

Bilateral Brief: India-Liberia

Political

India-Liberia relations have been warm and friendly. Liberia has supported India's candidature at the various United Nations (UN) fora. The Government of India (GOI) opened a resident Mission in capital Monrovia in May, 2021. The first resident Ambassador arrived in Monrovia in August, 2021 and presented Letter of Credence to the then President of Liberia, Mr. George Manneh Weah on 26th November, 2021. Opening of the new resident Mission has generated a lot of goodwill and scope for strengthening the already existing friendly relations. Prior to the opening of the Mission, Ambassador of India to Ivory Coast was concurrently accredited to Liberia with residence in Abidjan. Liberia does not have a resident Mission in New Delhi.

Mr. Joseph Nyumah Boakai, Sr., took over as the 26th President of Liberia on 22 January, 2024 by defeating the former President Dr. George Manneh Weah by a narrow margin.

Former President of Liberia, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, was conferred Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust in 2012.

President Sirleaf paid a successful visit to India in September 2013 when the following four Agreements/Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) were signed:

- i) Agreement on Establishment of Joint Commission between India and Liberia.
- ii) MoU between Foreign Service Institutes of India and Liberia.
- iii) MoU on Cooperation in the field of Oil and Gas between India and Liberia.
- iv) Agreement between EXIM Bank and Government of Liberia for a Line of Credit of US\$ 144 million for funding a power transmission and distribution project in Liberia. *(The LoC was later cancelled at Liberia's request).*

President Sirleaf highly appreciated the support and assistance of the Government and people of India rendered to Liberia's development process over the past years. President Sirleaf took special note of India's active participation in the United Nations-sponsored peace mission in Liberia and appreciated the role India continued to play in promoting peace and security in the continent.

President Sirleaf made a categorical statement reaffirming Liberia's support to India's candidature for a permanent seat in the expanded UN Security Council. Both sides strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and resolved to increase cooperation

in the common efforts of the international community in combating this scourge in a comprehensive manner.

President Sirleaf led a high-level delegation on her second visit to India in October 2015 to participate at the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi.

Deployment of Indian Army's contingent under United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) during 2007-16 was well appreciated by Liberia. The first-ever all women contingent in the history of UN peacekeeping - the Female Formed Police Unit of the CRPF to the UNMIL was deployed in Liberia during 2007-16. This contingent generated enormous goodwill for India during its long deployment and has also been a source of inspiration for the Liberian women and public in general.

Important Visits from India to Liberia

Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri M. J. Akbar visited Liberia from March 1-2, 2018.

Minister of State for Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Shri G. M. Siddeshwara visited Monrovia from September 10-11, 2015 to personally hand over to the Liberian President, Prime Minister's invitation for the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit at New Delhi.

Minister of State for External Affairs, Dr. Shashi Tharoor visited Liberia from September 16-19, 2009, accompanied by a CII business delegation. It was the first visit by an Indian Foreign Minister since Sardar Swaran Singh's visit to the country in 1971. President Sirleaf characterized the visit of Dr. Tharoor as "a landmark visit", which was closely followed by another official visit by the Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Shri Vayalar Ravi, in February 2010.

Other Important Visits from Liberia to India

The former First Lady of Liberia, Mrs. Clar Marie Weah visited India to attend the 10th Edition of the Merck Foundation Africa Asia Luminary Conference and Merck Foundation First Ladies Initiative Summit organized by the Merck Foundation in Mumbai on October 18-19, 2023.

A high-level Liberian Defence Delegation led by the former Deputy Minister of Defence for Operations, Mr. Prince Kollie Vincent, visited India to participate in the DefExpo and India Africa Defence Dialogue (IADD) 2022 held in Gandhinagar from 18-22 October 2022. He again led a high-level Defence delegation to India to participate in the Aero India 2023 and SPEED- Defence Ministers' Conclave-2023 held in Bengaluru from 13-16 February 2023.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gbehzohngar M. Findley visited India to attend First International Solar Alliance Summit from March 10-11, 2018.

Vice President Joseph Nyumah Boakai led the Liberian delegation including Minister for Public Works, to the 9th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave held in New Delhi from March 17-19, 2013. This was the first visit to India by a Vice President from Liberia.

Earlier, Commerce Minister, Ms. Miata Beysolow visited India to participate in the 8th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave and the 2nd India-Africa Trade Ministers' Conference in March 2012.

Dr. Richard Tolbert, Chairman of the National Investment Commission of Liberia and Dr. Frederick Norkey, Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry attended the 5th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership in Delhi in March 2009.

Trade and Commerce

The overall bilateral trade has seen substantial rise during 2017-18 and 2018-19. The fall in bilateral trade during 2015-17 was largely due to the factors related to Ebola epidemic and its aftermath. Despite the Covid pandemic, there was a significant jump in bilateral trade with notable increase in both export and import values during 2021-22. The trade continued to grow in year 2022-23 when total bilateral trade stood at US\$283.95 M (an increase of 5.8% y-o-y) with export and import values at US\$257.15M (an increase of 4% y-o-y) and US\$26.80M (an increase of 26% y-o-y) respectively. There is a potential to increase the bilateral trade substantially.

The main items of **export from India** are food stuff particularly rice, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals products, Ceramic products, two and three wheelers, transport equipment, articles of steel, iron and aluminium, and plastic and rubber products.

Imports from Liberia mainly include animals and vegetable fats and oils, metals scrap, wood and articles of wood and natural rubber.

The bilateral trade figures during the last five years are as follows:
(in million US\$)

Year	Exports	Imports	Total
2019-20	219.52	7.75	227.27
2020-21	225.65	6.95	232.60
2021-22	247.05	21.20	268.25
2022-23	257.15	26.80	283.95
2023-24 (April 23 – Jan 24)	198.79	10.65	209.44

(Data Source: MOC GOI)

In 2012, Liberia acceded to India's Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme for Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The DFTP, which was amended in April 2015, provides zero duty and preferential market access to LDCs on more than 98% of India's tariff lines.

Liberia has signed the Framework Agreement in International Solar Alliance (ISA). The process of ratification by the Liberian Parliament is also underway.

India is a preferred destination for higher education and medical treatment among the Liberians.

Indian Investment

Arcelor Mittal, a PIO company invested in mining started exporting iron ore from Liminco mine since July 2011.

Sesa Goa (a subsidiary of Vedanta Resources), has invested in Liberia by acquiring the \$1.6 billion-Western Cluster iron ore project, known to be one of the largest deposits in Africa. The integrated project site consists of three iron ore deposits namely Mano River, the western portion of the Bomi Hills and the never exploited Bea Mountain.

Hyderabad based L. V. Prasad Eye Institute Collaborative Center is a modern eye clinic inaugurated by former Liberian President on 24 July, 2017 at JF Kennedy Memorial Hospital in Monrovia.

AFCONS Infrastructure Limited (part of the Shapoorji Pallonji (SP) Group which is the third-largest construction group in India) operates in Liberia as sub-contractor under Arcelor Mittal undertaking the infrastructure components of the company.

Star Cement Company and Sethi Ferro Fabrik Inc. are 100% Indian owned cement and steel manufacturing plants respectively owned by Sethi Brothers, one of the leading business groups in Liberia. Star Cement is the only second cement factory after CEMENCO, a German company, in Liberia. The Sethi Brothers also own Plastic factories in Liberia.

Jeety Rubber Liberia Limited Corporation, a 100% Indian owned rubber processing plant, owned by Mr. Upjit Singh Sachdeva, a leading Indian businessman in Liberia, is located at Weala, Margibi County. The Plant has recently started its production activities. In its initial stage, the company has planned to produce processed rubber only for exportation purposes. In later stages, the company is expected to produce tyres and other rubber products like hand gloves, rain boots, and rubber bands, among others.

Indian Assistance to Liberia

Government of India (GOI) contributed SDR 11.15 million towards the IMF's Financial Package for Liberia's Debt Relief in October 2007. In order to improve the non-existent transport system of Liberia, India gifted 25 buses in 2010 which has been a visible example of India's assistance to improve daily lives of thousands of Liberians.

In December 2014, India again gifted 15 buses to Liberia which were formally received by the Foreign Minister, Mr. Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan in the presence of former President Sirleaf.

India provided agricultural assistance package consisting of pesticides and sprayers to the Liberian government in 2009 to help combat emergency situation caused by caterpillar infestation.

Liberia was severely affected by Ebola during 2014-15. It was declared Ebola free by WHO on 9 May 2015. GOI stood by Liberia during these difficult times and extended bilateral assistance of over US\$ 50,000 to Liberia to fight Ebola.

In addition, GOI provided cash assistance of US\$ 500,000 to the WHO as well as contribution of US\$ 10 million to the UN Fund for Ebola and additional US\$ 2 million for purchase of protective gear to tackle Ebola for the 3 Ebola affected countries of West Africa including Liberia (Agreement on contribution of US\$12 Million was signed on December 9, 2014).

In August 2014, the Indian Community in Liberia also donated assorted anti-Ebola related material worth more than US\$ 200,000 to the National Task Force on Ebola. The donation was received by President Sirleaf personally.

GOI has also contributed US\$ 2 million as grant for construction of the 14th Military Hospital in Liberia in August 2019. The Hospital was inaugurated by the Liberian President on the September 1, 2021. He also thanked Government of India for its contribution while inaugurating the Hospital.

GOI also supplied 45 passenger buses and 5 fire-trucks to Liberia in December, 2019 on grant basis.

In March 2021, GOI supplied 96,000 Covid-19 vaccines to Liberia through the COVAX facility under its Vaccine Maitry programme.

Various grants and cash assistances by GoI have been well-appreciated by the Liberian top leadership and public in general.

Capacity Building and Human Resource Development

India has been contributing towards human resource development, capacity building and skills up-gradation of Liberians. Under the India-Africa Forum Summit I and II (IAFS I and II), India committed to set up an Information Technology Centre, a Farm Science Centre and a Training Centre for Women in the Solar Energy sector. A Vocational Training Centre for Women is being set up at Buchanan County near capital Monrovia by Barefoot College, Tilonia. Liberia has been a beneficiary country of the PAN African e-network project and is appreciative of the project.

GOI has offered the upgraded programme of e-VidyaBharti (Tele-education) and e-ArogyaBharti (Tele-medicine) Project (e-VBAB) to Liberia.

India provides 70 training slots under the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) & 4 ICCR scholarships for under graduate / post-graduate studies. In addition, Liberian Defence personnel have also been allotted 4 slots for various defence courses/training under ITEC programme every year. In TY 2023-24, 3 slots each in army and navy courses have been allotted to the Armed Forces of Liberia. Liberians have also been benefiting from other capacity building training programmes in India under the IAFS, Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats conducted by Ministry of External Affairs as well as under the US-Liberia-India trilateral cooperation programme.

Indian Community

There are about 3000 Indian nationals and PIOs residing in Liberia. The Indian Community is mainly engaged in trading and providing services. A few of them have now started manufacturing ventures too. Indians have major share in pharmaceuticals and construction material sectors.

There is a Hindu Temple, Sikh Gurudwara and also a cremation ground in Liberia. There are two Indian Schools in Liberia, which cater to the educational needs of not only Indians but also Liberians and other nationals.

Liberian government recognizes Indian community's substantial contribution to the Liberian economy.

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