

## **India - Lesotho Relations**

Since 1996, the High Commission in Pretoria has been concurrently accredited to Lesotho. (Earlier, Lesotho was concurrently accredited to the High Commission of India in Botswana). Following the visit of Prime Minister Mosisili to India in August 2003, Lesotho opened a resident Mission in New Delhi in 2005. India's Honorary Consul to Lesotho was announced in March 2014.

High Commissioner, Ms. Ruchira Kamboj presented her credentials to the King Letsie III of Lesotho on 29 November 2017.

Following general elections on 3 June, 2017 the All Basotho Convention (ABC) led by Dr Thomas M. Thabane formed the government in coalition with three other parties namely: Alliance of Democrats, the Basotho National Party, and the Reformed Congress of Lesotho. The Prime Minister assumed office on 16 June, 2017.

### **High-level Visits**

#### **From Lesotho**

Lesotho's Prime Minister Dr. Pakalitha Mosisili led a delegation to India for the 3<sup>rd</sup> India-Africa Forum Summit accompanied by Foreign Minister Mr. Tlohang Sekhamane and Trade Minister Mr. Joshua Setipa. Prime Minister Mosisili met with Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on the sidelines of the Summit on 28 October 2015.

A high level business delegation led by Lesotho's Prime Minister Dr. Motsoahae Thomas Thabane participated as "Partner Country" at the 10<sup>th</sup> CII Exim Bank Africa Conclave held in New Delhi in March 2014.

The first ever exchange of visits at political level was the highly successful visit of Prime Minister Mosisili to India in August 2003. The areas of cooperation prioritised in talks between the two Prime Ministers were employment generation, agricultural development, education, tourism and upgrading of infrastructure, in which India agreed to share its experience in human resource development as well as high technology and industrial areas, in the spirit of South-South cooperation. India agreed to extend assistance, through training as well as supply of equipment, for establishing manufacturing units in the small scale industries sector. During the visit, both sides had agreed to set up a bilateral Joint Commission.

His Majesty King Letsie III will be on a (Private) visit to India from 27 December 2017-2 January 2018.

#### **From India**

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Hon'ble Minister of State (IC) Culture, Tourism & MoS for Civil Aviation visited Lesotho on 9 July 2015 as Special Envoy of Hon'ble Prime Minister to deliver invitations for the 3<sup>rd</sup> India-Africa Forum Summit to the leadership of the Government of Lesotho. During the visit, Minister met with the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Dr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations Mr. Tlohang Sekhamane.

## **Joint Bilateral Cooperation Commission Meeting (JBCC)**

The agreement establishing the Joint Commission was signed in March 2004. The first session of India-Lesotho Joint Commission was held in New Delhi in March 2009. The Indian delegation was led by Shri Ashok Tomar, JS (E&SA), while Mr Tebello Metsing, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Relations, led the Lesotho delegation.

The Second India-Lesotho Joint Bilateral Commission for Co-operation was held in Maseru in September 2013. The three member Indian delegation was led by Shri Ravi Bangar, Additional Secretary (E&SA), while Mr J. T. Metsing, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Relations, led the Lesotho delegation. Both sides held discussions on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of common interest.

**The third meeting of the JBCC was held in New Delhi on 1 December 2017.**

### **Defence**

Since 2001, there have been periodic visits by senior military officials. Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen J.B.S. Yadava visited Lesotho in February 2004. Maj Gen RPS Malhan visited Lesotho in September 2006. Lt. Gen. Susheel Gupta, DCOAS, visited IATT in Maseru in March 2007. An MOD delegation, headed by Lt. Gen. SPS Dhillon, DCOAS visited IATT in March 2009. An MOD delegation, headed by Lt Gen VS Tonk, DCOAS (IS&T) visited IATT in July 2011. Lt Gen JP Nehra, Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Indian Army visited Lesotho on 17 – 19 Jul 2014. The IATT completed its assignment in Lesotho in January, 2017.

A number of officials of the Lesotho Defence Forces (LDF) have been trained in Indian defence training establishments. Lieutenant General ET Motanyane, Commander, LDF visited India along with other senior officers in October 2007. Mr. Moshoeshoe David Sehloho, Principal Secretary, Defence & National Security, Lesotho visited New Delhi in August 2013 and met with the Defence Secretary and Deputy Chief of Army Staff, in addition to visiting Indian Military Academy, Dehradun.

### **Agreements / MOUs**

Shri B.S. Minhas, Secretary, Small Scale, Agro & Rural Industries visited Maseru in September 2004 and signed an Inter-Governmental MOU on Promotion and Development of Small Scale Enterprises.

In October 2004, a delegation from Lesotho comprising the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Agriculture visited India. The delegation-level talks were led by Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, then MOS (RIS) on the Indian side. Discussions covered the whole gamut of bilateral cooperation. In addition, there was a meeting with Secretary (Agriculture). The Agreement outlining the detailed terms and conditions of a credit line of US\$ 5 million promised during the visit of the Prime Minister of Lesotho was signed between the Government of Lesotho and the Export Import Bank of India during the visit. LOC of US \$ 5 million was granted to Lesotho for procurement of agricultural equipment from India.

Foreign Minister of Lesotho visited India in March 2010. Among other issues, during the visit, an Agreement for Line of Credit of US\$ 4.7 million for setting up of Vocational Training Centres in Lesotho was signed.

A bilateral MOU on Rural Development was signed in July 2011. Shri Nitin Chandra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Rural Development visited Lesotho in November 2011 in relation with the implementation of the MoU.

### **India's Assistance in other areas**

Under a tripartite agreement signed by Government of India and Kingdom of Lesotho in October 2001, 4 Indian agricultural experts / technicians were deputed to Lesotho under FAO's special programme for Food Security in Low Income Food Deficit countries. Subsequently, an Indian Expert was deputed in January 2004 to advise the Director of the Lesotho College of Agriculture and render assistance for drawing up an irrigation master plan.

Following contacts during the Prime Ministerial visit, National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO) signed an MOU in January 2004 for Mutual Cooperation for the Development of Small Industries in Lesotho. This envisaged strengthening the capacity of BEDCO for development sustenance and growth of small enterprises in Lesotho, facilitating transfer of technologies from India to Lesotho, assistance in setting up a Common Facility-cum-Training Center to meet the skill and technology needs of small enterprises in Lesotho and facilitating enterprise-to-enterprise contacts with a view to promote Indian investment and industrial partnerships in Lesotho. The Indian Ministry of Textiles sent a team of experts to assess Lesotho's training needs in the textile sector.

An India-Lesotho Centre for Advanced Education in Information Technology has been set up by India at Lerotholi Polytechnic. The Government of India has agreed to provide one time grant of Rs. 86.99 million (Rs. 38.32 million for equipment and training and Rs. 48.67 for new building construction). The building is complete and is pending final certification. Meanwhile, the Centre has been functioning from temporary premises. The High Commissioner of India Ms. Ruchira Kamboj inaugurated the India-Lesotho Centre for Advanced Information Technology on 29 November 2017, which is fully funded Government of India project, at the Lerotholi Polytechnic, Maseru and handed over to the Government of Lesotho. The Centre will be a significant marker of the India-Lesotho friendship, imparting as it will much needed critical training skills to youth, leading to more inclusive growth and development.

A Pan-Africa e-network has also been set-up in Lesotho by M/s TCIL which includes VVIP communication, tele-medicine and tele-education.

A two-member delegation from the Election Commission of India visited Lesotho on 29-31 January 2015 to provide Technical Assistance in different aspect of election management to the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho.

A Government of India supported Line of Credit (LoC) of US\$ 4.7million for setting up a Vocational Training Centre for Empowerment of Youth and Women in Lesotho is underway in Lesotho. Machinery has been provided and some of the sites are functional while some others are yet to be completed.

On 29 November 2017, High Commissioner of India, Ms. Ruchira Kamboj handed over 500 metric tonnes of rice to the Government of the Kingdom of Lesotho, donated by the Government of India as a gesture of goodwill and friendship between the two countries, at an official function organized in Maseru. The gift was a manifestation of the concern of the people of India for the people of Lesotho and their desire to help their brothers and sisters mitigate the devastating effect of food shortages caused by famine

and other acts of nature. There was huge appreciation and gratitude for the gift of 500 MT of rice, 'a milestone in our bilateral relations'.

## Trade & Economic Cooperation

Bilateral trade between the two countries is much below potential. Major items of Indian imports from Lesotho comprise wool, apparel and clothing accessories, while major items of Indian exports include pharmaceuticals, cotton, and machinery. Recent bilateral trade figures are as follows:

(figures in US\$ million)	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18 (Apr-Aug)
India's exports	18.25	31.01	38.22	30.06	33.18	10.15
India's imports	4.36	2.51	1.38	4.94	24.91	33.02
<b>Total Trade</b>	<b>22.61</b>	<b>33.52</b>	<b>39.60</b>	<b>35.00</b>	<b>58.09</b>	<b>43.17</b>

Source: Ministry of Commerce, GOI

The Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme announced by PM at the India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi in April 2008 has been offered and accepted by the Government of Lesotho.

## Education and Training

For 2016-17, under ITEC, 70 slots have been allocated to Lesotho, out of which 38 were utilized.

ICCR allocated 18 scholarship slots for Lesotho under the Africa Scholarship Scheme for 2016-17 and 20 slots were utilized (2 slots over utilized).

## Indian Community

There are about 1500 Indian expatriates and PIOs in Lesotho working as teachers, accountants and other professionals. Some of them are engaged in business as well. The community has a reasonably high economic profile in the country. There is an Indian Association which organises periodic functions and has hosted well-attended cultural performances by troupes sent by ICCR from time to time. An "India Day" was held on 5 November 2017 by the Association with the support of the High Commission of India, Pretoria.

**Consular Services camp:** Consular Services Camp for rendering CPV services to Indian nationals living in Lesotho are organized regularly by the High Commission in Maseru. The last camp was held in Maseru, Lesotho on 10-11 November 2017.

## Useful Resources:

Website of High Commission of India: <http://www.hcisouthafrica.in/>

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/indiainsouthafrica](http://www.facebook.com/indiainsouthafrica)

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/hci\\_pretoria](https://twitter.com/hci_pretoria)

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