Eswatini can be India's gateway to Africa – High Commission

BY MUSA SIMELANE

The High Commission of India in Eswatini says the recently concluded Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) between India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) could open a new economic chapter for Eswatini.

It would position the kingdom as a gateway for Indian investment and innovation into Southern Africa.

In a statement released this past week, the high commission described TEPA as "a model for inclusive global growth that offers lessons and opportunities for non-signatory nations like Eswatini." The agreement, which came into force last Wednesday is already being hailed globally as a landmark deal linking India with Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein — collectively known as EFTA.

"This agreement demonstrates how strategic partnerships built on trust, investment and skills can transform developing economies," said the high commission. "Eswatini, with its strong regional memberships and stable environment, is in a prime position to channel India's growth energy into Africa."

TEPA is expected to attract over USD 100 billion (E1.7 trillion) in investment into India within 15 years, half of it in the first decade. But beyond the figures, what makes it unique is its focus on mutual investment, skills exchange and supply chain integration.

It is believed that India's strategy represents a major shift in global trade thinking — moving away from tariff wars and protectionism, toward partnerships rooted in long-term development. For small nations like Eswatini, that shift creates a new opening.



Indian High Commissioner to Eswatini is N. Ram Prasad.

Put simply, the statement posits that Eswatini does not have to wait for deals with the world's largest powers, but can position itself as a regional partner in India's expansion into Africa — a bridge that connects advanced Asian industries with African potential.

The statement clarifies that Eswatini's advantage lies in its membership in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). These four major regional trade bodies together represent access to hundreds of millions of consumers. This makes the country uniquely suited to act as a hub for re-exporting goods, coordinating supply chains, and hosting regional investment centres.

The high commission added that India views Eswatini not merely as a trading partner, but as a strategic collaborator in advancing South–South cooperation.

"India's vision of global trade is about inclusivity — helping developing countries strengthen their productive capacity," the high commission noted. "Eswatini's commitment to good governance, its central location and its reputation for peace and stability make it a natural partner for this vision."

With India's economy projected to grow by over 6% annually for the next decade, the demand for reliable partners in Africa is expected to surge. Eswatini could use this momentum to attract investment in textiles, agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, ICT and renewable energy — sectors where India already leads in innovation and affordable solutions.

TEPA's model is also viewed as one that provides a template for African economies looking to escape dependence on donor-driven arrangements. Instead of traditional aid, the agreement focuses on mutual benefit and co-creation of value.

Furthermore, the commission posits that TEPA changes the conversation from 'help us' to 'work with us'. And this is exactly the kind of mind-set that can propel Eswatini into a new era of economic diplomacy.

"The agreement illustrates that emerging markets do not need to wait for engagement from the largest global economies in order to prosper," read the statement. "They can diversify their partnerships and participate in new trade networks driven by innovation and inclusivity."

Success

India's success story over the past two decades offers important lessons. Through initiatives like 'Make in India', digital india and production-linked incentives, the country has managed to attract billions in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and technology. Eswatini could also adapt some of these strategies on a smaller scale — creating 'Made in Eswatini' industrial clusters supported by Indian expertise and EFTA capital.

The high commission emphasised that India's focus is not on extractive relationships but on long-term partnerships that transfer knowledge and technology.

"We believe in building capacity, not dependency, that is why we support collaborations that empower local entrepreneurs, enhance skills and foster innovation."

To fully seize this opportunity, experts say Eswatini must strengthen its investment readiness. This means improving infrastructure, simplifying business registration processes and aligning standards with international frameworks. "The next big shift for Africa will not be about who exports more raw materials will be about who integrates fastest into the new global value chains. Eswatini can lead that transformation." The high commission emphasised that investment is the new currency of trust in global relations. It said the TEPA's structure — linking trade commitments with concrete investment targets — sets a new benchmark for cooperation that is practical, transparent and sustainable.

"This approach helps create lasting value, building confidence among partners and delivers benefits that go beyond market access by creating jobs, supporting education and encouraging entrepreneurship."

TEPA represents a forward-looking model for how developing economies can cooperate in a complex world. It described the agreement as a "beacon of balanced and sustainable globalisation", pointing to a future where shared investment and skills exchange become the foundation of international prosperity.

"In a world seeking new pathways for stability and inclusive growth, India's TEPA offers a roadmap that countries like Eswatini can adapt to their own regional contexts," the high commission said.