



India's Engagements with Ethiopia

17 December, 2025

Key Takeaways

- PM Narendra Modi visited Ethiopia on 16-17 December 2025, on his first bilateral visit.
- He was conferred with 'Great Honor Nishan of Ethiopia' country's highest honour during Addis Ababa visit.
- India and Ethiopia have elevated their bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership, marking a new phase of cooperation.
- India, Ethiopia signed eight MoUs, agreements, including that for establishing a Data Centre at Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for debt restructuring under the G20 Common Framework.
- Over **675 Indian companies** are registered with the Ethiopian Investment Commission, with total investments over **USD 6.5 billion**, especially in key sectors of manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, creating over 75,000 local jobs.
- Bilateral ties are supported by structured dialogues such as Foreign Office Consultations and Joint Trade Committee meetings.
- High-level political engagement is also sustained through Prime Minister-level meetings on the sidelines of G20 and BRICS Summits, and regular External Affairs Minister interactions.
- India-Ethiopia total trade stood at US\$ 550.19 million in FY 2024-25. Indian exports are US\$ 476.81 million and imports US\$ 73.38 million, making the relationship strongly export-driven.

Introduction

As part of a three nation visit to Jordan, Ethiopia and Oman from 15-18 December, 2025 PM Narendra Modi was in Ethiopia on 16-17 December. He arrived in Addis Ababa on his first bilateral visit to Ethiopia. PM Modi held wide-ranging discussions with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, covering a broad range of bilateral matters and issues of mutual interest.

India-Ethiopia relations are rooted in historical connections and sustained by contemporary political engagement and economic cooperation. Ethiopia is an important country in the African subcontinent, a member of the BRICS Forum, an important player in the Global South, and for India, a historical and long-term development partner.

The friendship between the two countries goes back more than 2,000 years when trade thrived in the time of the Axumite Empire (1st century AD). Indian traders traded silk and spices for gold and ivory through the ancient port of Adulis in the 6th century AD. In the 16th century, Indians from Goa came with the Portuguese

army to help the King of Ethiopia fight invaders. The British forces that helped end Italy's occupation of Ethiopia (from 1936 to 1941) included a large number of Indian soldiers.

Formal diplomatic ties between the India and Ethiopia were established in 1950. These have evolved into a multifaceted partnership encompassing trade, investment, capacity building, and development cooperation. Trade remains a central pillar, with India emerging as one of Ethiopia's leading trading partners in Africa, driven largely by Indian exports.

Political engagement has remained consistent through Prime Ministerial meetings on the sidelines of G20 and BRICS Summits, as well as regular ministerial and institutional dialogues. India's long-term commitment to Ethiopia is reflected in continued political outreach, structured mechanisms such as Joint Trade Committees, and strong Indian investment presence in the country.

India- Ethiopia Bilateral Relations over the years

India and Ethiopia maintain robust bilateral relations through sustained high-level political engagements, including recent meetings between the Prime Ministers on the sidelines of multilateral summits and ongoing official visits across various sectors.

High-Level Political Engagements

India and Ethiopia have kept high-level contacts strong. Prime Minister of India met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Johannesburg on November 22, 2025, and earlier on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg on 24 August 2023. During these meetings they discussed boosting bilateral ties in technology, skilling, parliamentary contacts, trade, investment, defence, ICT, agriculture, education and people-to-people ties. Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed also joined the **Second and Third Voice of the Global South Summit** chaired by India on 17 November 2023 and 17 August 2024 respectively. Both leaders also held telephonic conversation during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which they expressed mutual solidarity, covering domestic, regional, and global issues.

Regular engagements have also been held at the Foreign Ministerial levels. India's EAM met with Ethiopia's Foreign Minister on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Johannesburg on February 20, 2025, to discuss bilateral cooperation. Earlier in September 2024, the two foreign ministers met on the sidelines of the 79th UN General Assembly. External Affairs Minister Shri S Jaishankar visited Addis Ababa in 22 June and April 2023 and held talks with the Ethiopian side on bilateral cooperation in areas like education, health and investment, development partnership and also regional developments, and multilateral cooperation, including in the African Union and United Nations. Additionally, EAM met the Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on 21 September 2022 and 26 September 2021. On 27 August 2021, EAM held a telephonic conversation with the Ethiopian and FM, discussing bilateral relations and UNSC matters.

Recent Official Visits and Interactions:

Director General of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) visited Ethiopia between 11-15 Aug 2025 and met with the Ethiopian State Minister of Water and Energy, to discuss the country's solar energy development plans.

Indian Delegation led by Economic Advisor, Ministry of Finance participated in the first session of Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) held in Addis Ababa from 21st July to 27th July 2024.

Secretary (ER) visited Ethiopia for preparatory meetings ahead of the upcoming Fourth India Africa Forum Summit (IFS-IV).

Indian Delegation led by Additional DG (Project Tiger & Elephant) participated in Global Cheetah Summit held in Addis Ababa during 28th-31st January 2024.

The sixth Joint Trade Committee meeting at the level of Joint Secretary / Director General was held in Addis Ababa (6-7 Nov 2023).

Visit of Multi-Party Parliamentary delegation to Ethiopia (May 30- June 01, 2025)

A multi-party Parliamentary delegation, led by Ms. Supriya Sule, visited Ethiopia from May 30- June 01, 2025. This visit was part of a four-nation tour planned following the April 22 Pahalgam terrorist attack, 'Operation Sindoor', and the subsequent developments. During their visit, the delegation held wide-ranging discussions with Ethiopian dignitaries, including former Prime Minister Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn; Mr. Adem Farah, Deputy Chairperson of the Prosperity Party with the rank of Deputy Prime Minister; Mr. Tadesse Chafo, Speaker of the House of People's Representatives; and representatives from the African Union. They also interacted with members of the media, academia, civil society, think tanks, and the Indian diaspora in Ethiopia. The discussions focused primarily on India's unwavering stance on 'zero tolerance towards terrorism'. Ethiopia expressed strong solidarity with India and reiterated its own firm commitment to combating terrorism.

Visits from Ethiopia

Ethiopian Defense Minister visited India and signed a defense cooperation MoU at the sidelines of Aero India 2025 (11 February 2025). She also had a bilateral meeting with Defence Minister of India

Minister of Industry Mr. Melaku Alebel participated in Bharat Tex 2024 in New Delhi in February 2024.

A delegation headed by State Minister of Health H.E. Ms. Firehiwot Abebe Gobena visited India from November 08-16, 2025 as part of the study tour conducted in collaboration with World Bank, to engage in discussion and exploring opportunities for enhanced collaboration with the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors.

Gen. Teshome Gemechu, Director General for Defence Foreign Relations and Military Cooperation of Ethiopia visited New Delhi from 15-17 October 2025 for the first ever Joint Defence Cooperation meeting. The visit marks a milestone in long standing bilateral defence relationship between the two countries.

A seven-member Ethiopian delegation, led by the Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), visited New Delhi from 26–30 August 2025.

A 41 Member delegation led by Deputy Speaker of the House of Federation of Ethiopia attended a capacity building programme at National Centre for Good Governance at New Delhi from 12-17 May 2025 under ITEC.

Visit of Ethiopian Parliamentary delegation to India (20-24 Feb, 2023)

A 50-members strong Ethiopian Parliamentary delegation attended a training programme at the Parliamentary Research & Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE) in New Delhi. The delegation consisted of govt whips, chairperson & deputy chairperson of various standing committees and speakers of 12 regional parliaments.

Bilateral Agreements



Air Services Agreement (1967); 4 MoUs signed subsequently in 1972, 1993, 2004 and 2008.

Agreement on Technical, Economic and Scientific Cooperation (1969)

Cultural Agreement (1983)

Trade Agreement (1997)

Agreement on Cooperation in Micro Dams and Small Scale Irrigation Schemes (2002)

Agreement on Establishment of Joint Ministerial Commission (2007)

Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (2007)

Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Science and Technology (2007)

Educational Exchange Programme (2007)

Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations (2007)

Double Taxation avoidance treaty (2011)

MOU between NSIC, India and FEMSEDA (2011)

MOU between ICAR and Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (2011)

Trade Agreement (2017)

Agreement for Cooperation in the field of Information, Communication and Media (2017)

MoU between FSI and Foreign Service Institute of Ethiopia (2018)

MoU between the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research – Central Research Institute, India and Wollo University, Ethiopia (2021)

MoU between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology of India and the Information Network Security Administration of Ethiopia (2024)

Source: The Embassy of India in Addis Ababa

Economic and Commercial Relations

In 2024-25, India-Ethiopia total trade was US\$ 550.19 million. India exported goods worth US\$ 476.81 million and imported US\$ 73.38 million worth of goods. Indian companies are in the top three foreign investors in Ethiopia with newer Indian multinationals marking their presence in Ethiopia.

India's Exports and Imports with Ethiopia



Exports from India to Ethiopia

Primary and semi-finished iron and steel products, drugs and pharmaceuticals, machinery and instruments, manufactures of metal, etc

Major imports by India from Ethiopia

Pulses, precious and semi-precious stones, vegetables & seeds, leather and spices.

Source: The Embassy of India in Addis Ababa

Ethiopia is a beneficiary under the Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) scheme for LDCs. There are mutual interests and desire to diversify and intensify the economic, trade and technical cooperation between the two countries.

Indian companies are in the top three foreign investors in Ethiopia with newer Indian multinationals marking their presence in Ethiopia. There are more than 675 Indian companies registered with Ethiopian Investment Commission with investment over USD 6.5 billion. Indian investors have created more than 17,000 jobs. About 48.3% of Indian investment is in the manufacturing sector.

In 2024 alone 11 Indian companies have invested in Ethiopia in various sectors including agriculture, automobile, iron and steel, ICT etc. Indian investments in the textile sector have been at the forefront with regard to FDI. India is also considered as one of the top investors in the pharma sector.

Indian Community in Ethiopia

The Indian community in Ethiopia has a long history. The first settlers came from Gujarat in the late 19th century. During the imperial period, tens of thousands of Indian teachers worked in schools across Ethiopia, even in remote areas. Today, around 150 Indian faculty members teach in Ethiopian universities and higher institutions. The total Indian diaspora in Ethiopia is about 2,500 people. Many works with Indian companies operating in the country, while several Ethiopian companies also employ Indian workers.

Outcome of PM's Visit

Arriving from Jordan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the National Palace in Ethiopia on 16 December, ahead of talks. In a special ceremony hosted at the Addis International Convention Centre, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed conferred the highest award of Ethiopia the '**Great Honor Nishan of Ethiopia**' upon Prime Minister Modi for his exceptional contribution towards strengthening bilateral partnership and for his visionary leadership as a global statesman. Prime Minister Modi expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and the people of Ethiopia for this honour.

Given the importance of the relationship, the leaders agreed to elevate the India-Ethiopia ties to the level of **Strategic Partnership**. Both the leaders noted that as Global South partners, the two countries must continue to contribute towards building an inclusive world. Prime Minister Modi underlined that it was a singular honour for India to welcome the African Union as a G20 member during its Presidency of the grouping in 2023.

Prime Minister Modi thanked Ethiopia for its solidarity in the wake of Pahalgam terror attack and for supporting the global fight against terrorism. Both leaders reviewed progress in the in areas of trade and investment, innovation and technology, education and capacity building, and defense cooperation.

He conveyed India's willingness to step up collaboration with Ethiopia in the fields of health security, digital health, traditional medicine, Jan Aushadhi Kendra, food security, sustainable agriculture, natural farming, and Agri-tech. Both, discussed cooperation in the fields of Digital Public Infrastructure, mining, critical minerals and clean energy.

Prime Minister Modi stated that Indian companies, as trusted partners have invested over 5 billion dollars in the Ethiopian economy, especially in essential sectors of manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, creating over 75,000 local jobs. The two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to working together to voice the

concerns of the Global South. They discussed cooperation in the multilateral arena, including the United Nations.

They called for greater cooperation on issues such as climate change, renewable energy and disaster risk reduction and in this context welcomed the role of international organizations such as International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA) and International Solar Alliance (ISA). Prime Minister Modi noted that India looked forward to working with Ethiopia as BRICS partners under its presidency and for the proposed India-Africa Forum Summit.

Prime Minister Modi on 17 December also addressed the Joint Session of Ethiopian Parliament.



Conclusion

India–Ethiopia ties reflect resilience built on political continuity and export-led trade engagement. With total bilateral trade at US\$ 550.19 million in FY 2024–25, India maintains a strong trade surplus, underscoring Ethiopia's importance as a destination for Indian goods. Regular high-level political interactions and institutional mechanisms have helped sustain engagement despite economic headwinds. Beyond trade, India's position as a major investor further strengthens the relationship's strategic foundation. Sustained political dialogue and trade facilitation can help revitalise bilateral commerce, reinforcing India's broader Africa engagement and long-standing partnership with one of the continent's most influential nations.

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