

India - Eritrea Relations

Indian traders were familiar with the Eritrean port of Massawa since the 17th century. During World War II, there were many casualties among Indian soldiers at the battle of Keren in Eritrea in 1941.

Eritrea is a former Italian and British colony. In 1952 the UN established it as an autonomous entity federated with Ethiopia. India formally recognized Eritrea soon after its independence in 1993.

Over the years, India has offered capacity building assistance in several fields to Eritrea ranging from legislative drafting, technical scholarships (agriculture, education, health), and also food aid. In 2009 Indian government extended a Line of Credit of US\$ 20 million to the Eritrean government. India is a destination for Eritreans for higher studies.

Bilateral Exchanges

In January 1995, former Chief Justice of India, Justice P N Bhagwati participated in a Workshop on legislative drafting in Eritrea. In December 2000, a MoU on Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Education was signed by Minister of Agriculture H. E. Arefaine Berhe and Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education. In June 2001, Agriculture Minister of Eritrea visited India. In the same year in August, Minister of Transport and Communications of Eritrea visited India. Minister of Education, H. E. Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed and Minister of Agriculture, H. E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe visited India in June 2006. An MoU on Agriculture Cooperation with ICAR was signed during this visit. In September 2006, Hon'ble Raksha Mantri met Minister of Health of Eritrea H. E. Mr. Saleh Maky on the sidelines of the 61st Session of the UNGA in New York. In April 2007, Minister for Agriculture of Eritrea, H. E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe, visited India as the Special Envoy of his Government. Minister for Agriculture of Eritrea, H.E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe, visited India in September 2008. Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Preneet Kaur met Foreign Minister of Eritrea in Nairobi on the margins of South-South Cooperation meeting in December 2009. Mr. Hagos Ghebrehiwet W. Kidan, Head of Economic Affairs of PFDJ, Special Envoy of Eritrean President visited India in February 2010. He handed a letter from Eritrean President addressed to Hon'ble Prime Minister. In August 2010, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs Shri S.M. Krishna inaugurated in New Delhi the Pan African e-Network project with Eritrea. Foreign Minister of Eritrea, H. E. Mr. Oman Saleh Mohammed visited India in February 2011 for LDC Conference. He met Hon'ble Minister for External Affairs. In June 2011, Foreign Minister of Eritrea, H. E. Mr. Oman Saleh Mohammed visited India and met with Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Preneet Kaur. Ambassador of India to Eritrea, Yogeshwar Varma visited Asmara in October 2014 and presented credentials to President H.E. Isias Afwerki. Ambassador met President for 45 minutes and discussed several areas of bilateral relations. President Afwerki praised India's current and emerging important global role and want to strengthen bilateral relations. In this regard, he sought extensive economic, mineral development, training and educational engagements with India. He expressed desire to visit India during 3rd India-Africa Summit now rescheduled to be held in October 2015. HC also met Foreign Minister, Minister of Agriculture, Minister of National

Development and Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Mines. Again in March, 2015, Ambassador of India visited Eritrea and met Foreign Minister, Agriculture Minister & Education Minister and Minister for National Planning & Development to pursue bilateral cooperation.

Cooperation in Capacity Building

Shortly after Eritrea's independence, India offered assistance in its legislative drafting process. Assistance in form of scholarships through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme has evolved. Over the years, India has offered capacity building assistance in several fields to Eritrea including in agriculture, medicine and education.

A trilateral agreement between Eritrea, India and the FAO was signed in Rome in 1998 under which nearly 100 Indian agricultural experts were deputed to Eritrea to help increase agricultural productivity and production, inland fisheries and aquaculture.

A Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the field of agriculture between Eritrean authorities and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research was signed in 2006 during the visit of the Minister of Agriculture of Eritrea to India.

In 2003 India donated 5,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Eritrea. Earlier, India had provided 1,500 metric tonnes of wheat and 200 metric tonnes of sugar to Eritrea as relief assistance.

Government of India's Pan-African e-network project for Eritrea was inaugurated in August 2010. All three sites (VVIP node, medical and education) are functional. Two screenings of special lectures under the Pan African E-Network project have been done at the Orotta National Referral Hospital in Asmara in May and July 2012.

At the request of the Eritrean Government, India provided a legal expert, under the ITEC scheme, to Eritrea for two years. 15 ITEC scholarships were offered to Eritrea during 2009-10. 3 other slots were utilized under India-Africa Forum Summit scholarship scheme (2010-2011). Pursuant to the 2nd Africa-India Forum Summit held in Addis Ababa in May 2011, the ITEC training slot availability during 2011-12 was enhanced to 35. During 2011-12, Eritrea utilized a total of six slots - two each offered under the ITEC, IAFS and C. V. Raman scholarships. One Eritrean official attended the 52nd Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) during August-September 2011. Eritrea availed of the one slot offered under the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship programme. 30 ITEC slots and 8 ICCR slots have been offered to Eritrea during 2014-15.

Eritrean officials attended the Conference on Government of India Lines of Credit held in New Delhi on November 22-23 2011. One Eritrean official visited India to participate at the 4th International Civil Aviation Negotiations Conference (India-ICAN) held in Mumbai during October 17-22 2011.

An Eritrean delegation visited India in 2010. It visited Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institute of Technology

Delhi, Delhi University and Hamdard University. An agreement was concluded for cooperation with IGNOU.

A 3 member expert technical team from MEA & HMT(I), India visited Asmara in October, 2014 and finalised the detailed project report and project parameters for setting up of a Vocational Training Centre which is expected to be installed in 2015.

Economic & Commercial Links

During 2014-15 India-Eritrea bilateral trade was around US\$ 244.73 million.

India-Eritrea Trade (US\$ million)

Year	Indian Exports	Indian Imports	Total Trade
2012-13	18.99	10.90	29.89
2013-14	16.45	4.85	21.30
2014-15	14.06	230.68	244.73

Source : Department of Commerce, India

Exports from India include electrical and miscellaneous engineering equipment, drugs and pharmaceuticals, cotton yarn and fabrics. India is among the largest exporters to Eritrea along with Italy and the UAE. Eritrea imported millets worth US\$ 200,000 from India during 2010.

Eritrean exports to India consist mainly of leather, hides (excluding raw hides) and skins.

Eritrea qualifies for India's offer of unilateral duty free tariff preferential market access for export of goods and services to India. The scheme, introduced in 2008, offers duty free access to exports from LDCs on 84% of India's tariff lines and preferential access for another 9%.

India extended a Line of Credit of US\$ 20 million (US\$ 10 million each for education and agriculture projects) to Eritrea in July 2009.

Indian Community and Diaspora in Eritrea

The Indian community in Eritrea, comprising mostly of school teachers and businessmen, number around 1200. Most Indians live and work in and around Asmara as also in Anseba, Debub, Northern Red Sea region and the Dahlak islands. Indians work as teaching staff at secondary schools and technical colleges such as the Eritrean Institute of Technology. There are also medical doctors and construction workers.

India has an Honorary Consul in Asmara (Mr. Semere Petros, email: semere@gemel.com.er, Tel: +291-1-186742) in November 2008. Eritrea has an embassy in New Delhi.

More than 1,500 Indian troops served in the UN Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), deployed in both countries until February 2007). Maj. Gen. Rajender Singh was the UNMEE Force Commander from 2004-2006.

Useful Resources:

High Commission of India, Nairobi Website:

<http://www.hcinairobi.co.ke>

High Commission of India, Nairobi Facebook page:

https://www.facebook.com/pages/India-in-Kenya-High-Commission-of-India-Nairobi/894496970596247?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

High Commission of India, Nairobi Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/IndiainKenya>

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