

Embassy of India
Asmara, Eritrea
India- Eritrea Bilateral Relations

India - Eritrea Bilateral Brief

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.

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.

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.

7. On November 7, 2019, Eritrea signed a MoU in New Delhi and becoming a partner country of eVidyaBharatiArogyaBharati (eVBAB) Network Project of India.

Bilateral Exchanges:

8. In December 2000, a MoU on Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Education was signed by Minister of Agriculture H. E. Arefaine Berhe and Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education. Minister of Transport and Communication of Eritrea visited India in 2000.

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 RakshaMantri 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.

9. 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.

Visit of Eritrean Minister of Foreign Affairs to India on April 7-12, 2021:

10. A senior Eritrean delegation composed of Mr. Osman Saleh, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. YemaneGhebreab, Presidential Adviser visited India from April 7-12, 2021. The delegation met with External Affairs Minister of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar and National Security Adviser, Shri AjitDoval in separate meetings. The Eritrean delegation visited AIIMS and Indian Agricultural Research Institute to explore cooperation in healthcare and agriculture, in areas of capacity building and research. The delegation also met with Indian business leaders under the auspices of FICCI. Discussions centered on investment opportunities for Indian companies in Eritrea with particular focus on energy, water resources, agriculture and manufacturing. The delegation also met pharma companies (Pharmexcil) and deliberated on pharma cooperation between India and Eritrea. The Eritrean delegation toured the power generation plant and training centre of NTPC, Dadri.

India in UN Peacekeeping in Eritrea

11. 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 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

12. 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.

13. There were 40 slots of ITEC courses for Eritrea every year. ICCR has allotted 8 slots to Eritrea for every academic year. IAFS 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.

14. In 2003 India donated 50 metric tonnes of wheat to Eritrea. Earlier, India had provided 150 metric tonnes of wheat and 20 metric tonnes of sugar to Eritrea as relief assistance. In November 2020 India donated food aid of 50 MT to Eritrea consisting of 30 MT of white wheat flour, 10 MT of rice and 10 MT of sugar.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. INS Trikand was on OTR visit to Massawa Port on Sept 25-27, 2021. INS Trikand arrived at Massawa Port on Sept 25 and departed on Sept 27. INS Trikand also organized a reception for Eritrean dignitaries on Sept 26, 2021.

20. The 1st Training Squadron comprising of Indian Naval Ships Tir, Sujata and ICGS Sarathi made a port call at Massawa Port of Eritrea on April 23-25, 2022. It interacted with Eritrean naval counterparts and imparted on-board training to Eritrean naval personnel. An on-board reception was also held on April 24 for Eritrean dignitaries. Ambassador and senior Eritrean Navy officials visited the Ships.

Economic & Commercial

21. India's exports mainly include pharmaceutical products, plastic and articles thereof, paper board and products, lentils, cereals, etc. India's exports to Eritrea was USD 5.92 million in 2019-20. In 2020-21 it was USD 9.46 million.

Culture and other activities

22. The first ICCR sponsored Rajasthani Folk Dance troupe visited Asmara, Eritrea on 12-13 December 2018 and gave cultural performance in Asmara. Embassy of India organizes various activities from time to time by involving the Indian community and friends of India. Under AKAM banner the Mission has so far organised about 60 events highlighting the achievements of India@75.

Indian Community and Diaspora in Eritrea

23. The Indian community in Eritrea, comprising mostly of professionals, school teachers, college professors and construction workers number around 200. Most Indians live and work in and around Asmara as also in Anseba, Debub, Northern Red Sea region and the Dahlak islands. Indians work as teaching staff at secondary schools and technical colleges such as the Eritrean Institute of Technology. There are only a few PIO Gujarati businessmen. Embassy of India celebrates PravasiBharatiya Divas at the Embassy premises on a regular basis.

Source: Embassy of India, Eritrea Web site April 2022.