

Brief on India-Eritrea Bilateral Relations

India and Eritrea share a deep historical connection. The ancient Eritrean port of Adulis served as a vital link in the trade route between southern India and the Roman Empire. Indian traders were familiar with the Eritrean port of Massawa since the 17th century. During World War II, many Indian soldiers laid down their lives in the battles 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. India formally recognized Eritrea soon after its independence on 24 May 1993 from Ethiopia. The Government of India opened its resident diplomatic Mission in August 2019. Prior to that, Indian interests in Eritrea were being looked after successively by High Commission of India, Nairobi and Embassy of India, Khartoum.

3. 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 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.

4. 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.

5. An MoU on starting Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Eritrea was signed in April 2018 in New Delhi. Subsequently, the first 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 Mr. Ibrahim Osman Mahmud, Director General (Desks) and the Indian side was led by Dr. M. Suresh Kumar, JS (WANA). The third round of FOC was held on 5 December 2025 in Asmara. The Indian side was led by Dr M. Suresh Kumar, Joint Secretary (WANA), Ministry of External Affairs and the Eritrean side was led by H. E. Ambassador Estifanos Habtemariam, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The FOC reviewed with satisfaction the entire spectrum of bilateral relations including political, economic, capacity building, health, education, renewable energy, culture and people-to-people ties. During the visit, Dr Suresh Kumar also called on H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammad, Minister of Foreign Affairs and H.E. Mr. Yemane Gebremeskel, Minister of Information of Eritrea.

6. 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 by India.

7. On 31 October 2019, Eritrea signed the Framework Agreement of the International Solar

Alliance (FA-ISA) at its second Assembly in New Delhi. However, ratification of FA-ISA by Eritrea is pending.

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

9. Eritrea signed the Framework Agreement on the Establishment of International Big Cat Alliance in October, 2025 and ratified the same in December, 2025. This will pave the way for strengthening bilateral relations in the field of wildlife conservation and environment.

India in UN Peacekeeping in Eritrea

10. 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 UNSC voted unanimously to end its peacekeeping Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Bilateral Exchanges

11. 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 on 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. Mr. Berhe visited India again in June 2001. Minister of Transport and Communications of Eritrea visited India in August, 2001. 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, Minister for Agriculture, H.E. Mr. Arefaine Berhe visited India as the Special Envoy of his Government. He visited India again in September 2008. The then Hon'ble MOS(EA) H.E. Smt. Preneet Kaur met Foreign Minister of Eritrea H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed in Nairobi on the margins of South-South Cooperation meeting in December 2009.

12. Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammad visited India in February 2011 for the India-LDC Ministerial 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 Hon'ble 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 Mohammad led the Eritrean delegation for the 3rd IAFS held from 26-29 October 2015. A delegation led by the Eritrean Finance Minister participated in the annual African Development Bank Board meeting held in

Ahmedabad in May, 2017.

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

14. A senior Eritrean delegation comprising of H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh, FM and Mr. Yemane Ghebreab, Adviser to the President on Political Affairs, visited India from 7-12 April 2021. The delegation met Hon'ble EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and NSA Shri Ajit Doval. The delegation visited AIIMS and IARI and also met with Indian business leaders under the auspices of FICCI.

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

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

17. 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.

18. Shri V. Muraleedharan, the then MOS (EA) visited Asmara on 14-15 September 2022 on a first ever full-fledged bilateral visit from India to Eritrea. He called on Eritrean President H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki and the Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh and discussed strengthening of cooperation in the areas of energy, health, education, capacity building and agriculture.

19. Foreign Minister of Eritrea H.E. Mr. Osman Saleh Mohammed met EAM on 1 June 2025 in New Delhi. EAM conveyed satisfaction over deepening of bilateral cooperation especially in health, education, capacity building and trade and investment. EAM expressed happiness over the recent training of ten Eritrean diplomats under the '1st Special Course for Diplomats from North & East African Countries.'

20. A 13-member delegation from Eritrea, led by Special Advisor to Minister of Agriculture, visited India to participate in 'World Food India, 2025', organised by Ministry of Food Processing Industries in New Delhi on 25-28 September, 2025.

21. A 3 member delegation from Artemis Hospital visited Eritrea on 27-28 October, 2025. They had meetings with the officials in the Ministry of Health and also visited a few hospitals in Eritrea to explore the possibility of visits of specialists from India to treat patients in Eritrea. Signing of an MoU in this regard is being discussed by the two sides.

Cooperation in Capacity Building

22. 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) 2026-27, 60 slots under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Scheme have been allotted to Eritrea. More than 240 Eritrean nationals have availed of ITEC courses since 2007-2008.
- For the Academic Year 2025-26, 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 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 3 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 the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, Delhi from 15.01.2024 to 09.02.2024 under the ITEC Programme.
- 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 the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) in September 2024.
- Ten Foreign Service Officers from Eritrea attended the 1st Special Course for Diplomats from North & East African Countries organised by the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) in August, 2025.

23. 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.

24. 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 were done at the Orotta National Referral Hospital in Asmara in May and July 2012.

25. 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.

26. The bilateral trade figures for the last 2 years are as follows:

Year	Export from India to Eritrea in US \$ mn	Import from Eritrea to India US \$ mn	Total	Growth
2023-24	10.05	0	10.05	-44%
2024-25	19.00	0	19.00	88.99%

27. There is a vast untapped potential for increasing bilateral trade between the two countries. Major items of exports from India to Eritrea are cane and beet sugar, sugar confectioneries, pharmaceuticals, rubber, rice and fabric yarn. Eritrea has good reserves of potash, copper and other minerals.

Cultural and other activities

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

29. 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.

30. The Indian community in Eritrea is around 200, comprising mostly of school teachers, college professors/lecturers and skilled/semi-skilled workers. The role of Indian teachers and professors in the education system of Eritrea is deeply appreciated. Most Indians live and work in and around Asmara, Keren, Adi Keyh.

31. India enjoys a favourable image and goodwill among the Eritrean people. India is a popular destination for Eritrean nationals for availing of medical treatment. Bollywood movies and actors, particularly from the decades of 70s to 90s are immensely popular in Eritrea. The movie 'Mother India' enjoys the status of a cult classic. It is not rare to come across Eritreans having a fairly good knowledge of Hindi picked up from Indian movies.

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