

India-Botswana - Bilateral

India's relations with Botswana have been close and friendly. India established diplomatic relations with Botswana immediately after its independence in 1966 and opened its diplomatic mission in Gaborone in 1987. Botswana established its Mission in New Delhi in 2006. Botswana is an active member of Southern African Development Community (SADC), South African Customs Union (SACU), WTO and other International organizations.

Political Relations:

Bilateral Visits: A number of high level visits have been exchanged between the two countries since its independence. These are:

- The former President Festus Mogae visited India twice in May 2005 and December 2006. During his State visit to India in December 2006, a number of areas were identified for enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries. A line of credit of US\$20 million and grant-in-aid of Rs.50 million each for health and education sectors were also announced.
- The Vice President of India accompanied by a high level business delegation visited Botswana from January 9 - 11, 2010. During the visit, Agreements on the Educational Exchange Programme and cooperation in the field of Agriculture were signed. The visit of Vice-President of India generated increased awareness about India and was well-received by the Government of Botswana. The Business delegation explored possibilities for increased investments, joint ventures and exports from India of manufactured goods, machinery, pharmaceuticals, ITC equipment, etc.
- The Vice President of Botswana Mompoti Merafhe reciprocated by paying a visit to India in June 2010. During his visit, the two countries signed agreements on cooperation in the fields of Science and Technology and MSME/SMME sectors. A MOU between the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) of India and Local Enterprises Authority (LEA) of Botswana was also signed during the visit. Vice President of Botswana during his visit also inaugurated the Botswana Export Development and Investment Authority (BEDIA) office in Mumbai.
- A three-member delegation led by Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia visited Botswana from 18 – 19 September, 2011. The visit coincided with a CII-BEDIA Business Conference at the Gaborone International Convention Centre (GICC) which was attended by key business stakeholders from the two countries.
- Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly of Botswana, Mrs Margaret Nasha visited India to participate in the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference of Women Speakers of Parliament in held on October 3 - 4 October, 2012 in New Delhi. The Conference was organized by the Parliament of India and IPU.
- A three-member delegation was led by Botswana's Minister of Minerals, Energy and Water Resources (MMEWR) Hon Kitso Mokaila visited India from 11 to 16

November, 2013 to explore Indian companies' participation in Botswana's coal mining projects and Trans Kalahari Rail (TKR) Project.

- Hon. Mr. Eric Molale, Minister for Presidential Affairs and Public Administration led a 13-member delegation comprising of Chief Election Commissioner; three Members of Parliament, Councillors and senior officials of Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of Botswana to Chennai and Bangalore from 15 – 20 May, 2016 to witness the use of electronic voting machines in one of the world's oldest and biggest democracies.
- Hon'ble Shri Jual Oram, Minister of Tribal Affairs led a 3-member delegation visit to Botswana during 22-25 August 2016, to coincide with the BOT-50 celebrations. During the visit he called on Botswana Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Local Government and Rural Development; and Education and Skills Development. Apart from these Ministerial meetings, he also met the Mayor of Gaborone; Belete Tribal Chief at Ramotswa, near Gaborone. During the second-leg of his visit, Hon'ble Minister visited Maun and Okavango Delta in the northern part of Botswana and met with Indian community and local tribal leaders. On 25th August 2016, Hon'be Minister had a brief meeting with Botswana's Vice President Mr. Mokgweetsi Masisi who was on a visit to Maun.

The two countries have signed the following agreements:

1. Cultural Exchange Agreement signed in May 1997
2. Bilateral Trade Agreement signed in January 2001
3. Protocol for Foreign office consultations signed in October 2002
4. Agreement on Cooperation on Bilateral Cooperation in December 2006.
5. Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation in December 2006
6. Programme for Cultural Cooperation signed in 2007
7. Pan African E-Network Project signed in 2008 and inaugurated by the External Affairs Minister of India on August 16, 2010
8. MoU on Cooperation in Agriculture signed in Jan 2010
9. Educational Exchange Programme signed in Jan 2010
10. MoU on MSME / SMME signed in June 2010
11. MoU on Science & Technology signed in June 2010
12. MOUs between NSIC of India and Local Enterprises Authority of Botswana in 2010
13. Agreement on Establishment of Joint Ministerial Commission in January 2011
14. Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between India and Botswana for Secondment of Indian Army personnel for training BDF personnel in September 2014.

Indian Scholarships for Botswana nationals:

ITEC: The Government of India has offered 65 slots to Botswana during the year 2015-16 under the Indian Technical Economic Cooperation Scheme (ITEC) to Botswana nationals in various fields ranging from Accounting, Management, IT & Communication, etc. which are fully utilized by the Government of Botswana. Training Courses in

Defence-related fields are offered to Botswana Defence Force (BDF) under ITEC-II.

India Africa Forum Summit: Vice President of Botswana, His Honour Mr. Mokgweetsi Masisi attended the Third India Africa Forum Summit held in New Delhi on 28-30 October 2015. His delegation included Hon. Eric Molale, Minister of Presidential Affairs & Public Administration and senior officials. Vice President Masisi called on Hon'ble Prime Minister on the sidelines of the Summit. As part of the decisions taken under the previous IAFS Summits, fully GOI-funded specialized training courses were offered in various fields. These training programmes are organized at various Government and State/ Private vocational & learning institutions of excellence. About 65 Botswana nominees have benefitted from these special training courses so far.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations: The Government of India offers scholarships to meritorious Botswana students under various scholarship schemes of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations. These are in non-medical undergraduate, post graduate and research degree levels, leading to PhDs at various Indian universities. The number of these slots have been increased to 17 for the academic session 2012-13 onwards.

Commercial Relations:

Botswana offers a business friendly atmosphere and welcomes foreign investment. Botswana is heavily dependent on diamonds which forms approx. 40% of its GDP and almost 70% of its export earnings come from this single natural resource.

Botswana State Enterprises like Local Enterprise Authority (LEA), Botswana Investment and Trade Centre (BITC) have played an important role in the development of Small Scale Industries in Botswana.

Vice President Masisi and his delegation participated in a business seminar jointly organized by the CII and Botswana Investment Trade Centre (BITC) in Mumbai on 27th October 2015. The Vice President was in India to attend the IAFS III Summit.

A ten-member delegation of Electronics and Computer Software Export Promotion Council (ESC) visited Botswana on 8-10 November 2016. The High Commission organized a B2B session for the delegation with stakeholder companies in the ICT sector in Botswana on the 9th November 2016.

A four-member delegation from Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) visited Gaborone on 25 -28 July 2016 at the invitation of Independent Electoral Commission of Botswana and made a presentation on Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to Botswana Members of Parliament on 26th July and another demonstration on 27th July to media persons and other stakeholders.

A **two**-member delegation from RITES, consisting of Director (Projects) and Director (Finance) visited Botswana 12-13 May 2016 and met with CEO of Botswana Railways and Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Transport and Communications and discussed possibility of sale/ wet leasing of new/ in-service locomotives ranging from 1300 HP to 3000 HP with full warranty support.

The main items of exports from India in recent years have been manufactured goods, metals, machinery and equipment, cotton yarn, fabrics, ready-made garments, drugs & pharmaceuticals and transport equipment. Bilateral trade in the last two years was as follows: USD 1,057.35 million in 2014-15; US\$ 595.21 million in 2015-16. The downward trend in 2015-16 was attributable to slump in global diamond trade in 2015. [Statistics based on GOI's DGFT data].

The opening of Botswana's Mission in New Delhi in 2006 and Botswana Export Development and Investment Authority (BEDIA), now called BITC representative office in Mumbai in 2010 gave impetus to the bilateral trade and investment.

The first branch of Bank of India was set up in Gaborone on 9 August 2013; while the State Bank of India opened its branch on 26 November 2013 in Gaborone. Bank of Baroda has been operating in Botswana since 2001.

Cooperation in the Diamond & other minerals:

Botswana is mineral-rich country and offers great potential for investment in the mining sector which has hitherto been predominantly under the control of De Beers and Government of Botswana through 50:50 partnership in two companies.

The Indian diamond companies and businessmen, especially from Gujarat (Surat) have always shown keen interest in buying rough diamonds as well as in investment in the downstream industries in the diamond sector, mainly in the cutting and polishing of the rough diamonds. At present three major Indian companies, Shrenuj, Blue Star and KGK Diamonds have offices and factories in Botswana. M/s. Shrenuj is in the process of re-organising its operations.

Besides, diamonds, Botswana also has huge deposits of coal, copper, nickel, soda ash, salt, and uranium. The mineral sector roughly forms 23% of its economy. With huge coal deposits, the Government of Botswana has announced a "Coal Roadmap" in early 2012. A number of Indian companies have shown interest in exploring potential for viable investment in the mining sector for export of coal to India for power generation.

M/s Jindal Steel & Power Limited (JSPL) took over CIC Energy (a Canadian company) for beneficiation of coal mining and power production. JSPL has plans to set up two coal-fired 300 MW power in the Mamambula coal blocks areas where huge coal deposits have been found.

Indian Community:

There are roughly 10,000 to 11,000 people of Indian origin settled in Botswana, out of which approx. 3000 to 4,000 people have acquired the Botswana nationality. The Indian community has played a significant role in the economic growth of Botswana and has also been supporting a number of social welfare projects. The Indian community in Botswana is mostly engaged in the services sectors viz. retail, manufacturing and in the teaching and accounting professions. Most of the Indian immigrants have migrated from the States of Gujarat and Southern Indian States of Kerala, Andhra and Tamil Nadu. They have maintained their linguistic, religious and cultural traditions. Botswana is considered to have strong secular credentials. The country has been liberal in allowing all religions to practice and establish their places of worship.

Cultural Relations:

The Indian community in Botswana is fairly active. There are five Hindu temples, two Gurudwaras and three mosques. There are about 12 Indian socio-cultural community associations which actively engage themselves in the celebration of various Indian cultural festivals/ events. Prominent socio-cultural functions observed by the Indian community in Botswana are: Holi, Ram Navmi, Shivaratri, Dandia, Diwali, Onam, Durga Puja, Baisakhi & Guru Nanak Devji's birth anniversary. The Indian socio-cultural events attract a large gatherings. There is also a Sai Temple and a newly built ISKCON Temple in Gaborone.

BOT-50 Celebrations: The 50th Anniversary of Botswana's Independence from Great Britain is to be celebrated on 30th September 2016 by Botswana. The celebrations are shortly known as BOT-50. Hon'ble Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram visited Botswana on 22-25 August 2016 to coincide with BOT-50 celebrations. To celebrate BOT-50, the High Commission organized various events beginning with the launching of ITEC Alumni Website in March 2016; Ambedkar Jayanti in April 2016; International Yoga Day in June 2016; an Indian Film Festival showcasing Indian feature films, beginning from 9th September 2016; an Indian Art Exhibition titled "March of Millennium Years" from 12-15 September 2016, showcasing bronze and marble statues, artefacts, paintings and sculptures and Hindi Divas on 18th September. The High Commission also put together nine Indian community associations for a road show and cultural event on 11th September 2016. ICCR-sponsored Indian Light Classical Music troupe led by Mrs. Shaila Hattangadi visited Botswana in October 2016. The 6-member troupe gave one performance on 25th October in Gaborone and the second performance on 26th October 2016 at Francistown.

High Commission of India celebrated Rashtriya Ekta Divas on 31st October, celebrating the 141st birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel with screening of a documentary on Sardar Patel and mounting a photo exhibition.

The High Commission celebrated the Constitution Day on 26th November 2016 by organising a seminar. Keynote address was delivered by Hon. Justice Mr. Lakhwinder Walia, the second senior most Judge in the High Court of Botswana. He spoke on the similarities of the Constitutions of India and Botswana. Ms. Alice Mogwe, of Ditshwanelo, the Botswana Human Rights NGO; and Prof. N.P. Sinha of the University of Botswana were the Guest Speakers.

All these events were well received by local citizenry and attracted large participation by Indian community members. Botswana dignitaries appreciated contribution of India and Indian community to the development of Botswana. All these events were widely covered and publicized by local newsprint and electronic media.

For more information and latest updates please visit High Commission of India, Gaborone's website <http://www.hcigaborone.org.bw>

Interview of High Commissioner to European Times: <http://www.european-times.com/in-motion/botswana-in-motion/ketan-shukla-high-commissioner-india-interview>