

India- Lesotho Relations

Diplomatic Representation

Since 1996, the High Commission in Pretoria has been concurrently accredited to Lesotho. Earlier, Lesotho was concurrently accredited to the High Commission of India in Botswana. Following the visit of Prime Minister Mosisili to India in August 2003, Lesotho opened a resident mission in New Delhi in 2005. India's Honorary Consul to Lesotho was announced in March 2014.

Visits

A high level business delegation led by Lesotho's Prime Minister Dr. Motsoahae Thomas Thabane participated as "Partner Country" in the 10th CII Exim Bank Africa Conclave held in New Delhi in March 2014.

The first ever exchange of visits at political level was the highly successful visit of Prime Minister Mosisili to India in August 2003. The areas of cooperation prioritised in talks between the two Prime Ministers were employment generation, agricultural development, education, tourism and upgrading of infrastructure, in which India agreed to share its experience in human resource development as well as high technology and industrial areas, in the spirit of South-South cooperation. India agreed to extend assistance, through training as well as supply of equipment, for establishing manufacturing units in the small scale industries sector. In the Joint Declaration issued after the visit, Lesotho recognized J&K as integral part of India and supported the resolution of differences between India and Pakistan through bilateral dialogue. During the visit, both sides agreed to set up a bilateral Joint Commission.

Joint Commission

The agreement establishing the Joint Commission was signed in March 2004. First session of India-Lesotho Joint Commission was held in New Delhi in March 2009. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Ashok Tomar, JS (E&SA), while Mr Tebello Metsing, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Relations, led the Lesotho delegation.

The Second India-Lesotho Joint Bilateral Commission for Co-operation was held in Maseru in September 2013. The three member Indian delegation was led by Shri Ravi Bangar, Additional Secretary(E&SA), while Mr J. T. Metsing, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Relations, led the Lesotho delegation. Both sides held discussions on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of common interest.

Defence

Apart from the presence of an Indian Army Training Team in Maseru since 2001, there have been periodic visits by senior military officials. Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen J.B.S. Yadava visited Lesotho in February 2004. Maj Gen RPS Malhan visited Lesotho in September 2006. Lt. Gen. Susheel Gupta, DCOAS, visited IATT in Maseru in March 2007. An MOD delegation, headed by Lt. Gen. SPS Dhillon, DCOAS visited IATT in March 2009. An MOD delegation, headed by Lt Gen VS Tonk, DCOAS (IS&T) visited IATT in July 2011. Lt Gen JP Nehra, Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Indian Army visited Lesotho on 17 – 19 Jul 2014.

A number of officials of the Lesotho Defence Forces (LDF) have been trained in Indian defence training establishments. Lieutenant General ET Motanyane, Commander, LDF, visited India along with other senior officers in October 2007. Mr. Moshoeshoe David Sehloho, Principal Secretary, Defence & National Security, Lesotho visited New Delhi (19 – 23 Aug 2013) and met with the Defence Secretary and Deputy Chief of Army Staff, in addition to visiting Indian Military Academy, Dehradun.

Agreements / MOUs

Secretary, Small Scale, Agro & Rural Industries Shri B.S. Minhas visited Maseru in September 2004 and signed an Inter-Governmental MOU on Promotion and Development of Small Scale Enterprises.

Bilateral MOU on Rural Development was signed in July 2011. Shri Nitin Chandra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development visited Lesotho in November 2011 in relation with the implementation of the MoU.

In October 2004, a delegation from Lesotho comprising the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Agriculture visited India. The delegation-level talks were led by Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, then MOS(RIS) on the Indian side. Discussions covered the whole gamut of bilateral cooperation. In addition, there was a meeting with Secretary(Agriculture). The Agreement outlining the detailed terms and conditions of the credit line of US\$ 5 million promised during the visit of the Prime Minister of Lesotho was signed between the Government of Lesotho and the Export Import Bank of India during the visit. LOC of US \$ 5 million was granted to Lesotho for procurement of agricultural equipment from India.

Foreign Minister of Lesotho visited India in March 2010, during the visit an Agreement for Line of Credit of US\$ 4.7 million for setting up of Vocational Training Centres in Lesotho was signed.

Indian Assistance in other areas

Under a tripartite agreement signed by Government of India and Kingdom of Lesotho, 4 Indian agricultural experts/technicians were deputed to Lesotho under FAO's special programme for Food Security in Low Income Food Deficit countries. Subsequently, an Indian Expert was deputed to advise the Director of the Lesotho College of Agriculture and render assistance for drawing up an irrigation master plan.

Following contacts during the Prime Ministerial visit, National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO) signed an MOU for Mutual Cooperation for the Development of Small Industries in Lesotho. This envisaged strengthening the capacity of BEDCO for development sustenance and growth of small enterprises in Lesotho, facilitating transfer of technologies from India to Lesotho, assistance in setting up a Common Facility-cum-Training Center to meet the skill and technology needs of small enterprises in Lesotho and facilitating enterprise-to-enterprise contacts with a view to promote Indian investment and industrial partnerships in Lesotho. The Indian Ministry of Textiles sent a team of experts to assess Lesotho's training needs in the textile sector.

India-Lesotho Centre for Advanced Education in Information Technology has been set up by India at Lerotholi Polytechnic. The Government of India has agreed to provide one time grant of Rs. 86.99 million (Rs. 38.32 million for equipment and

training and Rs. 48.67 for new building construction). The building is under construction and is almost complete and the Centre has been functioning from temporary premises.

A Pan-Africa e-network has also been set-up in Lesotho by M/s TCIL which includes VVIP communication, tele-medicine and tele-education.

Trade & Economic Cooperation

Bilateral trade between the two countries is much below potential. Major items of Indian imports from Lesotho comprise wool, apparel and clothing accessories, while major items of Indian exports include pharmaceuticals, cotton, machinery. Recent bilateral trade figures are as follows:

(figures in US\$ million)	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 (Apr-Sep)
India's exports	18.64	21.20	18.10	31.01	17.68
India's imports	1.13	3.15	4.26	2.51	0.85
Total Trade	19.77	24.35	22.36	33.52	18.53

Source: Ministry of Commerce, GOI

Negotiations on a Preferential Trade Agreement, leading to a Free Trade Agreement between India and the South African Customs Union (SACU), of which Lesotho is a member, are underway. The Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme announced by PM at the India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi in April 2008 has been offered and accepted by the Government of Lesotho.

ITEC / ICCR

In FY 2014-15, under ITEC, 70 slots have been allocated to the Kingdom of Lesotho, out of which 47 have been utilized so far.

ICCR allocated 18 scholarship slots for Lesotho under the Africa Scholarship Scheme for 2014-15 and 18 slots for 2015-16. For 2014-15, all 18 slots have been utilized.

Indian Community

There are about 1500 Indian expatriates and PIOs in Lesotho working as teachers, accountants and other professionals. Some of them are engaged in business as well. The community has a reasonably high economic profile in the country. There is an Indian Association which organises periodic functions and has hosted well-attended cultural performances by troupes sent by ICCR from time to time.

Useful Resources:

High Commission of India, Pretoria website:
<http://indiainsouthafrica.com/>

December 2014