

## **India - Eswatini Relations**

India's relations with Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) are close, friendly and cordial. **The first resident Indian Mission in Mbabane started functioning from 13 August 2019 on assumption of charge of Ms Radha Venkataraman as High Commissioner of India.**

### **Political:**

#### **Exchange of visits:**

During the last decade several important visits have taken place between the two countries. These include those at the level of the King, Mswati III of Eswatini and our Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji.

#### **From Eswatini**

**His Majesty King Mswati III** visited India first in October, 2015 to attend the 3rd India Africa Summit (IAFS-III) and called on the President and Prime Minister which helped to advance India's profile and presence in the Kingdom of Eswatini. His Majesty again visited India in March 2017 as a Guest of Honour for the CII-EXIM Bank Conclave and was hosted by the President. This visit of His Majesty gave further momentum to India's commercial and cultural profile in Eswatini. Earlier, His Majesty also attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Africa Summit (IAFS-II) held at Addis Ababa in May 2011, and met with the then Prime Minister, Shri Manmohan Singh.

**Minister of Natural Resources and Energy** of the Kingdom of Eswatini, Senator Peter Bhembe with a three member delegation consisting of the Managing Director of Eswatini Electricity Company, Acting Chief Geologist and Chief Mining Engineer, visited in November 2019 Delhi, Kolkata and Ahmedabad to study iron and steel production units in India. As a follow up, Steel Authority of India has agreed to conduct a feasibility study for iron ore beneficiation and setting up of a steel plant in Eswatini.

**Chief Defence Officer** of the Kingdom of Eswatini HRH Prince Hlangusemphi Dlamini took part in the India-Africa Defence Minister's Conclave in Lucknow held from 5-6 February 2020. On 07 February 2020, he visited various rural development schemes implemented by NABARD and was briefed on the capacity building training programmes available at Bankers Institute of Rural Development at Lucknow.

**Ministers of Agriculture and Commerce, Trade & Industry** were scheduled to take part in the IAAM 2020 / CII-EXIM Bank Conclave in Delhi in March

2020, which got postponed.

**Other visits** from Eswatini have been mostly to attend the annual CII-EXIM Bank-Africa Conclaves and for other multilateral events.

### **From India**

On 09-10 April 2018, **Hon'ble President of India**, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, accompanied by the First Lady and a large delegation visited the Kingdom of Eswatini. During the visit, The President addressed a Joint Session of the Eswatini Parliament and conveyed Government of India's decision to open a resident Indian Diplomatic Mission in Eswatini. He was also conferred the highest honour of Eswatini, 'the Order of the Lion'. During the visit, the President witnessed the signing of MoU on Cooperation in Health Sector and an Agreement for exemption of visas for holders of diplomatic/service passports. The President also inaugurated the Royal Science & Technology Project, built with the Government of India Line of Credit of US\$ 20 million.

In May 2010, **former Speaker of Lok Sabha**, Smt. Meira Kumar, visited Eswatini to attend the Mid-year Executive Meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). During the visit, she also called on the Swazi King and the Prime Minister.

Other visits from India include those of Smt. Preneet Kaur, then **MoS for External Affairs** in 2011, as PM's Envoy to invite the King to the IAFS-II held in Addis Ababa, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, **MoS for Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation** in July 2015, again as a Special Envoy of the Prime Minister to invite King Mswati III to the IAFS-III held in New Delhi in October 2015.

### **Bilateral Consultations:**

In August, 2017, **bilateral consultations** between the two countries were held in Mbabane. The Indian side was led by Dr. Neena Malhotra, Joint Secretary (E&SA).

**The first meeting of the JWG** for consultations on implementation of MoU on Health Cooperation signed in April 2018 scheduled for February 2020 could not take place due to COVID-2019.

**Study Tour to Judicial Institutions in India** for the Minister of Justice and her Team requested for in late-March 2020 could not materialize due to COVID-2019 and is being rescheduled virtually at a mutually convenient time, shortly.

### **Developmental cooperation and assistance including capacity building:**

During the State visit of the President in April 2018, President Shri Ram Nath Kovind announced many projects. Important among them included (i) Line of Credit of US\$ 108.28 million extending technical and financial support for construction of the new Parliament building of Eswatini; Line of Credit of US\$ 10.4 million for establishing Disaster Recovery Data Center at the Royal Science and Technology Park (RSTP), which itself was built under an earlier Line of Credit extended by India to Eswatini; cash grant of US\$ 1 million to the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA); in-kind donation of 700 tons of rice and 300 tons of beans for the NDMA and medicines and medical equipment worth US\$ 3 million, grant assistance of US\$ 400,000 for construction of irrigation infrastructure in Lubuyane in the Hhohho region (underway after the release of first instalment of US\$ 200,000 in October 2019 and second and final instalment of US\$ 200,000 released on 07 August 2020).

Earlier, the Government of India had provided two Lines of Credit to Eswatini: (i) US\$20 million for setting up Royal Swazi Science & Technology Park (RSTP) (completed and inaugurated by Hon'ble Rashtrapati during his visit to Eswatini in April 2018); and (ii) US\$37.9 million for agriculture development and mechanization project (completed, leading to a six-fold increase in production of maize in the country).

### **Training and scholarships for Eswatini:**

In the training year 2019-20, 26 Eswatini students/officials availed of ITEC training programme. Several more nominees could not avail of ITEC scholarships granted to them due to cancellation of courses scheduled for March 2020. Six nominees from Eswatini underwent training at the Barefoot College their five months course and graduated on 29 July 2020. Eswatini continues to avail of the ICCR scholarship being provided for academic courses.

In 2018, apart from regular allotment of ITEC, ICCR and IAFS slots for training and scholarships for Eswatini nationals, Hon'ble Rashtrapati during his visit, announced an increase of ITEC slots from 30 to 50 and also a customized accounting training for 50 Treasury officials at the Institute of Government Accounts and Finance in India (INGAF). In fulfillment of these commitments, almost all ITEC slots were utilized and the training of 50 treasury officials were completed in 2018.

In July 2008, India-Eswatini signed a MoU on strengthening of bilateral co-operation in area of computer aided education of children at the elementary level in the Eswatini. Under this, the Hole-in-Wall (HiWEL), the implementing agency, established 3 Hole-in-Wall Learning Stations (HITWLS) at Cetjwayo Primary School and Bulandzeni Community Primary School in Hhohho Region and Mahlanga Primary School in Manzini Region.

## Cultural Cooperation

For the first time, a group of 7 artisans from Eswatini took part in the Surajkund International Crafts Bazaar 2020 at Haryana from 1-16 February 2020.

## Others

A total of 200 solar lamps provided by IIT Mumbai for school children in Eswatini for assembly and distribution were delivered to the school children from Sithobela on 27 February 2020.

To complement the national efforts of the Kingdom of Eswatini to combat the Covid-2019 pandemic, essential medicines weighing more than 6000 kgs and costing above Indian Rupees One Crore have been donated by India as humanitarian assistance to the Kingdom of Eswatini on 26 June 2020. Prime Minister Ambrose M. Dlamini himself received the consignment in the company of Minister of Health, Minister of Youth & Sports Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Principal Secretary of Health, RA of Manzini at the Central Medical Stores of the Government. Wide visual and print media coverage was given to the donation.

## Trade and commerce:

India has a trade agreement with Eswatini since 2002 whereby both the countries have granted Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to each other.

### **Import-export: Figures in US\$ million (Source: Dept. of Commerce, GOI):**

	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>
<b>India's total exports to Eswatini</b>				
Pharmaceuticals, distillate fuel, fertilisers and machinery and mechanical parts etc.	39.56	32.71	19.20	18.57
<b>India's total imports from Eswatini</b>				
Organic Chemicals etc.	39.24	8.92	9.60	7.03

## Indian community:

The Indian community (NRI/PIO) in Eswatini consists of around 1500 persons, including about 500 who have taken up Eswatini nationality. Most Indian

nationals in Eswatini are engaged in business and there are a few Indian experts working for the Government departments, few Indian doctors working in hospitals and a few Professors/Lecturers teaching at the University of Eswatini.

Since the establishment of the High Commission in Mbabane in August 2019, interaction with the resident Indian community has seen healthy participation in get-togethers and celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Vishwa Hindi Divas, 550th Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev, Independence Day and Republic Day flag hoisting events and Reception. International Day of Yoga, which has been conducted in Eswatini with much enthusiasm and cooperation, not only with the Indian Community but also Eswatini nationals, continued virtually on 21 June 2020. Videos and photographs of Yoga@Home shared by Emaswati and diaspora was shared on the social media of the Mission. Both TV channels of Eswatini covered the Yoga Day celebrations held at the Embassy Residence. Eswatini TV also ran a show in its programme “Breakfast TV Show” on Yoga where the High Commissioner and a local Indian origin Yoga Teacher participated. Several Indian and local participants took part in the Ministry of AYUSH Blogging competition, My Life My Yoga. Articles on Yoga appeared on both the newspapers of Eswatini, viz., Eswatini Observer and the Eswatini Times.

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## **07 August 2020**

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