTED
BRIEFLY ON PRESIDENT CLINTON'S UPCOMING TRIP TO INDIA,

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STATING THAT SENSITIVE ISSUES WOULD BE DISCUSSED, THE BULK OF THE TRIP INVOLVED CEMENTING ALREADY-STRONG TIES BETWEEN INDIA AND MAURITIUS. FOUR AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED, VAJPAYEE SUPPORTED MAURITIUS CLAIMS TO DIEGO GARCIA, AND MAURITIAN PRIME MINISTER NAVLN RAMGOULAM BACKED AN INDIAN SEAT ON THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL. END SUMMARY.

CLINTON VISIT TO INDIA

2. VAJPAYEE SAID THAT ALL ISSUES - INCLUDING KASHMIR AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM -- WOULD BE DISCUSSED DURING PRESIDENT CLINTON'S UPCOMING VISIT TO INDIA. THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRIVATE COMMENTS TO THE AMBASSADOR ARE COVERED REFTEL.

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UNITED ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

3. VAJPAYEE VOICED INDIA'S SUPPORT FOR MAURITIAN CLAIMS TO DIEGO GARCIA AND THE REST OF THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO. IN RETURN, RAMGOULAM BACKED INDIA'S CLAIM TO A PERMANENT SEAT ON THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL. VAJPAYEE ALSO OPPOSED THE IDEA OF EXPANDING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION (IOR-ARC), WHICH IN EFFECT WOULD EXCLUDE HOPEFUL APPLICANTS PAKISTAN AND FRANCE.

BILATERAL TIES STRENGTHENED

4. VAJPAYEE COMMENTED FREQUENTLY ON THE STRENGTH OF THE INDO-MAURITIAN RELATIONSHIP AND HOW THE TWO COUNTRIES SHARE THE VALUES OF SECULARISM AND COMMUNAL HARMONY. HE SAID BOTH INDIA AND MAURITIUS NEED TO FIGHT AGAINST FORCES THAT WOULD DIVIDE THEIR SECULAR SOCIETIES.

5. FOUR BILATERAL ACCORDS WERE SIGNED DURING THE VISIT, INCLUDING:

--A TRADE AGREEMENT THAT ESTABLISHES A COMMISSION TO ADVISE INDIA AND MAURITIUS ON WHICH SECTORS AND SPECIFIC PROJECTS WOULD INCREASE TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES;

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--AN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AGREEMENT AIMED AT PROMOTING THE TRANSFER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FROM INDIA AND GIVING INDIA ACCESS TO FRENCH-LANGUAGE INFOTECH OPPORTUNITIES;

--A USD 9 MILLION LINE OF CREDIT FROM INDIA FOR MAURITIUS TO PURCHASE AN INTEGRATED COASTAL SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM FROM BHARAT ELECTRONICS LIMITED, BANGALORE;

--A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING TO EXCHANGE OCEANOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, IN PARTICULAR INDIAN SATELLITE MAPPLNG OF MAURITIUS' ECONOMIC EXCLUSION ZONE.

SIMULTANEOUSLY, STEPS WERE TAKEN TO ESTABLISH A MAURITIUS-CHENNAI AIR LINK AND INDIAN OIL CORPORATION'S LARGE-SCALE ENTRANCE TO THE MAURITIAN MARKET.

6. REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRY AND THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN MAURITIUS TERMED THE VISIT A RESOUNDING SUCCESS, YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. JAY REETOO, INDIAN DESK OFFICER AT THE MFA, TOLD EMBOFF THAT MAURITIUS HOPES THE COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED BY THE TRADE AGREEMENT WILL ADDRESS THE TRADE IMBALANCE BETWEEN INDIA AND MAURITIUS.

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(INDIA IS MAURITIUS' THIRD-LARGEST TRADING PARTNER.)
SANJEEV TRIPATHI, CONSULAR-ECONOMIC OFFICER AT THE INDIAN
HIGH COMMISSION, OBSERVED TO EMBOFF THAT THE SAME AGREEMENT
WOULD ASSURE INDIAN ACCESS TO MAURITIAN MARKETS DESPITE
MAURITIUS' MEMBERS
HIP IN REGIONAL TRADE ORGANIZATIONS SADC
AND COMESA.

7. COMMENT: VAJPAYEE'S VISIT CLEARLY FORTIFIED AN
ALREADY-STRONG RELATIONSHIP, WHICH IS TO BE EXPECTED GIVEN
THAT 70 PERCENT OF MAURITIUS' POPULATION IS OF SUBCONTINENT
ORIGIN. VAJPAYEE'S COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SECULAR
DEMOCRACY ARE OF NOTE; BOTH COUNTRIES STRUGGLE, IN VARYING
DEGREES, WITH COMMUNAL DIVISIONS. END COMMENT.

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