

## India – Kuwait Relations

India and Kuwait enjoy traditionally friendly relations, rooted in history and have stood the test of time. Geographic proximity, historical trade links, cultural affinities and presence of large number of Indian nationals in Kuwait continue to sustain and nurture this long standing relationship. India has been a natural trading partner of Kuwait and until 1961 Indian Rupee was the legal tender in Kuwait. Till the discovery and development of oil, Kuwait's economy revolved around its fine harbour and maritime activities which included ship building, pearl diving, fishing and voyages to India on wooden *dhow*s carrying dates, Arabian horses and pearls that were traded for wood, cereals, clothes and spices.

### Political Relations:

India and Kuwait have had a healthy tradition of high-level contacts, as outlined below:

**VVIP visits from India to Kuwait:** These have been made by Vice President Dr. Zakir Husain in 1965, by Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1981 and by Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari in 2009. Last visit to Kuwait by an Indian PM was 36 years back.

**VVIP visits from Kuwait to India:** These have included those by the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah in 1964, the Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 1980 and again in 1983 (for the NAM Summit), the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 2006 and the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in November 2013. Recently, the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jabar Al Sabah visited India on a week-long private visit for relaxation – cum –medical checkup from 25<sup>th</sup> June to 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2017.

### Recent Exchanges:

**From India:** Gen. V.K. Singh (Retd), Minister of State for External Affairs visited Kuwait from 6-7 September 2016 and met Deputy PM and Interior Minister, Deputy Foreign Minister, Minister of Social Affairs & Labour and Governor of Farwaniya Governorate. During the visit, Hon'ble Minister also unveiled the life-size bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Embassy complex. Our National Security Advisor, Shri Ajit Doval, led a five member official delegation to Kuwait for the 3<sup>rd</sup> India-Kuwait Security Cooperation Dialogue from 13-14 March 2017. A two member team from National Investigation Agency (NIA) visited Kuwait from 24-27 April, 2017 in connection with investigation of a terror funding case involving transfer of funds by one Kuwaiti national to some Indian nationals who had joined ISIL.

A 4-member delegation led by Shri Naini Narshimha Reddy, Labour & Home Minister of Telangana & Chairman of Telangana Overseas Manpower Co. Ltd visited Kuwait on 21

January 2017 to explore manpower opportunities in Kuwait. An 11-member Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2017 delegation visited Kuwait from 9-10 October 2016. A 3-member delegation from the Office of Comptroller and Auditor General of India participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> Indo-Kuwait Joint Seminar on “Role of Supreme Audit Institutions in Good Governance” held from 7-10 November 2016 in Kuwait and also signed an MOU with the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait.

**From Kuwait:** Mr. Mohammad Abdullatif Al-Farhoud, CEO, Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC), Kuwait along with a delegation from KCCI attended the 8<sup>th</sup> Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit which was held from 10-13 January 2017 in Gandhinagar, Gujarat; the 5<sup>th</sup> JWG on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development was held in New Delhi from 14-15 December 2016 wherein bilateral labour and consular issues were discussed; Mr. Nizar Al-Adsani, CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) accompanied by two members of KNPC, including the Deputy CEO of Al-Ahmadi Refinery, attended the PETROTECH-2016 at New Delhi from 5-7 December 2016; the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of India-Kuwait Foreign Office Consultations was held in New Delhi on 16 November 2016; the Kuwaiti delegation was led by Assistant Foreign Minister Mr. Ali Al-Saeed and also included Ambassador of Kuwait to India Fahad Ahmad Al-Awadi. In addition to bilateral political and regional issues, the main focus was on labour and Consular related issues along with the commitment to explore avenues for investment and enhancement of trade between the two countries.

Dr Bader Hamad Al-Essa, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education participated in the UNESCO International Conference on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education in New Delhi from 19-20 September 2016. A 10-member Kuwaiti delegation led by Sheikh Youssef Al-Sabah, Director General, Kuwait Port Authority participated in the Maritime India Summit in Mumbai from 14-16 April 2016. Dr. Abdulmohsen Medejij Al-Medeijij, Minister of Commerce & Industry led a business delegation to the Partnership Summit held in Jaipur, Rajasthan on 15-17 January 2015, as well as to the 4<sup>th</sup> India-Arab Partnership Conference held in New Delhi on 26-27 November 2014. Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, President of the National Security Bureau of Kuwait, visited India from 17-19 February 2014 and held security dialogue with his Indian counterpart. The Prime Minister of Kuwait accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Oil Mr. Mustafa Jassem Al-Shimali, Minister of Commerce and Industry Mr. Anas Khalid Al-Saleh, senior officials and business leaders visited India from 7-10 November 2013. The Kuwaiti PM held bilateral discussions with our President, Vice-President and Prime Minister. He also met Ministers of External Affairs, Finance, Commerce & Industry, Petroleum & Natural Gas and Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, UPA Chairperson.

**Commercial Relations:** Historically, Indo-Kuwaiti relations have always had an important trade dimension. India has consistently been among the top ten trading partners of Kuwait. Total bilateral trade with Kuwait during 2016-17 was US\$ 5.95 billion. While India's imports from Kuwait were US\$ 4.45 billion (POL accounted for US\$ 3.46 billion) which plummeted largely due to drop in oil prices coupled with cut down in volume of oil import from Kuwait. India's exports to Kuwait grew by 19.79% (US\$ 1.49 billion) in 2016-17 vis-à-vis 2015-16. India's exports to Kuwait included food items, cereals, textiles, garments, electrical and engineering equipment, ceramics, machinery and mechanical appliances, cars, trucks, buses, tyres, chemicals, jewellery, handicrafts, metal products, iron and steel, etc. The Embassy organized "Made in India Exhibition" in Kuwait on 18 February 2017. A wide variety of Indian products ranging from tyres, motorbikes, trucks, buses, security solutions, batteries, air compressors, fans, mixies, tableware, cookware, televisions, refrigerators, etc., were displayed in the Exhibition. The Embassy organized "Indian Handicrafts and Handloom Exhibition" at Holiday Inn Hotel, Salmiya on 23 Oct 2016. Several varieties of handmade carpets, brass show pieces, marble pieces carved and designed with organic colours, handloom sarees, kurthas, ladies hand-bags, purses, antique pieces in wood and brass, jewelleryes with semi-precious stones, handmade furniture, table covers, cushion stools, cushion covers, framed paintings, etc., were displayed during the exhibition.

**Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC):** Following the visit of the Amir of Kuwait to India in 2006, both sides agreed to set up an "India-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation". The 2<sup>nd</sup> JMC meeting was held in New Delhi in July 2008. The 3<sup>rd</sup> JMC meeting is scheduled to be held in Kuwait from 18-20 September 2017.

**Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs):** The 1<sup>st</sup> FOCs between India and Kuwait were held in New Delhi on 7 May 2012, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> FOCs were held in Kuwait on 11 September 2014 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> FOCs were held in New Delhi on 16 November 2016.

**Indian companies in Kuwait:** Indian PSUs like TCIL, LIC (International), LIC Housing Finance, New India Assurance Company, Oriental Insurance Company, Air India Ltd. (Air India and Air India Express) have offices in Kuwait. During the last two years, Indian EPC companies viz. Larsen & Toubro, Shapoorji Pallonji, Dodsai, Punj Lloyd, Simplex Projects, Essar, Kalpataru etc. were awarded EPC contracts worth over US\$ 6 billion in Kuwait. The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI) is executing Kuwait Oil Company (KOC)'s soil remediation project worth US\$ 39 million.

**Kuwaiti Investment in India:** Kuwaiti investment in India has been largely indirect through portfolio managers. Much of it has gone to India through international investment companies or through Mauritius, Singapore or other countries providing tax breaks. So far, investments in India are over US\$ 3.5 billion, of which US\$ 3 billion is by

Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). In December 2015, KIA announced an investment of US\$ 300 million in GMR Infrastructure Ltd., while in October 2015, KIA made a substantial investment in the Interglobe Aviation's (Indigo Airlines) IPO and about US\$ 2.7 million in Bombay Stock Exchange's anchor investment in January 2017. In 2013, KIA had made an investment of US\$ 5.37 million in the Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd.

**Hydrocarbon Sector:** Kuwait remains a reliable supplier of crude oil & LPG to India, meeting our crucial energy needs. To discuss and expand co-operation in the hydrocarbon sector, the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the India-Kuwait JWG on Hydrocarbon was held in New Delhi on 15-16 September 2015. Mr. Nizar Al-Adsani, CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) accompanied by two members of KNPC attended the PETROTECH-2016 at New Delhi from 5-7 December 2016.

**Civil Aviation:** Air India operates flights between Kuwait and Ahmedabad, Chennai, Goa & Hyderabad; Air India Express has flights between Kuwait and Kochi, Kozhikode & Mangalore; Jet Airways has 2 flights a day between Mumbai and Kuwait, while Kuwait Airways has flights from Kuwait to Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Kochi, Mumbai & Thiruvananthapuram. National Aviation Services, Kuwait, has been handling contracts for 5 Indian airports.

**S&T:** India and Kuwait have signed an S&T Agreement in April 2009. A delegation from Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) visited India from 18-22 November 2013 and signed a Programme of Cooperation with Department of Science & Technology and an MOU with CSIR. An 8-member delegation from CSIR and Ministry of Earth Sciences visited Kuwait on 14-16 April 2014. An 8-member delegation from KISR visited India from 25-26 May 2015 and held meetings with CSIR.

**Medical cooperation:** India and Kuwait have signed an MOU on Medical Cooperation on April 23, 2012 at New Delhi. A Joint Working Group on Medical Cooperation was set up and its first meeting was held in Kuwait in November 2013. To streamline the recruitment of nurses from India for work in Kuwait, the then Asstt. Undersecretary Dr. Jamal Al Harbi (now Minister of Health) and Dr. Mahmoud Abdulhadi, Asstt. Undersecretary for Legal Affairs of Kuwaiti Health Ministry visited Kerala on 15 April 2016 and met the Kerala Chief Minister and NORKA Minister Shri K.C. Joseph. The issue is still pending resolution.

**Education:** There are 21 Indian schools in Kuwait which are providing education to nearly 47,000 Indian and foreign students. All these schools are affiliated to Central Board of Second Education (CBSE) and follow CBSE curriculum. Besides, there are around 70 Indians students who are pursuing their higher studies in different universities

in Kuwait. In addition, many Indian and foreign students are enrolled in Distance Education Programmes of Indian universities to study graduate/post graduate courses.

**Youth Affairs & Sports:** A two-member Youth Delegation from Kuwait visited India from 9-15 March 2016 under the Youth Exchange Programme. 15 member Youth delegations from each side are likely to exchange visits in December 2017 & January 2018.

**Cultural Relations:** There is interest in Indian Culture and there have been regular exchanges in these fields. A “Festival of India in Kuwait” was held in Kuwait in 2009. Executive Programme for Cultural and Information Exchanges (2013 - 16) was signed in 2013. Renowned Indian artistes viz. Niladri Kumar and Ustad Shujaat Husain Khan (Sitar), Salil Bhatt (Veena), Kala Ramnath (Violin), Rupak Kulkarni (Flute), Yogesh Samsi (Tabla), Kathak & Odissi dance troupe of Ms. Parwati Dutta Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt (guitar), Ms. Amita Dalal (Sitar) and Himanshu Mahant (Tabla) and Ms. Sonam Kalra’s Fusion Group performed in Kuwait. Bhangra Groups sponsored by ICCR performed in Kuwait in 2015. The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Yoga Day was celebrated in the Embassy on 17 June 2017. A 4 - member delegation from Kuwait attended the two day 'International Conference on Yoga for Body and Beyond' organized by the Ministry of AYUSH from 22-23 June 2016 at New Delhi. A three - member Kuwaiti delegation led by Asstt Director General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Dr. Bader Al – Duweesh participated/represented the Kuwaiti Information Minister Sheikh Salman Sabah Al - Salem Al - Humoud Al - Sabah in the World Cultural Festival, organized by the Art of Living Foundation from 11 - 13 March 2016 in New Delhi. A delegation of Kuwait Journalist Association led by its Chairman Ahmed Yousuf Behbehani visited India from 14 - 18 May 2012.

Kuwaiti Embassy in cooperation with ICCR organized the “Kuwait Cultural Week” from 15 - 19 May 2012 at New Delhi and Jaipur, which included joint arts and crafts exhibition, lectures at Jamia Milia Islamia University and folklore performance by Kuwait Television Troupe. There are approx. 250 Indian associations registered with the Embassy. These associations organize regularly socio- cultural programmes for the benefit of their members.

**Agreements:** Prominent amongst the various bilateral agreements signed are: Reciprocal Protection of Investment (2001); Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (2004); Extradition (2004); Juridical and Judicial Cooperation in Civil and Commercial Matters (2005); MoU on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development (2007); Scientific and Technological Cooperation (2009); Cultural and Information Exchanges (2009); Education and Learning Cooperation (2009); MoU on Medical Cooperation (2012); Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons (2013); MoU between Foreign Service Institute and the Saud N. Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute (2013); MOU on

S&T Cooperation between CSIR and Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR); MoU on Sports & Youth Affairs (2013); MOU on cooperation between KISR and Ministry of Earth Sciences (2014); MOU between ISRO and KISR (2015). MOU between Office of CAG and State Audit Bureau of Kuwait (2016). The Protocol amending the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income between India and Kuwait, on 15 January 2017.

**Indian Community:** As per the latest statics received from Kuwait authorities, the number of Indian nationals stand at 9,17,970 as on 19.7.2017. The majority of them are employed in private sector followed by domestic sector while 29,317 are employed in government sector. The Indian community constitutes the single largest expatriate population and is the community of first preference among expatriates for employment. They are viewed as law-abiding, peace loving and culturally sensitive to the requirements of the host country. The Indian community in Kuwait is present in practically every sector – professionals like engineers, doctors, chartered accountants, management consultant etc. The Embassy has set up an 'Indian Workers Welfare Centre' in September 2009 which provides a labour complaint redresal mechanism and accommodation for domestic workers in distress. A work contract attestation system, a toll free 24x7 telephonic helpline for Indian domestic workers, a free legal advice clinic and a help desk to guide all Indian nationals in respect of issues being faced by them are also being implemented. The Mission has implemented since June 2015 a web-based attestation and clearance system known as e-Migrate system. The system is easy, secure, and transparent. The system renders protection to prospective emigrant as he/she is able to verify all documents online basis related to his/her employer, and his prospective employment. 32,000, foreign employers in Kuwait have registered successfully in the above e-Migrate system as on 06.03.2017. It is worth to note that approximately USD 4.8 billion is remitted from Kuwait to India annually.

The Embassy is providing prompt consular, passport, attestations, visa and community welfare services. The number of consular services rendered by the Mission upto July, 2017 is: Passports: 55,295; Attestation of documents: 57,666; Marriage registration: 15; Visas: 9334; OCI: 168; Misc Services: 1,689; Emergency Certificates (travel document): 3130 (to facilitate repatriation of distressed Indian nationals); Death registration 347; Attestation of employment contract 22,048. The Mission has assisted 177 distressed Indian workers for issue of air tickets, token financial assistance, air lifting of patients (wheel chair and stretcher borne) and transportation of mortal remains to India. The Mission has been arranging transportation of mortal remains within 2-3 days in case of normal death and two weeks or so in the event of unnatural death. A total of Rs. 5.86 crore has sent to India on death compensation and other service dues for disbursement to the next of kin.

**Useful Resources:**

Embassy website: [www.indembkwt.org](http://www.indembkwt.org);

Facebook: [https://www.facebook.com / indianembassykuwait](https://www.facebook.com/indianembassykuwait);

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/indembkwt>;

Indian community web portal:

[www.indiansinkuwait.com](http://www.indiansinkuwait.com)

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