

India-Eritrea Relations

Eritrea, with an area of 1,25,000 sq km, is located on the Horn of Africa. It is bordered by Sudan to the northwest and west, Ethiopia to the south and Djibouti to the southeast.

Eritrea is an LDC (GDP around US\$ 2.9 billion in 2011) and is dependent on subsistence farming (25% of GDP, 80% workforce). Remittances from Diaspora form 30% of GDP. Agricultural (rain-fed) exports include cotton, fruits and vegetables, hides, meat and fish. Mineral resources include gold, copper, iron ore and potash. Industry contributes to around 20% of GDP. Real GDP growth of Eritrea for 2011 accelerated to around 10% with revenues from commercial mining. Inflation is estimated to have decreased to around 13%. Total trade is estimated to have grown to around US\$ 1.28 billion during 2011 of which exports are estimated to have jumped to around US\$ 380 million (from US\$ 30 million in 2010). Per capita GNI is around US\$ 300. Eritrea is a member of the 19-member COMESA Common Market for East and Southern Africa).

Indian traders traded at the Eritrean port of Massawa since the 17th century. There was an Indian presence in Eritrea at the turn of the 20th century. There were many casualties among Indian soldiers at the battle of Keren in Eritrea in 1941.

Eritrea is a former Italian and British colony. In 1952 the UN established it as an autonomous entity federated with Ethiopia. India formally recognised Eritrea soon after its independence in 1993.

Over the years, India has offered capacity building assistance in several fields to Eritrea ranging from legislative drafting, technical scholarships (agriculture, education, health), and also food aid. In 2009 Indian government extended a Line of Credit of US\$ 20 million to the Eritrean government. India is a destination for Eritreans for higher studies.

Bilateral Exchanges

The Eritrean Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed met with the Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Preneet Kaur on 7 June 2011 in New Delhi. He had also visited India for the India-LDC Ministerial Conference organized by Government of India in February 2011, when he met Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, Shri S.M. Krishna. High Commissioner met the Foreign Minister H.E. Osman Saleh Mohammed, Minister of Agriculture H.E. Mr. Arafain Berhe and the Minister of Education H.E. Mr. Semere Russom during his visit to Eritrea in October 2011. High Commissioner called on the Eritrean President H. E. Mr. Isias Afwerki in Asmara when he presented Credentials in March 2012.

Cooperation in Capacity Building

Shortly after Eritrea's independence, India offered assistance in its legislative drafting process. 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, medicine and education.

A trilateral agreement between Eritrea, India and the FAO was signed in Rome in 1998 under which nearly 100 Indian agricultural experts were deputed to Eritrea to help increase agricultural productivity and production, inland fisheries and aquaculture.

A Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the field of agriculture between Eritrean authorities and the Indian Council for Agricultural Research was signed in 2006 during the visit of the Minister of Agriculture of Eritrea to India.

In 2003 India donated 5,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Eritrea. Earlier, India had provided 1,500 metric tonnes of wheat and 200 metric tonnes of sugar to Eritrea as relief assistance.

Government of India's Pan-African e-network project for Eritrea was inaugurated in August 2010. All three sites (VVIP node, medical and education) are 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.

At the request of the Eritrean Government, India provided a legal expert, under the ITEC scheme, to Eritrea for two years. 15 ITEC scholarships were offered to Eritrea during 2009-10. 3 other slots were utilized under India-Africa Forum Summit scholarship scheme (2010-2011). Pursuant to the 2nd Africa-India Forum Summit held in Addis Ababa in May 2011, the ITEC training slot availability during 2011-12 was enhanced to 35. During 2011-12, Eritrea utilized a total of six slots - two each offered under the ITEC, IAFS and C. V. Raman scholarships. One Eritrean official attended the 52nd Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD) during August-September 2011. Eritrea availed of the one slot offered under the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) scholarship programme. 20 ITEC slots and 8 ICCR slots have been offered to Eritrea during 2012-13. One scholarship each under the ITEC and IAFS programmes have been utilized by Eritrean nationals so far during this period.

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.

An Eritrean delegation visited India in 2010. It visited 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.

Economic & Commercial Links

During 2011-12, India-Eritrea bilateral trade grew to a figure of around US\$ 35 million registering a nearly 40% increase. During the first six months of 2012-13, the total trade figure is just over US\$ 22 million.

India-Eritrea Trade (US\$ million)

Year	Indian Exports	Indian Imports	Total Trade
2005-06	8.18	0.99	9.17
2006-07	6.65	0.34	6.99
2007-08	110.26	1.48	111.74
2008-09	16.86	6.47	23.33
2009-10	29.34	0.17	29.50
2010-11	24.50	0.75	25.25
2011-12	31.52	3.35	34.88
2011-12*	12.67*	10.36*	22.03*

Source : Department of Commerce, India
* April-Sep

Exports from India include electrical and miscellaneous engineering equipment, drugs and pharmaceuticals, cotton yarn and fabrics. India is among the largest exporters to Eritrea along with Italy and the UAE. Eritrea imported millets worth US\$ 200,000 from India during 2010.

Eritrean exports to India consist mainly of leather, hides (excluding raw hides) and skins.

Eritrea qualifies for India's offer of unilateral duty free tariff preferential market access for export of goods and services to India. The scheme, introduced in 2008, offers duty free access to exports from LDCs on 84% of India's tariff lines and preferential access for another 9%.

Indian companies have supplied agricultural equipment to the Eritrean Ministry of Agriculture and laboratory equipment for high schools and colleges through the Ministry of Education. Indian companies are also among suppliers of equipment for a sugar factory presently under construction.

India extended a Line of Credit of US\$ 20 million (US\$ 10 million each for education and agriculture projects) to Eritrea in July 2009.

Indian Community and Diaspora in Eritrea

The Indian community in Eritrea, comprising mostly of school teachers and businessmen, numbered around 2000 in the 1960s. According to the Report of the High Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, there were around 400 Indians in Eritrea in 2001, including teachers and professors at the University of Asmara. Presently it is estimated that the Indian community totals around 1200. Most Indians live and work in the following areas – 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 also medical doctors and construction workers.

India appointed an Honorary Consul in Asmara (Mr. Semere Petros, email: semere@gemel.com.er, tel: +291-1-186742) in November 2008. Eritrea has an embassy in New Delhi.

India in UN Peacekeeping in Eritrea

More than 1,500 Indian troops served in the UN Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), deployed in both countries until February 2007). Maj. Gen. Rajender Singh was the UNMEE Force Commander from 2004-2006. Over the life of the mission, Indian medical personnel attended to some 17,000 cases. The Indian contingent also assisted in drilling of wells and construction of roads and dams.

India is the Chair of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Somalia-Eritrea Sanctions Committee since January 2011.

Select List of Bilateral Interactions

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| Jan 1995 | Former Chief Justice of India, Justice P N Bhagwati participated in a Workshop on legislative drafting in Eritrea. |
| Dec 2000 | MoU on Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Education signed by Minister of Agriculture H. E. Arefaine Berhe and Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education. |
| June 2001 | Agriculture Minister of Eritrea visited India. |
| Aug 2001 | Minister of Transport and Communications of Eritrea visited India. |
| June 2006 | Minister of Education, H. E. Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed and |

- Minister of Agriculture, H. E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe visited India. Mr. Saleh met Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture Shri Sharad Pawar. An MoU on Agriculture Cooperation with ICAR was signed during this visit.
- Aug 2006 Dr. Ghebrehiwet Teame, Director of Technical Services and Mr. Amanuel Negassi, Director of Agricultural Services visited India.
- Sep 2006 Hon'ble Raksha Mantri met Minister of Health of Eritrea H. E. Mr. Saleh Maky on the sidelines of the 61st Session of the UNGA in New York.
- April 2007 Minister for Agriculture of Eritrea, H. E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe, visited India as the Special Envoy of his Government.
- Sep 2008 Minister for Agriculture of Eritrea, H.E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe, visited India.
- Dec 2008 Dr. Gebreberhan, Vice President of Eritrean Institute of Technology visited India. He called on Hon'ble Minister for Human Resource Development Shri Arjun Singh.
- Dec 2009 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.
- Feb 2010 Mr. Hagos Ghebrehiwet W. Kidan, Head of Economic Affairs of PFDJ, Special Envoy of Eritrean President visited India. He handed a letter from Eritrean President addressed to Hon'ble Prime Minister.
- Aug 2010 Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs Shri S.M. Krishna inaugurated the Pan African e-Network project with Eritrea.
- Feb 2011 Foreign Minister of Eritrea, H. E. Mr. Oman Saleh Mohammed visited India for LDC Conference. He met Hon'ble Minister for External Affairs.
- June 2011 Foreign Minister of Eritrea, H. E. Mr. Oman Saleh Mohammed visited India and met with Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Preneet Kaur.
- Oct 2011 High Commissioner visited Asmara, Eritrea and presented a copy of his Credentials to Foreign Minister H. E. Mr. Osman

Saleh Mohammed. During the visit, he also met the Minister of Agriculture H.E. Mr. Arafain Berhe and the Minister of Education H.E. Mr. Semere Russom. HC also visited Keren.

March 2012 High Commissioner visited Asmara, Eritrea and presented a copy of his Credentials to President H. E. Mr. Isias Afwerki. HC also visited Massawa.

January 2013