

India-Eritrea – Bilateral Relations

Indian traders were familiar with the Eritrean port of Massawa since the 17th century. During World War II, Indian soldiers played a crucial role in the battles of Keren and Asmara. There were many casualties among Indian soldiers at the battle of Keren and Asmara. The Keren Cremation Memorial commemorates 285 Indian soldiers whose remains were cremated in accordance with their faith. The Keren War Cemetery commemorates 73 Indian soldiers buried there and the Asmara War Cemetery commemorates 16 Indian soldiers.

2. India formally recognized Eritrea soon after its de jure independence on 24 May 1993 from Ethiopia. Over the years, India has provided capacity building assistance in several fields to Eritrea including legislative drafting, technical scholarships (agriculture, education, health, handicrafts, etc.) and also food aid. In 2009, Indian Government extended a Line of Credit of US\$ 20 million to the Eritrean Government.

3. An MoU on starting Foreign Office Consultations between India and Eritrea was signed in April 2018 in New Delhi. Subsequently, the first session of FOC was held in Asmara on 29 October 2018 at the level of Joint Secretary (WANA) and Director General, Asia-Pacific Department in the Eritrean Foreign Ministry.

4. Eritrea has been included in the list of countries to whom unilateral Duty-Free Tariff Preferential (DFTP) market access and e-Visa facility has been extended.

5. The Government of India opened its resident diplomatic Mission in August 2019.

6. On 31st October 2019, Eritrea signed the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance at its second Assembly in New Delhi and became a member of International Solar Alliance countries.

7. On 7 November 2019, Eritrea signed an MoU in New Delhi and became a partner country of eVidyaBharatiArogyaBharati (eVBAB) Network Project of India.

Bilateral Exchanges:

8. In December 2000, an MoU on Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Education was signed by Eritrean Minister of Agriculture H. E. Mr. ArefaineBerhe and Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education. Minister of Transport and Communications of Eritrea visited India in the year 2000. 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. ArefaineBerhe visited India in June 2006. An MoU on Cooperation in Agriculture was signed during the visit. In September 2006, Hon'ble RakshaMantri 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, Eritrean Minister for Agriculture, H. E. Mr. ArefaineBerhe visited India as the Special Envoy of his Government. He also visited India in September 2008. The then 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.

9. Foreign Minister of Eritrea, H. E. Mr. Oman Saleh Mohammed visited India in February 2011 for the LDC Conference. He again visited India in June 2011 and met

with the then Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Preeti Kaur. The then Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. (Retd.) V.K. Singh visited Eritrea in September 2015 and handed over an invitation from the Prime Minister to the President of Eritrea H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki to attend the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit. Foreign Minister of Eritrea H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh led the Eritrean delegation for the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit held from 26-29 October 2015. A delegation, led by Eritrean Finance Minister, participated in the annual African Development Bank Board meeting held in Ahmedabad in May 2017.

Recent Visits:

10. A 5-Member All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) delegation led by Prof. Randeep Guleria, Director, AIIMS visited Eritrea from 26-29 January 2020.

Visit of Eritrean Minister of Foreign Affairs to India on April 7-12, 2021:

11. A senior Eritrean delegation comprising of H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Yemane Ghebreyes, Presidential Adviser visited India from 07 to 12 April 2021. The delegation met with External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar and National Security Adviser Shri Ajit Doval in separate meetings. The Eritrean delegation visited AIIMS and Indian Agricultural Research Institute to explore cooperation in healthcare and agriculture, in areas of capacity building and research. The delegation also met with Indian business leaders under the auspices of FICCI. Discussions centered on investment opportunities for Indian companies in Eritrea with particular focus on energy, water resources, agriculture and manufacturing. The delegation also met pharma companies (Pharmexcil) and deliberated on pharma cooperation between India and Eritrea. The Eritrean delegation toured the power generation plant and training centre of NTPC, Dadri.

12. As part of India's humanitarian Mission Sagar-II, Indian Naval Ship Airavat carrying food aid for Eritrea visited Massawa Port on 6-8 November 2020. It delivered a food aid of 50 MT consisting of white wheat flour, rice and sugar.

13. INS Trikand was on Operational Turnaround (OTR) visit to Massawa Port on 25-27 September 2021. INS Trikand arrived at Massawa Port on 25 September and departed on 27 September. INS Trikand also organized an on-board reception for Eritrean dignitaries on 26 September 2021.

14. The 1st Training Squadron comprising of Indian Naval Ships Tir, Sujata and ICGS Sarathi made a port call at Massawa Port of Eritrea on 23-25 April 2022. It interacted with Eritrean naval counterparts and imparted on-board training to Eritrean naval personnel. An on-board reception was also held on April 24 for Eritrean dignitaries. Ambassador and senior Eritrean Navy officials visited the Ships.

Visit of MOS (VM) to Eritrea

15. Shri V. Muraleedharan, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs visited Asmara on 14-15 September 2022 on a first ever full-fledged bilateral visit from India to Eritrea. During the visit, MoS called on Eritrean President H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki and Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed. In his meeting with President of Eritrea, MoS conveyed the greetings of the Indian leadership and held discussions on further strengthening bilateral cooperation in several sectors. MoS had a productive meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs. He took stock of the entire gamut of bilateral relations. Both leaders explored new areas of cooperation including energy,

health, education, capacity building and agriculture. MoS visited Asmara War Cemetery and paid homage to the Indian soldiers who laid their lives during World War II in Asmara. MoS also met the vibrant Indian community in Eritrea consisting of professionals and skilled workers and shared with them the giant strides made by India in several fields. MoS thanked the Indian community for being active partners in Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav and encouraged them to continue their contributions.

India in UN Peacekeeping in Eritrea

16. More than 1500 Indian troops served in the UN Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), deployed in both countries until February 2007. Thereafter, in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution No.1741, strength of UNMEE was brought down to 1700. The Indian contingent was also downsized to 600 personnel. Maj. Gen. Rajender Singh led the UNMEE as its Force Commander from 2004-2006. Over the life of the mission, the Indian medical battalion with UNMEE attended to some 17,000 medical cases. The Indian contingent also assisted in drilling of wells, construction of roads and dams. Most of the remaining peacekeepers were withdrawn in February 2009 and later that year the UN Security Council voted unanimously to end its peacekeeping Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Cooperation in Capacity Building

17. Assistance in the 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, health and education, handicrafts, etc. At the request of the Eritrean Government, India provided a legal expert, under the ITEC Programme, to Eritrea for two years.

18. There are 40 training slots of ITEC courses for Eritrea every year. ICCR allots generally 8 slots to Eritrea for every academic year. However, during 2022-23 academic year, ICCR allotted 11 slots for Eritrea including 3 special slots for Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For 2023-24 academic year, ICCR has allotted 12 scholarships. IAFS also allotted 2 slots for Eritrea for the year 2019-20. A total of 25 slots were utilized for a special customized training programme of eight weeks on promotion of Basket and Mat Weaving Artisan Enterprises, on the request of the Eritrean Government, at the National Institute of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Hyderabad from 14/05/2018 to 06/07/2018. One Eritrean diplomat attended the 69thPCFD organised by the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service of Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi from 03 to 28 October 2022. During the period, 17-28 April 2023, 10 Foreign Service Officers from Eritrea attended the 1stSpecial Course for Diplomats from Eritrea and Zambia organised by the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) of the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi.

19. In 2003, India donated 50 metric tonnes of wheat to Eritrea. Earlier, India had provided 150 metric tonnes of wheat and 20 metric tonnes of sugar to Eritrea as relief assistance. In November 2020, India donated food aid of 50 MT to Eritrea consisting of 30 MT of white wheat flour, 10 MT of rice and 10 MT of sugar.

20. Government of India's Pan-African e-network project for Eritrea was inaugurated in August 2010. All three nodes (VVIP, medical and education) were 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.

21. An Eritrean delegation visited several Indian educational institutes in 2010 including Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, Delhi University (DU) and Hamdard University. An agreement was concluded for cooperation with IGNOU. Three doctors from Eritrea visited India for mid-career specialised training courses at Apollo Hospital in New Delhi from 21 August to 20 September 2017.

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

23. 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 offered under IAFS-II.

Economic & Commercial

24. India's exports to Eritrea were USD 17.95 million in the financial year 2022-23. India's exports mainly included sugar, cane/beet sugar, pharmaceutical products, rubber, rice, apparel and clothing accessories, etc. Eritrea qualifies for India's offer of unilateral Duty-Free Tariff Preferential (DFTP) market access for export of goods and services to India.

Cultural and other activities

25. Embassy of India organizes various activities from time to time by involving the Indian community and friends of India. Since March 2021, Mission has organised many events highlighting the achievements of India@75 under the AKAM banner.

26. The first ICCR sponsored Rajasthani Folk Dance troupe visited Asmara, Eritrea on 12-13 December 2018 and gave cultural performances in Asmara. A 13-member cultural troupe, including one officer to assist the troupe members, visited India to participate in the 36th edition of Surajkund International Crafts Mela 2023 from 03 to 19 February 2023.

Indian Community and Diaspora in Eritrea

27. The Indian community in Eritrea, comprising mostly of professionals, school teachers, college professors and construction workers number around 200. Most Indians live and work in and around Asmara, Keren, Adi Keyh. Embassy of India celebrates PravasiBharatiya Divas at the Embassy premises on a regular basis.

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