

**Embassy of India
Asmara**

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 offered 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. India is a destination for Eritreans going abroad for higher studies and medical treatment.

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. Government of India has appointed Shri Subhash Chand, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of India, Abuja as the 1st Resident Ambassador of India to Eritrea on May 10, 2019. Subsequently, he took charge on August 26, 2019. He presented his credentials to President of Eritrea Mr Isaias Afwerki on 4th December 2019. The Embassy is now functioning from its hired premises at Adi Rosso 12/14, Campovollo, Asmara since January 2020.

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. In February 2020, Eritrea has availed 3 ITEC training slots for ISA-member countries on solar energy at NISE, Gurgaon.

7. On November 7, 2019, Eritrea signed a MoU in New Delhi and becoming a partner country of eVidyaBharatiArogyaBharati (eVBAB) Network Project of India. Subsequently, Eritrea has identified National Coordinator and Single Point Coordinator for the Project.

8. To mark the 71st Republic Day, a Flag Hoisting ceremony was held at the Embassy premises in Asmara on January 26, 2020. This was the first such event after establishment of the first Resident Embassy in Eritrea. On 27th January, 2020, a National Day Reception was organised at Asmara Palace Hotel. The event was attended by many Eritrean dignitaries, members of the diplomatic corps and Indian community members.

Bilateral Exchanges

9. 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. ArefaineBerhe and Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education. Minister of Transport and Communication of Eritrea visited India in 2000.

10. 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 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. ArefaineBerhe, visited India as the Special Envoy of his Government. Minister for Agriculture of Eritrea, H.E. Mr. ArefaineBerhe, 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.

11. In August 2010, Minister of External Affairs Shri S.M. Krishna inaugurated in New Delhi the Pan African e-Network project with Eritrea, while interacting over video conferencing with Agriculture Minister of Eritrea. Foreign Minister of Eritrea, H. E. Mr. Oman Saleh Mohammed visited India in February 2011 for LDC Conference. He again visited India in June 2011 and met with Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Preneet Kaur. Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. V.K. Singh visited Eritrea in September 2015 and handed over an invitation from the Prime Minister to the President Isaias Afwerki of Eritrea to attend the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit. Foreign Minister of Eritrea Mr. Osman Saleh led the Eritrean delegation for the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit held from 26-29 October, 2015. Finance minister with a delegation participated in the annual African Development Bank Board meeting held in Ahmedabad in May 2017. A 5-Member All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) delegation led by Prof. RandeepGuleria, Director, AIIMS visited Eritrea from January 26-29, 2020.

India in UN Peacekeeping in Eritrea

12. 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 from 850 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 and 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

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

14. There are 40 slots for ITEC courses for Eritrea for 2019-20. ICCR has allotted 8 slots to Eritrea for the academic year 2020-21. IAFS has also allotted 2 slots for Eritrea for the year 2019-20. A total 25 slots were utilized for a special customized training programme of eight weeks on promotion of Basket and Mat Weaving Artisan Enterprises, on request from the Eritrean Government, at the National Institute of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Hyderabad from 14/05/2018 to 06/07/2018.

15. 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.

16. In November 2010, Embassy of Eritrea requested MEA for a grant of US\$ 2 million for a project to enhance the capacity of the newly established Institute of Higher Education (IHEs) through procurement laboratory equipments and chemicals, computers, and books etc.

17. 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. For the second phase of the network project, Eritrean Government has identified three colleges and a hospital for e-VBAB network projects. In this regard, Eritrea has signed the MOU on 7th November 2019 in New Delhi.

18. An Eritrean delegation visited several Indian educational institutes in 2010 including 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. Three doctors from Eritrea visited India for mid-career specialised training courses at Apollo Hospital in New Delhi from 21 August 2017 to 20 September 2017.

19. 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.

20. 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

21. India's exports mainly include pharmaceutical products, plastic and articles thereof, paper board and products, cereals, etc. India's imports were mainly ores, slag and ash in the commodity category of HS code 26.

India's Exports to Eritrea in Million US \$: (Source: Department of Commerce, New Delhi)

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 (Apr-Jan)
14.06	6.45	3.22	7.43	9.03	5.45

India's Imports from Eritrea in Million US \$: (Source: Department of Commerce, New Delhi)

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20 (Apr-Jan)
203.68	167.45	36.41	1.96	--	--

22. A few private sector Indian companies are working in the Mining sectors in Eritrea as it is rich in minerals like copper, zinc, potash, gold, silver, granite, marble, salt, etc. But the historical peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia has opened doors for business and investment opportunities for Indian companies.

23. 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%.

Culture and other activities

24. The first ICCR sponsored Rajasthani Folk Dance troupe visited Asmara, Eritrea on 12-13 December 2018 and gave cultural performance in Asmara. The first ever ITEC Day in Asmara was held on 27 March 2019 with the participation of 50 guests including the ITEC alumni and representatives of Government Ministries and Indian community. Honorary Consul of India in Asmara participated in the Kumbh Mela in 2019.

25. Embassy of India, Asmara organized the following events:

- i) Hindi Day was celebrated on 1 October 2019 in association with Indian School, Asmara;
- ii) On the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Embassy of India organized following events:
 - a) Tree plantation at Asmara Comprehensive School with participation from Ministry of Agriculture;
 - b) Organized essay and painting competitions in association with Indian Community School;
 - c) A cycling event was organized on 19 October 2019 in Asmara in association with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Directorate of Culture and Sports of the Government of Eritrea.
- iii) Celebrated 550th birth anniversary of Guru NankDevji in Asmara on Nov 17, 2019.
- iv) On 26 November 2019, the Mission celebrated 70th Constitution Day in Asmara.
- v) World Hindi Day was celebrated on January 11, 2020 in Asmara.

Indian Community and Diaspora in Eritrea

26. The Indian community in Eritrea, comprising mostly of teaching professionals in Eritrean universities and secondary schools, number around 300. Most Indians live and work in and around Asmara as also in Anseba, Debub, Northern Red Sea region and the Dahlak islands. There are also medical doctors and construction workers. Embassy of India celebrated PravasiBharatiya Divas on January 11, 2020 in Asmara. Besides showing recorded version of EAM's interaction with our Diaspora, Embassy honoured 9 Indian community members who have served over 20 years in Eritrea.

27. India has reopened its Embassy in Asmara on August 26, 2019. Eritrea has an Embassy in New Delhi.

April 2020