

India – Timor Leste Relations

India was one of the early countries to establish diplomatic relations with Timor Leste (TL) and was represented at its Independence Day celebrations in May 2002 by a high level delegation led by the then Minister of State for External Affairs Shri Omar Abdullah. Letters of felicitations from the then President, PM and EAM were handed over on this occasion. An MOU formally establishing diplomatic relations was signed on 24 January 2003.

Indian diplomats, Ambassador Kamlesh Sharma (till 2004) and Dr. Atul Khare (till 2009), had served as the Special Representative of Secretary General (SRSG) in TL. Our DPR in New York was a member of the mini mission of the Security Council which visited TL in November 2012 to analyze the ground situation and hear views of all concerned on United Nations Integrated Mission in TL (UNMIT)'s withdrawal and post UNMIT situation in TL.

TL supports India's permanent membership of the UNSC. This was formally announced by PM Alkatiri in 2003 at the UNGA. TL supported India's candidature for a non-permanent seat during 2011-12. TL extended their crucial support for the election of India's candidate Ms. Poonam Khetrapal Singh for the post of Regional Director, South East Asia Regional office (SEARO), WHO in September 2013. TL co-sponsored the Resolution on Yoga in the UNGA.

Important bilateral visits and meetings

The Vice Minister of Health of TL Mrs Natalia D. Araujo visited Delhi to participate in the International Conference on Traditional Medicine for South East Asian Countries in February 2013. The Minister of Health of TL Dr Sergio G.C.Lobo led a delegation to India in March 2013 and met with the Minister of Health and Family Welfare. Finance Minister of TL Ms Emilia Pires visited India in May 2013 for ADB Governors' Meeting.

EAM met the Foreign Minister of TL in Brunei on the sidelines of ARF Ministerial Meeting in early July 2013. The two Ministers discussed bilateral issues and ways to take the relationship forward. During the meeting, EAM offered to provide a grant in aid of US\$ 100,000 to Government of TL. (This grant was later utilized to donate an Ambulance to TL).

The Vice Minister of Health of TL Dr. Ana Isabel visited India to attend the Pharmexcil's International Business Meet held in Chennai in July 2015. Joint Secretary of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Mr. Anshu Prakash, accompanied by Director Mr. Amal Push represented India at the WHO Regional Committee Meeting held in Dili in September 2015.

Foreign Minister of TL Mr. Hernani Coelho visited India on 27-29 March 2016 and met with EAM, MOS (VKS) and Minister of Health & Family Welfare. This was the first ever visit by TL Foreign Minister to India. As a follow up, the Vice Foreign Minister of TL Mr. Roberto Sarmiento de Oliveira Soares visited India on 4-6 December 2016 and called on MOS (VKS), CIM and Minister of Health and Family Welfare. MOS (VKS) met with the Foreign Minister of TL Mr. Hernani Coelho on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Manila on 08 August 2017.

The Mission is proactively engaged with the Government of TL to tap the emerging economic opportunities and pursue our initiative in development cooperation front. Former Ambassadors have had several visits to Dili and had a wide ranging discussions with the PM; Vice PM; and Senior Ministers in the Cabinet. Senior officials of the Mission have had follow up visits to Dili to carry forward the discussions. Ambassador led the first ever Indian business delegation to TL in October 2014. The 10-member multi-sectoral delegation, organized under the IBF of the Mission and met with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Oil and Natural Resources, Health, Transport and Communication, Tourism and Art & Culture, and Public Works. Wide range of issues including avenues of cooperation on economic and commercial sectors were discussed during the meetings. A Seminar on "Investment Opportunities in TL" outlining the investment procedures, quality control, procurement process, regulations and licensing process, trade policy etc. was held during the visit. India formally handed over GOI-funded Ambulance to the Health Ministry of TL in January 2016.

Former Ambassador Nengcha Lhouvum visited TL on 25-27 September 2016 for presentation of Credentials. During the visit, she met with the President, Minister of Commerce & Industry, Minister of Health and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. The Ambassador hosted the first-ever National Day Reception in Dili on 25 January 2017. The Vice Foreign Minister of TL Mr. Roberto Sarmiento de Oliveira Soares represented the Government of TL at the Reception. During the visit, the Ambassador called on the Ministers of Foreign Affairs & Cooperation; Planning and Investment; Public Works, Transport and Communication; Interior; and met the Ambassadors of Brazil, US, Portugal and Cd'A of Indonesia; Advisor to the President and select members of Indian community.

Capacity Building and Development Cooperation

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in January 2003, India and TL have been cooperating at bilateral, regional and international levels. India has been offering economic, technical and capacity building assistance to TL through the following projects:

Capacity Building: India continues to strongly support TL's developmental path and is eager to cooperate and contribute in TL's tasks of nation building. India extends 10 ITEC training slots and 10 GCSS Scholarships every year. India offers slots to TL for training of their diplomats at the Foreign Service Institute of India. We cooperated with East Timor Development Agency to get nomination for women trainees.

Grant in Aid: GOI approved a Grant in Aid to TL in October 2008 for infrastructure projects. An amount of US\$ 100,000 was transferred by the Mission to TL in March 2010.

Cooperation in Health Sector and supply of Ambulance: An inter-governmental MOU for cooperation in Health Sector has been finalized by both sides. This will be signed at mutually convenient time. A fully-equipped Ambulance unit which can serve as a mobile operation theatre was formally handed over to the Health Ministry of TL in January 2016. The Ambulance was funded by MEA at a cost of US\$ 70,620/-. Additional equipment for the Ambulance – Anesthesia Machine and Patient Monitor – were supplied to TL in July 2017.

Centre of Excellence in IT: The project for setting up of a Centre of Excellence in IT in Dili was conceived in 2004 and subsequently revised with a new draft MOU which was shared with the TL side in March 2014. Concurrence of the TL side for the MOU is awaited despite several reminders.

Bamboo Project: The project “Establishment of Bamboo Skills Development and Demonstration Centre in TL” was initially started by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in October 2004. The project with a combined budget of US\$ 1 million was completed in March 2012. The Indian technical partner was Cane and Bamboo Technology Centre (CBTC) in Assam. The objective of this project is to establish bamboo as thriving industry sector in TL. A skills development centre was also established in order to create awareness of the potential and to train craftsmen.

Proposal under IBSA Fund: The project, “Conservation Agriculture, Permaculture and Sustainable Fisheries Management: Enhancing Food and Nutrition Security and Reducing Risk Disaster in TL’ is being funded by IBSA. The project was developed by FAO in TL along with 2 NGOs - “naTerra’ and “Conservation International” - under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries of TL. The project will commence after the transfer of funds from FAO Rome to FAO TL.

Bilateral Trade

India-TL bilateral trade during 2016-17 was US\$ 2.49 million. Export from India was US\$ 2.31 million while import from TL was US\$ 0.17 million. Major items of exports by India included pharmaceuticals, plastics and electrical machinery, while imports from TL consisted of chemical products. Volume of bilateral trade since 2014-15 is given below:

Year	Exports to TL	Imports from TL	Total Trade	(US\$ million) Change (%)
2014-15	3.24	0.31	3.56	17.9
2015-16	3.42	0.03	3.45	-3.0
2016-17	2.31	0.17	2.49	-27.5

India has extended duty free access to import of products from TL as part of its Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme for LDCs. The Scheme grants tariff preferences to export of products originating in TL.

Indian community

Currently, there are about 30 Indians working as advisors in the various Ministries, UN agencies and international donors. Some Indians are entrepreneurs and are engaged in trading and restaurant business. The Indian community has formed a friendship society called 'Association of Indians in TL' in February 2017.

Useful resources

For more information and latest updates please visit:

Embassy of India, Jakarta website: <http://www.indianembassyjakarta.com>

Embassy of India Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiainIndonesia>

Embassy of India Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/@IndianEmbJkt>

Embassy of India YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/IndianEmbJkt

Government of Timor Leste: <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?lang=en>

Association of Indians in TL: <http://aiitl.com/>

08 September 2017