

**High Commission of India  
Freetown**

**India-Sierra Leone: Bilateral Brief**

**Political**

India and Sierra Leone share cordial and warm relationship based on common values and shared vision which dates back to almost six decades. India is committed to being a reliable partner of Sierra Leone in its development journey through soft loans, scholarships and capacity building.

India had played an important role in achieving peace and stability in Sierra Leone by contributing troops to the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 2000-2001.

In line with the Government of India's decision to open resident Missions in more African countries, India opened its Mission in Freetown in August 2020.

India has extended e-Visa facility to Sierra Leonean nationals for ease of mobility. In accordance with the bilateral MoU signed in February 2020, diplomatic and Official/Service passport holders will be allowed visa-free travel, once the MoU is operationalised.

**Visits from India**

Vice President Shri Venkaiah Naidu visited Sierra Leone on 12-14 October 2019 for the first ever high-level visit from India. He was accompanied by Shri Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, Minister of State for Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries; and Shri Ramvihar Netam, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha).

Vice President and President of Sierra Leone, Brig (Retd) Julius Maada Bio, discussed the entire gamut of bilateral relationship as well as global and regional issues of common interest.

A number of MoUs/Agreements were signed during the visit, including a Line of Credit for US\$ 30 million for irrigation development in Tomabum for self-sufficiency in rice production. Another Line of Credit of US\$ 15 million was reactivated for a potable water project.

The two sides also signed Agreement/MoU for (i) the setting up of a Joint Commission; (ii) Foreign Office Consultations; (iii) Training and Exchange Programmes for Diplomats; and (iv) Cultural Exchange Programme.

Vice President also met Speaker of Sierra Leone Parliament Mr. Abass Chernor Bundu and Foreign Minister Ms. Nabeela Tunis. He interacted with the Indian community as well during this visit.

The other high-level bilateral visits from India to Sierra Leone include the visit of Defence Minister Shri George Fernandes in July 2000 and Minister of State for External Affairs Shri Anand Sharma in January 2009.

Shri Sushil Kumar Modi, Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar, participated in the “Sierra Leone Conference on Development and Transformation” held in Sierra Leone from 30 January to 1 February, 2012. Special Envoy to PM, Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, MOS (Water Resources) visited Sierra Leone on 16-18 July 2016, to deliver PM’s invitation to President Koroma to participate in 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit.

An Indian Power Sector Technical delegation comprising of representatives from the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy and NTPC visited Sierra Leone on 8-11 December 2015. The delegation met the Minister of Energy and also made field visits to thermal power station outside Freetown and Lunar iron ore mines and Kenema and Bo substations.

### **Visits from Sierra Leone**

Former President Mr. Ernest Bai Koroma, accompanied by Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Trade, visited India on 27-29 October 2015 for the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit with the theme “Partners in Progress: Towards a Dynamic and Transformative Development Agenda” at which the Leaders reviewed strategic partnership and implementation of the Framework of Enhanced Cooperation adopted at the 2nd IAFS held in Addis Ababa in May 2011.

During a meeting between President Koroma and Prime Minister Modi, the two leaders discussed issues of mutual interest and shared the view that there is scope to scale up bilateral cooperation in the areas of agriculture, mining and ICT.

During the visit of the President, accompanying Foreign Minister Dr. Samura Kamara met with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj and reviewed bilateral

cooperation; and Trade Minister of Sierra Leone attended the Trade Ministers' Meet on the sidelines of IAFS-III.

Mr. Alpha O Timbo, Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education of Sierra Leone attended Partners' Forum 2018 on Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health held at New Delhi on 10-14 December, 2018.

Dr. Anthony Augustine Sandi, Deputy Minister of Health and Sanitation led a delegation to attend the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention at New Delhi on 29 September to 2 October, 2018. Finance Minister, Mr. Jacob Jusu Saffa, led a two-member delegation for CII-EXIM Bank India-West Africa Regional Conclave at Abuja, Nigeria on 8-9 October, 2018.

Minister of Finance and Economic Development Momodu Kargbo represented Sierra Leone at the 52nd Annual Meeting of the AfDB held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat on 22-25 May 2017. Minister of Communications & Information Mohamed Bangura participated in the Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS) held in New Delhi on 23-24 November 2017.

The Deputy Minister of Trade & Industry accompanied by the Special Secretary to the Chief of Staff in the Presidency and two business executives participated in the 10th EXIM Bank-CII Conclave held in New Delhi in March 2014.

Election Commissioners Mr. Mohamed Nfah Alie Conteh (CEC) and Mr. Edmond S. Alpha attended the 4th General Assembly of the Association of World Election Bodies and an international conference held at Bengaluru on 3-4 September 2019.

### **Foreign Office Consultation**

In accordance with the Protocol signed during the visit of Vice President of India to Freetown in October 2019, the inaugural FOC was hosted by Sierra Leone in March 2021. The Indian delegation was led by Mr. Rahul Chhabra, Secretary(ER) and the Sierra Leone side was led by Ms. Florence Bangalie, Director General & Ambassador-at-Large. The two sides undertook a comprehensive review of our bilateral relations. The Indian delegation also called on the President and the then Foreign Minister.

### **Relations at UN**

India commends Sierra Leone's role as Chairperson of the C10 in coordinating and voicing the position of the African continent on the issue of reforms of the UN bodies.

India was one of the countries which contributed troops to the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The deployment of the 4000-strong Indian military contingent in the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) in 2000-2001, led by Maj Gen V.K. Jaitley, had left a positive impact among the Sierra Leoneans.

### **Developmental Cooperation**

India's developmental cooperation with Sierra Leone through our Lines of Credit and through ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) aggregates to about US\$ 250 million covering a range of sectors. The projects implemented/signed/approved are:

- (i) US\$ 32 million for Construction of University of Science & Technology at Koidu Town, Kono District (*under loan agreement signed between EXIM Bank of India and EBID for US\$ 500 million in 2018 meant to be funding projects in ECOWAS countries*) in 2020
- (ii) US\$ 30 million for Irrigation Development in Tomabum in 2019;
- (iii) US\$ 15 million for expansion of rehabilitation of existing potable water facilities in four communities in 2019;
- (iv) In 2018, the IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa) Board of Directors approved US\$ 1 million out of the IBSA Fund for the a project entitled 'Digital Financial Inclusion' in Sierra Leone to expand digital financial services among women, youth, micro, small & medium enterprises of the country leading to resilient and inclusive economic growth.
- (v) US\$ 78 million for Transmission line and sub-station project in 2016;
- (vi) US\$ 20 million for public lighting of Freetown and 13 municipal headquarters through solar energy through EBID in 2011;
- (vii) US\$ 30 million for Rehabilitation of existing facilities and addition of new infrastructure to supply potable water in 2010;
- (viii) US\$ 29.45 million for modernization and expansion of network and infrastructure of Sierratel project through EBID in 2010; procurement of buses for university and tertiary institutions through EBID;

- (ix) US\$ 15 million for Agricultural projects including procurement of tractors, harvesters, rice threshers, rice mills, maize shellers and pesticide spray equipment in 2008.

### **Humanitarian & other Assistance**

Government of India has been providing humanitarian assistance packages to Sierra Leone.

As announced during the visit of Vice President to Sierra Leone in October 2019, India has extended humanitarian assistance of 1000 MTs of rice to Sierra Leone as a goodwill gesture. The consignment was handed over by the High Commissioner to the Foreign Minister in March 2021.

In order to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, India provided a large consignment of medicines to Sierra Leone was handed over in February 2021.

To help the Sierra Leonean government combat Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), in December 2014 Government of India donated US\$ 50,000 worth of medical equipment and medicines to the local government. This donation was in addition to the Government of India's contribution of US\$ 12 million to the UN Trust Fund for Ebola and cash contribution of US\$ 50,000 to WHO to help fight the Ebola virus disease in the three countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.

India also extended financial support of US \$ 100,000 to the Sierra Leone Residual Special Court through the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in New York and US \$ 50000 contribution to relief efforts for the damages caused by floods and mudslide in August 2017.

Earlier, in 2009, India gifted 200 military barracks to Sierra Leone. India also provided 29 packages of indelible ink for Sierra Leone's Presidential and Parliamentary elections held in 2007. India supplied 40,000 tonnes of non-basmati rice to Sierra Leone in 2008 as assistance to meet urgent needs.

### **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) & Capacity Building Programmes**

During the visit of Vice President in October 2019, an MOU was signed for Sierra Leone to participate in our Pan-African tele-Education and tele-Medicine initiative e-VidyaBharati and e-ArogyaBharati. India has also offered to set up a Centre of Excellence in ICT in Sierra Leone.

At present more than 200 Sierra Leonean students are studying different courses from Indian educational institution under the e-VidyaBharati programme, in virtual mode. As part of eVBAB, a Learning Centre has been set up at the Fourah Bay College with Indian assistance.

Sierra Leone is also one of the beneficiaries of ITEC and is provided 60 seats every year in different short-term, medium-term and long-term courses in various institutions in India. In addition, 15 ICCR scholarships are available every year for Sierra Leone for UG, PG and Ph.D. programmes.

Under the Netaji Subhas ICAR International Fellowships, one Sierra Leonean has obtained his Ph.D degree in Agriculture already and one is in the third year of the Fellowship. A third Sierra Leonean was selected for the same programme in 2020.

A number of Sierra Leonean women have got training under the ITEC Rural Solar Electrification course at the Barefoot College, Tilonia, Rajasthan, and have successfully installed solar systems in their villages providing inexpensive electricity.

Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (SSIFS) conducted a 2-week Special Course for Diplomats from Sierra Leone in virtual format from 21 June to 2 July 2021, as requested by the Sierra Leonean side during the FOC and agreed by India. SSIFS had also scheduled in-person special training programme for their senior diplomats in the first half of November, but was postponed at MFA's request.

A 3-week special training programme in virtual format under eITEC was organized at the request of the Sierra Leone Civil Aviation Authority (SLCAA) during May 2021, in view of Sierra Leone's upcoming ICAO Safety Audit.

The India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) hosted a virtual eITEC Training Programme for capacity building of the officials of the Sierra Leone National Electoral Commission from 24 August to 26 August 2021.

IIIDEM also hosted a 7-member delegation from the Sierra Leone National Electoral Commission for capacity building in ICT and data management from 30 November to 10 December 2021.

In 2018, five officers from the National Digital Crime Resource and Training Centre (NDCRTC) of IT Wing of the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad visited Sierra Leone and imparted training to the Cyber Crimes Bureau of the Sierra Leone Police.

### **Economic and Commercial**

India continues to be a strong trading partner of Sierra Leone and ranks 5th in terms of imports by Sierra Leone. Total bilateral trade figures between the two countries for the last few years are as follows:

US\$/million

<b>Period</b>	<b>I n d i a ' s e x p o r t s t o S i e r r a L e o n e</b>	<b>I n d i a ' s I m p o r t s f r o m S i e r r a L e o n e</b>	<b>Total Trade</b>	<b>Balance of Trade</b>
2016-17	93.71	12.23	105.94	<b>81.48</b>
2017-18	93.51	24.17	117.68	<b>69.34</b>
2018-19	112.27	11.73	124.00	<b>100.54</b>
2019-20	115.37	24.49	139.86	<b>90.88</b>
2020-21	152.11	8.71	160.82	<b>143.40</b>
2021-22 (Apr-Nov)	123.21	11.31	134.52	

*(Source: Department of Commerce, GOI)*

Major export commodities from India, of late, included engineering goods, rice, pharmaceuticals, plastics and ceramic products. While major items of imports from Sierra Leone included bulk minerals and ores, Iron and steel, aluminium and products of aluminium, copper and products made of copper.

### **Culture**

During the visit of the Vice President, India and Sierra Leone signed an MoU for Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2019-2023 to forge friendly people-to-people ties.

As part of Freedom70 celebrations, a Kathak Dance troupe sponsored by Ministry of Culture visited Freetown in January 2018.

The International Day of Yoga is organised in Freetown every year since 2015.

### **Indian Community**

Early Indian traders are understood to have set foot in Sierra Leone way back in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. According to old records, there were about 600 Indians in Sierra Leone by 1977; two thirds of them were traders, while the rest were teachers and experts.

Presently, the Indian community in Sierra Leone is about 3000, mostly engaged in trade and manufacturing. Indian Mercantile Association is the only Indian association in Sierra Leone. There are two places of religious interest for the Indian community in Sierra Leone; a Hindu Temple managed by Choithram Group and a Sikh Gurdwara managed by Jeety Group.

More than 600 Indians stranded in Sierra Leone due to COVID-19 were repatriated to India in four chartered aircrafts during June-September 2020.

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