

India-Eritrea – Bilateral Relations

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. Over the years, India has provided capacity building assistance in several fields to Eritrea including legislative drafting, technical scholarships (agriculture, education, health, handicrafts, etc.) and also food aid. In July 2009, Indian Government extended a Line of Credit of US\$ 20 million (US\$ 10 million each for education and agricultural projects) to Eritrea.

3. An MoU for Cooperation between Government of Eritrea and The International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) was signed on 3 October 1995.

4. An MoU on starting Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Eritrea was signed in April 2018 in New Delhi. Subsequently, the 1st 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. The 2nd session of the FOC was held on 15 May 2024 in Delhi and the Eritrean side was led by Director General (Desks) and the Indian side was led by Joint Secretary (WANA).

5. 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.

6. The Government of India opened its resident diplomatic Mission in August 2019. Prior to that, Indian interests in Eritrea were being looked after by India's High Commission in Nairobi and by India's Embassy in Khartoum.

7. On 31 October 2019, Eritrea signed the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (FA-ISA) at its second Assembly in New Delhi and became a 'signatory country' of International Solar Alliance countries. Eritrea is

yet to ratify the FA-ISA to become a member country.

8. On 07 November 2019, Eritrea signed an MoU in New Delhi and became a partner country of eVidyaBharatiArogyaBharati (eVBAB) Network Project of India.

India in UN Peacekeeping in Eritrea

9. More than 1500 Indian troops served in the UN Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), deployed in both countries until February 2007. 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, 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.

Bilateral Exchanges

10. In January 1995, former Chief Justice of India, Justice P N Bhagwati participated in a Workshop on legislative drafting in Eritrea. In December 2000, an MoU on Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Education was signed by Eritrean Minister of Agriculture H.E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe and Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research and Education. Minister of Transport and Communications of Eritrea visited India in the year 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. Arefaine Berhe visited India in June 2006. An MoU on Cooperation in Agriculture was signed during the visit. In September 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. In April 2007, Eritrean Minister for Agriculture, H.E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe visited India as the Special Envoy of his Government. He also visited India in September 2008. The then Hon'ble MOS(EA) H.E. Smt. Preneet Kaur met Foreign Minister of Eritrea H.E. Mr. Oman Saleh Mohammed in Nairobi on the margins of South-South Cooperation meeting in December 2009.

11. Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr. Oman Saleh visited India in February 2011 for the LDC Conference. He again visited India in June 2011 and met with the then Hon'ble MOS(EA) H.E. Smt. Preneet Kaur. The then Hon'ble MOS(EA) Gen. (Retd.) V.K. Singh visited Eritrea in September 2015 and handed over an

invitation from the Prime Minister to the President of Eritrea H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki to attend the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS). Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh led the Eritrean delegation for the 3rd IAFS held from 26-29 October 2015. A delegation, led by Eritrean Finance Minister, participated in the annual African Development Bank Board meeting held in Ahmedabad in May 2017.

12. A 5-Member delegation led by Prof. Randeep Guleria, Director, AIIMS visited Eritrea from 26-29 January 2020.

13. A senior Eritrean delegation comprising of H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh, FM and Mr. Yemane Ghebreab, Presidential Adviser visited India from 07 to 12 April 2021. The delegation met with Hon'ble EAM H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar and NSA Shri Ajit Doval in separate meetings. The Eritrean delegation visited AIIMS and IARI and 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.

14. Eritrea participated in the virtual Finance Minister's Session of the Voice of the South Summit in January 2023, the virtual Environment Ministers' Session of the 2nd Voice of Global South Summit in November 2023, and the virtual Environment Ministers' Session of the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit in August 2024 held in India.

15. INS Trikand was on Operational Turnaround (OTR) visit to Massawa Port on 25-27 September 2021.

16 The 1st Training Squadron comprising of Indian Naval Ships Tir, Sujata and ICGS Sarathi made a port call at Massawa Port of Eritrea on 23-25 April 2022. It interacted with Eritrean naval counterparts and imparted on-board training to Eritrean naval personnel.

Visit of MOS (VM) to Eritrea

17. H.E. Shri V. Muraleedharan, Hon'ble MOS (EA) visited Asmara on 14-15 September 2022 on a first ever full-fledged bilateral visit from India to Eritrea. During the visit, MOS called on Eritrean President H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki and the Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh. They explored new areas of cooperation including energy, health, education, capacity building and

agriculture. MOS (EA) visited Asmara War Cemetery and paid homage to the Indian soldiers who laid their lives during World War II in Asmara. MOS (EA) also met members of the Indian community in Eritrea.

Cooperation in Capacity Building

18. 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 Programme, to Eritrea for two years.

- For the Financial Year (FY) 2024-25, 60 slots under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Scheme were allotted to Eritrea. More than 200 Eritrean nationals have benefited from the capacity enhancing ITEC courses since 2007-2008.
- For the Academic Year 2024-25, ICCR allotted 12 scholarships under the 'India-Africa Maitri Scholarship Scheme.'
- IAFS allotted 2 slots to Eritrea for the year 2019-20.
- A total of 25 slots were utilized for a special customized training programme of eight weeks on promotion of Basket and Mat Weaving Artisan Enterprises, on the request of the Eritrean Government, at the National Institute of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Hyderabad from 14/05/2018 to 06/07/2018.
- One Eritrean diplomat attended the 69th PCFD organised by the SSIFS of MEA, New Delhi from 03 to 28 October 2022.
- During the period, 17-28 April 2023, 10 Foreign Service Officers from Eritrea attended the 1st Special Course for Diplomats from Eritrea and Zambia organised by the SSIFS of the Ministry.
- A special course for Eritrean nationals on 'Cyber Security and Malware Analytics' was conducted by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, Delhi from 15.01.2024 to 09.02.2024, under ITEC Programme of the Ministry.
- Two senior journalists from Eritrea Mr Yishak Yared Yohannes, Director, Shabait.com and Mrs Hawa Suleiman Abdulghader, Dy. Editor in Chief of Eritrea Alhaditha newspaper visited India on a familiarisation visit from 8 to 16 December 2023.

- An official from the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the the 2nd Global South Young Diplomats Forum (GSYDF) held at at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) in September 2024.

19. 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.

20. Government of India's Pan-African e-network project for Eritrea was inaugurated in August 2010. Two screenings of special lectures under the Pan African E-Network project werre done at the Orotta National Referral Hospital in Asmara in May and July 2012.

21. An Eritrean delegation visited several Indian educational institutes in 2010 including Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, Delhi University (DU) 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 to 20 September 2017.

22. India's exports to Eritrea were USD 10.05 million in the financial year 2023-24. India's exports included pharmaceutical products, inorganic/organic chemicals/compounds, beverages/spirits/vinegar, instruments/apparatus parts, etc. Eritrea qualifies for India's offer of unilateral Duty-Free Tariff Preferential (DFTP) market access for export of goods and services to India.

Cultural and other activities

23. The first ICCR sponsored Rajasthani Folk Dance troupe visited Asmara on 12-13 December 2018 and gave cultural performances in Asmara.

24. Cultural troupes from Eritrea visited India to participate in the 36th and 38th editions of the Surajkund International Crafts Mela held in 2023 and 2025 respectively.

25. The Indian community in Eritrea, numbering less than 200, comprises mostly of school teachers, college professors/lecturers and skilled/semi-skilled workers. Most Indians live and work in and around Asmara, Keren, Adi Keyh.

15 April 2025