

**High Commission of India  
Accra**

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**India-Sierra Leone Bilateral Brief**

**Political relations:**

The traditionally cordial bilateral relations of India and Sierra Leone were re-energized by the visit of the then Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Anand Sharma, to Sierra Leone in January 2009, representing the first high-level visit from India after a gap of ten years.

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.

Bilateral high-level visits and consultations include the visit of Indian Defence Minister, Shri George Fernandes, to Sierra Leone in July 2000; the visit of Sierra Leonean Minister of Industry and Transport, Mr. A.E. Bangura to New Delhi in November 1998; the visit of a two-member Parliamentary delegation, led by the Speaker of the Sierra Leone Parliament, to New Delhi in January 2003, and the visit of the Foreign Minister Alhaji Momodu Koroma and Trade and Industry Minister Dr. Kadi Sesay to New Delhi in November 2005.

Other ministerial visits from Sierra Leone was of Mr. Momodu Koroma, Foreign Minister of Sierra Leone in January 2007; Mr. Joseph S. Sesay, Minister of Health and Mr. Francis Abdul Rahman Sankoh, Director of Livestocks, Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Forestry in December 2007; Minister of Trade, Mr. A.P. Koroma, in March, 2008; and Foreign Minister, Ms. Zainab Bangura, in October 2008 and again in February, 2011.

Two MPs from Sierra Leone, Hon. Mr. Legacy Sankoh and Hon. Mr. Jacob I. Koroma, visited India to participate in the 'Leaders of the Future' programme, held in March 2012. Mr. Oluniyi Robbin-Coker, Minister of Energy and Water Resources visited India to participate in the Global Ministerial level "International Seminar on Energy Access" held in New Delhi in October, 2012.

A 4-member delegation led by Sahr George Pessima, Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, visited India for a study tour on 18-27 in January 2013. Dr. Richard Konteh, Chief of Staff, Office of the President, led the Sierra Leonean delegation to the 9th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave held in Delhi in March, 2013. The Deputy Trade and Industry Minister, Alie Badara Mansaray was part of the delegation. 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.

Shri Sushil Kumar Modi, Dy. Chief Minister of Bihar, visited Sierra Leone to attend the "Sierra Leone Conference on Development and Transformation" held in Sierra Leone from 30 January to 1 February, 2012.

Sierra Leone is a Commonwealth member country. It was represented at the Commonwealth Games Delhi 2010 by its 48-member sports delegation, led by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports.

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 Narendra Modi where cooperation in various fields was discussed. Foreign Minister Dr. Samura Kamara, who was part of the delegation, 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. Special Envoy to the PM Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, MOS (Water Resources) earlier visited Sierra Leone on 16-18 July to deliver PM's invitation to President Koroma.

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. The team met with the Minister of Energy and also had field visits to thermal power station outside Freetown and Lunsar iron ore mines and Kenema and Bo substations.

The deployment of the 4000-strong Indian military contingent in the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) – initially led by Brig. S.C. Joshi as the head of a 10-member Military Liaison Unit (attached to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for Sierra Leone), and, thereafter, by Maj. Gen. V.K. Jetley as Force Commander of UNAMSIL, beginning January 2000 – left a positive impact among the Sierra Leoneans. Indian troops were phased out in January, 2001.

### **Commercial relations:**

India's trade with Sierra Leone is limited. According to available statistics, total bilateral trade between the two countries was US \$ 106.05 million in 2016-17, with exports from India to Sierra Leone accounting for US \$ 93.2 million. Total trade in 2015-16 was US \$ 107.73 million with India's exports accounting for US \$ 91.17 million. Imports from Sierra Leone have been declining in the past three years from US \$ 23.59 million in 2014-15 to US \$ 12.23 million in 2016-17. The Ebola virus crisis in 2014-15 adversely affected economic activity in Sierra Leone and hence dampened bilateral trade. 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 for US\$ 10.7 bn in 2010, has recently sold off its operations to Orange Telecom of France.

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.

With a view to assisting Sierra Leone in its socio-economic development, India extended concessional loans through Lines of Credit (LoC) worth US\$ 100 million for various projects in the country. These include (i) Development of Commercial Agriculture; (ii) Rehabilitation of Telecom Sector in Sierra Leone (SIERRATEL); (iii) Rehabilitation of Six Potable Water Projects; and (iv) Solar Street Lighting Project. Another two LOCs of US\$ 30 million and US\$ 15 million

were approved for Irrigation Development and Expansion of Rehabilitation of existing Potable Water Facilities respectively in Sierra Leone. Government of Sierra Leone signed a fresh Line of Credit Agreement with the EXIM Bank of India of US \$ 78 million in August 2016 for establishment of transmission sub-stations in Sierra Leone.

The Pan-African e-Network project is functioning well. The Sierra Leone Learning Centre has signed an MoU with all five participating Indian university centres. Furthermore, doctors as well as medical and pharmacology students have been regularly attending the tele-medicine programs and have found them to be beneficial.

### **Humanitarian Assistance:**

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.

### **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)**

Under the ITEC program, Sierra Leone utilized 45 and 30 slots during the FY 2012-13 and 2013-14 respectively. It was allotted only 10 ITEC slots for the year 2014-15 and only 3 were utilized due to the Ebola Virus disease. Utilization of ITEC slots has once again picked up with 11 slots being utilized in 2015-16 and 26 slots in 2016-17. The ITEC Rural Solar Electrification course, held at the Barefoot College of Tilonia, was found to be particularly relevant. Some Sierra Leonean women, upon their return from the course, have successfully installed the solar system in their villages providing inexpensive electricity to the rural households.

### **Indian Community**

The Indian community in Sierra Leone is about 1400 strong, of which 500 are on short term contracts. Indians are mostly engaged in trade and manufacturing. A few of them are into mining and trading of gold and diamonds. There are about 60 Indian owned registered companies. Airtel is the biggest Mobile telecommunications company. 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 Choithram Group, runs a Charitable Hospital.

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. A similar event was organized by the Honorary Consul to mark the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Day of Yoga on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Day of Yoga on 25 June 2017.

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