

High Commission of India
Pretoria, South Africa
India- South Africa Bilateral Relations
[Concurrently accredited to the Kingdom of Lesotho]

India - Lesotho Relations

Since 1996, the High Commission in Pretoria has been concurrently accredited to Lesotho. (Earlier, Lesotho was concurrently accredited to the High Commission of India in Botswana). Following the visit of Prime Minister Mosisili to India in August 2003, Lesotho opened a resident Mission in New Delhi in 2005. India's Honorary Consul to Lesotho was announced in March 2014.

High-level Visits:

Mr. Tsehlo Moses Ramarou, Deputy Minister in Prime Minister's office participated in the India Africa Defence Ministers' Conclave (IADMC) on 6 February 2020.

Mr. Malaha Molapo, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security along with nine other officials from his Ministry visited India in August-September 2019 in connection with a study tour of major irrigation and agriculture infrastructures in India.

Mr. Monyane Moleleki, Deputy Prime Minister accompanied by Mr Chalane Letus Phori, Minister of Small Business Development, Cooperatives and Marketing and Mr Halebonoe Setsabi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Relations visited India to attend the 14th CII Exim Bank Africa Conclave held in New Delhi from 17-19 March 2019.

Mr. Samonyane Ezekiel Ntsekele, the Minister of Water Affairs accompanied by Mr Mokake Mojakisane, Commissioner of Water, Government of Lesotho visited India to attend the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention (MGSIC) in New Delhi from 29 September to 2 October 2018.

Mr. Nkaku Kabi, Minister of Health, Lesotho visited India from 30 June – 6 July 2018 and Ms Manthabiseng Arcylia Pholeli, the Deputy Minister of Health, Government of Lesotho visited India on 2 September 2018 to follow-up on the MoU signed between Apollo Hospital, India and the Ministry of Health, Government of Lesotho.

His Majesty King Letsie III and his family visited India on a (Private) visit to India from 27 December 2017-2 January 2018.

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Hon'ble Minister of State (IC) Culture, Tourism & MoS for Civil Aviation visited Lesotho on 9 July 2015 as Special Envoy of Hon'ble Prime Minister to deliver invitations for the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit to the leadership of the Government of Lesotho. During the visit, Minister met with the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Dr. Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Relations Mr. Tlohang Sekhamane.

Joint Bilateral Cooperation Commission Meeting (JBCC)

The Agreement establishing the Joint Commission was signed in March 2004. First session of JBCC was held in New Delhi in March 2009. The fourth meeting of the JBCC was held in Lesotho on 1 October 2019.

Defence

Since 2001, there have been periodic visits by senior military officials. The latest visit was of Lt Gen JP Nehra, Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Indian Army who visited Lesotho on 17–19 July 2014. A number of officials of the Lesotho Defence Forces (LDF) have been trained in Indian defence training establishments. Lieutenant General ET Motanyane, Commander, LDF visited India along with other senior officers in October 2007. Mr. Moshoeshe David Sehloho, Principal Secretary, Defence & National Security, Lesotho visited New Delhi in August 2013 and met with the Defence Secretary and Deputy Chief of Army Staff, in addition to visiting Indian Military Academy, Dehradun.

Agreements / MOUs

Agreement for LOC of US \$ 5 million for procurement of agricultural equipment from India. (2004).

Agreement for LOC of US\$ 4.7 million for setting up of Vocational Training Centres in Lesotho. (2010).

Agreement on exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic and official passports. (December 2020).

India's Assistance in other areas

Under a tripartite agreement signed by India and Lesotho in October 2001, 4 Indian agricultural experts / technicians were deputed to Lesotho under FAO's special programme for Food Security in Low Income Food Deficit countries. Subsequently, an Indian Expert was deputed in January 2004 to render assistance for drawing up an irrigation master plan.

National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation (BEDCO) signed an MOU in January 2004 for Mutual Cooperation for the Development of Small Industries in Lesotho. This envisaged strengthening the capacity of BEDCO for development sustenance and growth of small enterprises in Lesotho, facilitating transfer of technologies from India to Lesotho, assistance in setting up a Common Facility-cum-Training Center to meet the skill and technology needs of small enterprises in Lesotho and facilitating enterprise-to-enterprise contacts with a view to promote Indian investment and industrial partnerships in Lesotho. The Indian Ministry of Textiles sent a team of experts to assess Lesotho's training needs in the textile sector.

An India-Lesotho Centre for Advanced Education in Information Technology has been set up by India at Lerotholi Polytechnic, Maseru on 29 November 2017, which is a fully funded Government of India project. The Centre will be a significant marker of the India-Lesotho friendship, imparting much needed critical training skills to youth, leading to more inclusive growth and development.

A Pan-Africa e-network has also been set-up in Lesotho by M/s TCIL which includes VVIP communication, tele-medicine and tele-education.

A two-member delegation from the Election Commission of India visited Lesotho on 29-31 January 2015 to provide Technical Assistance in different aspect of election management to the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho.

A Government of India supported Line of Credit (LoC) of US\$ 4.7million for setting up a Vocational Training Centre for Empowerment of Youth and Women is underway in Lesotho.

On 29 November 2017, 500 metric tonnes of rice were formally donated by India to Lesotho as a gesture of goodwill and friendship between the two countries and to mitigate the devastating effect of food shortages caused by famine and other acts of nature.

Trade & Economic Cooperation

Bilateral trade between the two countries more than doubled in 2017-18 compared with the previous year but still is much below potential. Major items of Indian imports from Lesotho comprise wool, apparel and clothing accessories, while major items of Indian exports include pharmaceuticals, cotton, and machinery. Recent bilateral trade figures are as follows:

	2016-17	2017-18	2018 - 19	2019-20	2020-21
(figures in US\$ million)					
India's exports	33.18	31.59	30.46	40.78	39.89
India's imports	24.91	89.56	0.04	0.17
Total Trade	58.09	121.15	30.46	40.83	40.06

Source: Ministry of Commerce, GOI

The Duty Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Scheme announced by the Prime Minister at the India-Africa Forum Summit in New Delhi in April 2008 has been offered and accepted by Lesotho.

Education and Training

In 2019-20, 70 ITEC slots are allocated to Lesotho. In 2020-21, 35 ICCR slots are allocated to Lesotho and in 2022-23 academic year, 35 ICCR slots are allocated to Lesotho.

Indian Community

There are about 1500 Indian expatriates and PIOs in Lesotho working as teachers, accountants and other professionals. Some of them are engaged in business as well. The community has a reasonably high economic profile in the country. There is an Indian Association which organises periodic functions and has hosted well-attended cultural performances by troupes sent by ICCR from time to time. An "India Day" was held on 5 November 2017 by the Association with the support of the High Commission of India, Pretoria.

Consular Services camp:

Consular Services Camp for rendering CPV services to Indian nationals living in Lesotho are organized regularly by the High Commission in Maseru. The last camp was held in Maseru, Lesotho on 30 April-1 May 2022.

Source: Embassy of India, South Africa Web site May 2022.