# Eswatini to open embassy in India

BY MDUDUZI MAGAGULA

MBABANE – Eswatini will soon open an embassy in India.

Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Senator Pholile Shakantu, said the mission will fast-track trade and deepen bilateral ties. She explained that India, with its vast population and advanced economy, presents significant potential for Eswatini.

Shakantu added that Eswatini already benefits from its relationship with the world's third most populous nation. Trade and educational exchanges are yielding returns and there are strong prospects in pharmaceuticals and technology that the kingdom is keen to tap into. She made the remarks on the sidelines of a dinner hosted by the Indian High Commission in Mbabane.

The event, hosted by the Indian High Commissioner to Eswatini, N. Ram Prasad, was attended by senior government officials including the Minister for Public Service, Mabulala Maseko. Students and officers who recently completed scholarships in India were also present.

Minister Maseko praised India for its generosity in upskilling emaSwati. "The cooperation between our countries has changed lives and continues to empower our professionals," he said.

Among the alumni was Phindile Sibandze, Commissioner of Health at the Ministry of Health, who spoke on behalf of beneficiaries. "I just arrived on Thursday and I am still adjusting to the time difference, but I could not miss this occasion," she said. "On behalf of my fellow officers who have benefitted from the ITEC programme, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude. These courses have been truly transformative, enhancing our skills and inspiring us to implement effective practices in our work."



**Indian High Commissioner to Eswatini, His Excellency N. Ram Prasad and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Senator Pholile Shakantu, exchange pleasantries after the event. The minister announced that Eswatini will soon open an embassy in India.** (Pic: Mduduzi Magagula)

Sibandze said the programme had left a lasting mark. "We deeply appreciate the unwavering support and commitment of ITEC in empowering professionals like us. This programme has also allowed us to build networks with people from other countries, creating bonds that feel like family."

She described her personal experience of training in India. "In our class of 30 students from 24 countries, I was inspired by the diverse perspectives we shared. Each of us brought unique insights into leadership and the challenges in our fields. This exchange enriched my understanding and reinforced the importance of collaboration and mutual support."

Over two weeks, the group attended intensive sessions with international experts, government officials and academics. Key topics included yoga and leadership, financial literacy, personal change strategies, health and nutrition and crisis management.

Sibandze said one of the highlights was meeting India's Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, who outlined women-led policies promoted under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Beyond academics, Sibandze noted that cultural excursions were equally enriching. "We visited the Taj Mahal, Lotus Temple, India Gate and Qutub Minar. These gave us a glimpse into India's rich history and culture," she said.

Her reflections aligned with the remarks of High Commissioner Prasad, who described ITEC as one of the world's oldest institutionalised capacity-building programmes. Since India opened its resident mission in Eswatini in 2019, more than 400 emaSwati from government, parastatals and the private sector have trained under ITEC. Beneficiaries include officers from the Umbutfo Eswatini Defence Force, His Majesty's Correctional Services, the Royal Eswatini Police Service and various ministries.

Prasad said ITEC had adapted to modern challenges, pointing to the introduction of online training during the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, 166 emaSwati officials participated in nine e-ITEC courses, ensuring capacity-building continued despite restrictions.

Other alumni also shared their experiences. Montigny accountant, Nondumiso Tsabedze, who studied Digital Transformation and Accountancy, said the training sharpened her technical skills. "We learnt to use AI and co-pilot in finance, which is useful for data analysis and reconciliations, as well as Power Query for Excel," she explained. She highlighted how blockchain applications in accounting were opening new opportunities in her profession. Another alumnus, Samkelo Mamba, who works for FNB, said the training gave him a stronger footing in the banking sector. "The exposure broadened my view of banking technologies and their potential to transform operations back home," he said.