

## **India-Lebanon Bilateral Relations**

1. 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 a vibrant global diaspora.

2. 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 Community:**

3. There are nearly 9,000 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.

### **Indian Battalion [INDBATT] in UNIFIL:**

4. 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 XX (11 JAT) took over from INDBATT XIX (Assam Regiment) at the end of October, 2018. The INDBATT contingent currently consists of 779 personnel, but for the first time, Kazakh troops (120 personnel) are serving under the command of the Indian Battalion. With their utmost professionalism, INDBATT personnel are highly regarded for their sincere outreach to the local community and they have been able to win hearts and minds of the local community.

### **Recent high level visits and invitations:**

5. 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.

### **MOUs/Agreements**

6. The status of MOUs/Agreements with Lebanon are as follows:
- i. Cultural Exchange Agreement (signed in April 1997, ratified in February 2000, which is automatically renewed every 5 years).
  - ii. MOU for an Educational Exchange Programme (signed in June 2013, valid for 5 years, to be automatically renewed every 5 years).
  - iii. The other draft MOUs / Agreements under consideration include MOU on setting up of Yoga Chair, draft agreements on Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection (BIPPA) and Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), Cooperation in the Tourism Sector, Transfer of Sentenced Persons, Extradition, Mutual and Legal Assistance and Judicial Cooperation, MoU on Labour & Manpower, Agreement/arrangement reg. skill upgradation /recognition with Lebanon, MoU on FOC between India and Lebanon and MoUs for cooperation in Agriculture & Allied sectors.

### **India's Humanitarian Assistance:**

7. In the past, India 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.

### **ITEC:**

8. 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 75 civilian ITEC slots and 25 defence slots to Lebanon for 2019-20.

### **Economic and Commercial Relations:**

9. Total volume of trade between India and Lebanon during Jan-Dec 2018 was \$ 377.00 million with Indian exports to Lebanon at \$ 365.00 million and Indian imports from Lebanon at \$12.00 million. Trade between India and Lebanon during Jan-June 2019 stands at \$ 181.00 million, with Indian exports to Lebanon being \$ 171.00 million and Indian imports from Lebanon amounting to \$ 10.00 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.

10. There is considerable potential of expanding trade and investment between the two countries. A number of Lebanese companies started joint ventures with Indian companies and are very active in India and have plans to expand their network. A Chennai-based company, OEG, which was awarded contractual operation and maintenance of two power plants in Zouk-Lebanon (198 MW) and Jieyh-Lebanon (78 MW), deployed 50 engineers at these plants. Lebanese companies such as Future Pipes and Dar Al Handasah are expanding their existing operations in India.

11. In pursuance of the recommendations of the Embassy of India, Beirut, FIEO, CII, FICCI, EEPC have put together a multi-sectoral 48-member business delegation which visited Lebanon in September 2018. There has been signing of an Agency Agreement between Indian Register of Shipping (IRClass) and Exceptional Operations Classification Sal (XOClass) in a joint effort to develop Lebanese market for management, surveys and classification of ships; participation of 10 Indian companies in a major trade exhibition in Beirut; and further increase in the number of professionals and businessmen visiting between India and Lebanon.

### **Culture:**

12. 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. Renowned Lebanese singer Abeer Nehme has rendered ‘Vaishnav Jan To’ to celebrate Gandhi Jayanti in Beirut and other places.

### **Lebanese-Indian Friendship Fora:**

13. There have been some notable developments in the historically friendly relations and multi-dimensional cooperation between India and Lebanon, including the swift reconstitution of Lebanese Parliamentary Friendship Group for India [also known as Lebanese-Indian Friendship Parliamentary Committee] after the elections in May 2018. 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.

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