

India-Lebanon Relations

India and Lebanon have historically enjoyed close and friendly relations. India established diplomatic relations with Lebanon in 1954. Shared commonalities include, besides cultural similarities, a democratic, parliamentary system of government based on a written constitution, basic freedoms and human rights; a market economy moving towards greater liberalization; a large pool of educated English-speaking professionals and entrepreneurs; and vibrant global diaspora.

The fact that India kept its Embassy in Beirut open and functioning throughout the civil war from 1975 to 1990 [closing very briefly from 5 August to 16 October, 1989], in contrast to the Embassies of a large number of other countries, is greatly appreciated by the Lebanese, together with India's traditionally strong linkages with the Arab world and our steadfast support for the Palestine cause. Both countries have also cooperated closely on various issues of mutual interest during their overlap in 2010 as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Indian Army personnel (INDBATT) have been deployed in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) since November, 1998. As per the annual rotation, INDBATT XIX (Assam Regiment) took over from INDBATT XVIII (14 Grenadiers) at the end of September, 2017. The INDBATT contingent currently consists of 901 personnel – the third largest after the contingents of Indonesia and Italy. Besides their utmost professionalism, INDBATT personnel are highly regarded for their sincere outreach to the local community and ['Winning Hearts & Minds'].

Total volume of trade between India and Lebanon during Jan-Sept 2017 was \$ 181 million. Bilateral trade in 2016 reached \$ 293.10 million, with Indian exports to Lebanon at \$ 280.09 million, and Indian imports at \$13.01 million. Main exports from India are machinery, textile articles, plastic, gemstones, etc., and imports from Lebanon are base metals and articles thereof, miscellaneous manufactured articles, etc.

There is considerable potential of expanding trade and investment between the two countries. There have been some notable developments in recent months, including the award of operations and maintenance of two power plants to OEG, a Chennai based company which has deployed over 50 engineers at these plants; pre-qualification of ONGC Videsh Limited [OVL] as an operator in the latest licencing round for offshore gas blocks; steady increase in the number of Lebanese professionals and businessmen visiting India, and plans of Lebanese companies such as Future Pipes and DarAl Handasah to expand their existing operations in India.

The Lebanese people have traditionally admired Indian music, films, cuisine, etc. An increasing number of them are also interested in Yoga – there has been a large and enthusiastic participation in the public events organized by the Mission to celebrate the IDY since 2015. The dance classes conducted at the Embassy by an instructor deputed by ICCR and various cultural

activities organized by the Mission in cooperation with universities and other local partners are extremely popular.

The Embassy works closely with several local organizations, most notably Lebanese-Indian Friendship Parliamentary Committee [LIFPC] and the Association for Development of Lebanese-Indian Relations [ADLIR], in further strengthening people-to-people contacts and cooperation in diverse sectors.

There are nearly 8,000 Indian nationals in Lebanon, with a majority of them employed as workers in companies, agricultural farms, etc. The Embassy attaches highest priority to reaching out to the Indian community in an earnest, active, helpful and broad-based manner, and in ensuring their well being and welfare.

Mr. M.J. Akbar, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India visited Beirut in August, 2016 and had wide ranging discussions with the Lebanese side. Embassy of India, Beirut has been proactively following up proposals for regular exchange of high-level visits between the two countries with Government of India as well as Government of Lebanon. A number of other specific proposals from the Mission in recent months for energizing India-Lebanon exchanges and cooperation in diverse sectors are also under consideration.

In the recent past, India has provided \$ 1 million (\$500,000 in 2014 to Lebanon Humanitarian Fund and \$500,000 in 2016 to Lebanon Response Fund) as part of India's commitments made at the Pledging Conferences on Syria held in Kuwait in 2014 and 2015.

The Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation [ITEC] programme has been popular in Lebanon since its inception in 1964. Successive batches of ITEC trainees/alumni have been actively contributing to further strengthening India-Lebanon ties. India has offered 60 civilian ITEC slots and 19 defence slots to Lebanon for 2017-18.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Beirut website:

<http://indianembassybeirut.org/>

Embassy of India, Beirut Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/indianembassybeirut>

Embassy of India, Beirut [Twitter link:](#)

[India@Lebanon \(@IndiainLebanon\)](#)

Embassy of India, Beirut [YouTube link:](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvRsPw7PT5kiAn9dohhqqyA>

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