

Brief on India-Sierra Leone Relations

Political Relations

India and Sierra Leone share cordial and warm relationship which dates back to over five decades. India commends Sierra Leone's role as Chairperson of the C-10 in coordinating and voicing the position of the African continent on the issue of reforms of the UN bodies and especially on the question of the expansion of the UN Security Council. Sierra Leone cooperates with India at the UN and other International forums.

The High Commission of India to Ghana is concurrently accredited to Sierra Leone with residence in Accra. The Honorary Consulate of India is functioning in Freetown since 1993. Sierra Leone's desire to deepen the bilateral relations was evidenced by its proposal to open a resident Mission in New Delhi, approval for which was conveyed by our side in 2016. In line with the Govt's decision of opening 18 Missions in Africa, India will be opening its Mission in Sierra Leone in 2019-20.

Visits from India

Bilateral high-level visits and consultations include the visit of Indian Defence Minister, Shri George Fernandes, to Sierra Leone in July 2000 and then Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Anand Sharma in January 2009.

Shri Sushil Kumar Modi, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, participated in the "Sierra Leone Conference on Development and Transformation" held in Sierra Leone from 30 January to 1 February, 2012. Special Envoy to the PM, Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, MOS (Water Resources) visited Sierra Leone on 16-18 July 2016, to deliver PM's invitation to President Koroma to participate in 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit.

An Indian Power Sector Technical Team comprising of representatives from Ministry of New & Renewable Energy and NTPC visited Sierra Leone from 8-11 December 2015. A two-member team from EXIM Bank of India paid a visit to Sierra Leone in early October, 2017.

Visits from Sierra Leone

Then President Ernest Bai Koroma visited India (27-29 October 2015) for the third India-Africa Forum Summit. He had a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Modi. Then Foreign Minister Dr. Samura Kamara met with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj. Trade Minister of Sierra Leone also attended the Trade Ministers' Meet on 23-24 October 2015 on the sidelines of IAFS-III.

The Deputy Minister of Trade & Industry accompanied by the Special Secretary to the Chief of Staff in the Presidency and two business executives participated in the 10th EXIM Bank – CII Conclave held in New Delhi in March 2014.

Minister of Finance and Economic Development Momodu Kargbo represented Sierra Leone at the 52nd Annual Meeting of the AfDB held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat (22 – 25 May 2017). Minister of Communications & Information Mohamed Bangura, accompanied by two officials participated in the Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS) held in New Delhi on 23-24 November 2017.

Dr. Anthony Augustine Sandi, Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation led a delegation to attend the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention at New Delhi (29 September-2 October, 2018). Finance Minister, Mr. Jacob Jusu Saffa, led a two-member delegation for CII-EXIM Bank India-West Africa Regional Conclave at Abuja, Nigeria (8-9 October, 2018). A US\$78 million Transmission and Substations Energy project is under implementation.

Mr. Alpha O Timbo, Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education of Sierra Leone attended Partners' Forum 2018 on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health held at New Delhi (10-14 December, 2018).

Relations at UN

India was among the first countries to contribute troops to the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The deployment of the 4000-strong Indian military contingent in the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) beginning January 2000 – left a positive impact among the Sierra Leoneans. Indian troops were phased out in January, 2001.

Economic and Commercial relations

India continues to be a strong trading partner of Sierra Leone and ranks 5th in terms of imports by Sierra Leone. Total bilateral trade figures between the two countries for last few years is as follows:

Period	In US\$ mn			
	India's exports to Sierra Leone	India's Imports from Sierra Leone	Total Trade	Balance of Trade
2014-15	80.40	23.59	103.99	56.81
2015-16	91.17	16.56	107.73	74.61
2016-17	93.71	12.23	105.94	81.48
2017-18	93.51	24.17	117.68	69.34
2018-19	112.27	11.73	124.00	100.54
April-June 2019	38.86	6.38	45.24	32.48

(Source: Department of Commerce, GOI)

Indian export basket comprises mostly of drugs and pharmaceuticals, textile, eggs, and machine tools, while the major items of imports from Sierra Leone include ferrous waste and scrap, wood pulp, waste paper and small quantities of titanium ores.

There are about 20 Indian NRI/PIO trading companies, based in Sierra Leone. Bharti Airtel, which had acquired Zain Africa in 2010, has sold off its operations in Sierra Leone to Orange Telecom of France.

Developmental Cooperation - India's developmental cooperation through bilateral concessional Lines of Credit and through ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) aggregates to US\$ 217.5 million. The projects implemented/signed/approved are: (i) US\$ 15 million Agricultural projects including procurement of tractors, harvesters, rice threshers, rice mills, maize shellers and pesticide spray equipment in 2008; (ii) US\$ 30 million Rehabilitation of existing facilities and addition of new infrastructure to supply potable water in 2010; (iii) US\$ 78 million Transmission line and sub-station project in 2016; (iv) US\$ 30 million Irrigation development in Tomabum in 2019; (v) US\$ 15 million expansion of rehabilitation of existing potable water facilities in four communities in 2019; (vi) US\$ 29.45 million modernization and expansion of network and infrastructure of Sierratel project (through EBID); procurement of buses for university and tertiary institutions through EBID; (vii) US\$ 20 million public lighting of Freetown and 13 municipal headquarters through solar energy (through EBID). In end-July 2018, the IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) Board of Directors approved US\$ 1 million out of the IBSA Fund for the a project entitled 'Digital Financial Inclusion' in Sierra Leone to expand digital financial services among women, youth, micro, small & medium enterprises of the country leading to resilient and inclusive economic growth.

Humanitarian & other Assistance

Government of India has provided various assistance packages to Sierra Leone. During his visit to Sierra Leone in January 2009, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Anand Sharma, gifted 200 military barracks to Sierra Leone. These were erected by an Indian Public Sector Undertaking. India gifted 29 packages of indelible ink in May, 2007 for Sierra Leone's Presidential and Parliamentary elections held in September 2007. India also supplied 40,000 tonnes of non-basmati rice to Sierra Leone in June 2008 to meet urgent requirements.

To help the Sierra Leonean government combat Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), in December 2014 Government of India donated US \$ 50,000 worth of medical equipment and medicines to the local government. This donation was in addition to the Government of India's contribution of US\$ 12 million to the UN Trust Fund for Ebola and cash contribution of US\$ 50,000 to WHO to help fight the Ebola virus disease in the three countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. India also extended financial support of US \$ 100,000 to the Sierra Leone Residual Special Court through the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York and US \$ 50000 contribution to relief efforts for the damages caused by floods and mudslide in August 2017.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) & Capacity Building Programmes

In terms of capacity building, Sierra Leone has been one of the beneficiaries of our Indian Economic & Technical Cooperation (ITEC) programme. Five officers from the National Digital Crime Resource and Training Centre (NDCRTC) of IT Wing of the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad visited Sierra Leone with the objective of Capacity building. They imparted training to the Cyber Crimes Bureau of the Sierra Leone Police from October 01-13, 2018. Sierra Leone is considering signing MoU with TCIL on eVBAB.

Culture

The International Day of Yoga (21 June 2015) was celebrated successfully in a grand manner with high level participation from the Government and diplomatic community. Similar events were organized by the Honorary Consul to mark the 2nd International Day of Yoga on 21st June 2016, the 3rd IDY on 25 June 2017; 4th IDY on 23 June in 2018; and 5th IDY on 22 June, 2019. As part of Freedom70 celebrations, a Kathak Dance troupe sponsored by our Ministry of Culture visited Freetown on 27-28 January 2018.

Indian Community

There are about 20 Indian NRI/PIO trading companies, based in Sierra Leone. The Indian community in Sierra Leone is about 1400 strong, mostly engaged in trade and manufacturing. Indian Mercantile Association is the only Indian association in Sierra Leone. A Hindu temple is run by the local Temple Committee. Choithram Trust, managed by the Indian owned Choitram Group, runs a Charitable Hospital.

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