

India- Lesotho Relations

Diplomatic Representation

Since 1996, the High Commission in Pretoria has been concurrently accredited to Lesotho. Earlier, Lesotho came under the charge of the High Commission in Botswana. Following the visit of Prime Minister Mosisili to India in August 2003, Lesotho opened a resident mission in New Delhi in 2005.

Visits

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. In the Joint Declaration issued after the visit, Lesotho recognized J&K as integral part of India and supported the resolution of differences between India and Pakistan through bilateral dialogue.

During the visit, both sides agreed to set up a bilateral Joint Commission. The agreement establishing the Joint Commission was signed in March 2004. The first meeting of the Joint Commission was held in New Delhi on March 17, 2009.

Due to the presence of an Indian Army Training Team in Maseru since 2001, there have been periodic visits by senior military officials. Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen J.B.S. Yadava, visited Lesotho from February 1-2, 2004. Maj Gen RPS Malhan visited Lesotho on September 4-6, 2006. Lt. Gen. Susheel Gupta, DCOAS, visited IATT in Maseru on 21-22 March, 2007. A MOD delegation, headed by Lt. Gen. SPS Dhillon, DCOAS is visited IATT in March 2009. A MOD delegation, headed by Lt Gen VS Tonk DCOAS (IS&T) visited IATT in July 2011.

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.

Secretary, Small Scale, Agro & Rural Industries Shri B.S. Minhas visited Maseru on September 9, 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 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 the credit line of US \$ five 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. The delegation visited the Kirloskar factory in Pune to identify products which could be imported under this Agreement.

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

Indian Assistance in other areas

The Lesotho Government has been utilizing the training opportunities provided to them under ITEC/SCAAP Scholarships. In FY 2012-13 100 ITEC slots have been offered to Lesotho under the ITEC programme in civil training and about 15 slots under defence training. 5 Applicants from Lesotho have availed training under IAFS in the current financial year so far. ICCR allocates 14 scholarship slots for Lesotho under the GCSS scheme.

Under a tripartite agreement signed by Government of India and Kingdom of Lesotho, 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 to advise the Director of the Lesotho College of Agriculture and render assistance for drawing up an irrigation master plan.

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

Following contacts during the Prime Ministerial visit, National Small Industries Corporation and Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation signed a MOU for Mutual Cooperation for the Development of Small Industries in Lesotho. This envisages 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 advanced Centre for IT 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 under construction but the Centre has started functioning from a temporary premises. Two trainers from C-DAC are in place.

Trade & Economic Cooperation

Bilateral trade between the two countries is negligible and much below potential. Major items of Indian imports from Lesotho comprise wool, fine or coarse animal hair, horsehair yarn & woven fabric, apparel and clothing accessories not knitted or crocheted. India's Trade data based on DGFT figures is given below for the last five years:

(figures in US\$ million)	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13 (Apr-Sep)
India's exports	8.56	34.49	14.44	18.64	21.20	8.21
India's imports		0.29	0.60	1.13	3.15	2.84
Total Trade	8.56	34.78	15.04	19.77	24.35	11.05

Source: Ministry of Commerce

Negotiations on a Preferential Trade Agreement, leading to a Free Trade Agreement between India and the South African Customs Union, of which Lesotho is a member, are underway. The Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme announced by PM at the India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi on 8 April, 2008 has been offered to the Government of Lesotho. 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.

Indian Community

There are about 1300 Indian expatriates 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 organizes periodic functions and has hosted well-attended cultural performances by troupes sent by ICCR from time to time.

January 2013