

**Embassy of India
Tunis**

India-Libya bilateral relations

Background

Though separated by geography, India and Libya have enjoyed strong bilateral ties. India opened its Diplomatic Mission in Tripoli in 1969. The high-water mark of Indo-Libya relations was the visit of Late Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Libya in 1984. India has regularly supported Libya in international fora and welcomed the UNSCR 1506 adopted on 12 September, 2003, lifting sanctions imposed on Libya.

Following 2011 Libyan Revolution, India recognized the National Transition Council (NTC) on 16th November 2011 and regularly engaged with it and affirmed support to it at various fora. India provided humanitarian assistance of US\$ 1 million through the United Nation's Office of Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid. This was followed by another humanitarian assistance in the form of life saving drugs and medical equipment worth US\$ 1 million delivered to NTC in January 2012. A Libyan delegation visited India in December, 2011 to explore the possibility of treatment of injured Libyans in India. GoI also sent a team of prosthetic experts to Libya for fitting 'Jaipur Foot'.

In view of the fragile political and security situation prevailing in Libya in 2014, about 3800 Indian nationals were repatriated, which included 6 Indians kidnapped by ISIS. The Mission, which was temporarily relocated in D'Jerba (Tunisia), was later moved to Malta. The Mission in Tripoli resumed its operations in 2012, but was closed down in April, 2019 due to worsening security situation. A skeletal staff of a consular clerk and a gardener is being maintained at the Embassy Residence in Tripoli. In September 2020, 7 Indian workers were kidnapped on their way from Benghazi to Tripoli. In February, 2022, 27 Indian workers were evacuated by the Mission from Benghazi in Eastern Libya with the help of International Organisation for Migration. E/I, Tunis looks after affairs of Libya.

Ambassador of India to Tunisia and Libya, presented credentials to the President of the Presidential Council on 20 December, 2021. Ambassador also met with DG (Asia & Australasia) in Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Bilateral visits

Visits from India to Libya

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| November, 2004 | Shri EVKS, Elangovan, MoS for Commerce & Industry to attend the 9 th session of India-Libya Joint Commission. |
| November, 2004 | Shir Gulam Nabi Azad, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs & Urban Development |
| May, 2005 | Shri E. Ahmed, MoS for External Affairs |
| July, 2005 | Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, MoS for External Affairs |
| January, 2007 | Shri Murli Deora, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas |
| May, 2007 | Shri Pranab Mukherjee, EAM |
| April, 2013 | Shri E. Ahmed, MoS for External Affairs |
| Dec, 2013 | A high level security delegation to discuss capacity building in security. |

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| May, 2018 | Shri Kiren Rijju, MoS for Home to hold talks on security cooperation, intelligence sharing and training of Libyan security personnel. He also interacted with Indian community to understand their problems. |
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Visits from India to Libya:

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| March, 2007 | Mr. Burrani, Minister for Asian Affairs. |
| April, 2008 | Dr. Abdussalam Treki, Minister for African Affairs to participate in the India-Africa Forum Summit. |
| March, 2009 | Captain Ramadan, Secretary, Administration Committee of Hourbours. |
| July, 2011 | Mr. Abdelati Al-Obeidi, Foreign Minister of Libya. |
| September, 2012 | Ambassador Ramadan Rahim, DG (Asia), Ministry of Foreign Affairs. |
| November, 2012 | Four-member delegation led by Dy. Chairman of the High National Election Commission. An MoU was signed between the two Election Commissions. |
| February, 2013 | A defence delegation visited for the Air Defence Show |
| April, 2013 | An 11-member Parliamentary delegation made a study visit to India in April, 2013. |
| April, 2013 | Dy. Minister of Health to attend the International Summit on Health & Wellness Tourism in New Delhi. |
| February, 2014 | DG (Asia & Australasia) visited for FOC between the two Foreign Ministries. |
| March, 2014 | Chairman of the Libyan Privatisation and Investment Board to attend the CII-EXIM Bank conclave held in New Delhi. |
| June, 2014 | A police delegation led by Col. Reda Abdullhadi Al Jalah, Asstt Director of Training, Ministry of Interior. |

Bilateral Cooperation

The number of ITEC slots being offered to Libya have come down from 30 in 2013-14 to 10 now because of continuing internal political situation, because of which utilization has been low. The number of slots offered and utilized in the last few years are as follows:

| | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 | 2020-21 | 2021-22 | 2022-23 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Slots allotted | 30 | 20 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 |
| Slots utilized | 23 | 11 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |

Under the IAFS-II Scheme, 5 Libyans attended various training courses in 2012-13. In 2013 one official from the Libyan Foreign Ministry attended the 56th PCFD conducted by FSI. In 2017 another official from the MFA was sent to attend the 63rd PCFD course. ICCR also allocate 8 slots for Libya for higher studies under its Africa Scholarship Scheme. Some Libyans were selected for higher studies under the above Scheme but could not join their courses for various reasons.

Following the launching of the Pan-African e-governance initiative, a Centre in Libya for tele-medicine, tele-education, e-governance, etc. was set up. Under this initiative all nations in Africa were being connected to India through satellite network. After revolution re-activation of this center was under process and will be taken up under e-VBAB project upon improvement of security situation.

Important Bilateral Treaties and Agreements

The following Agreements/Memorandum of Understandings have been signed between India and Libya:

- Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion (1981);
- Agreement for Cooperation in the field of Health and Medical Sciences (1983);
- Agreement on Economic Cooperation (1985);
- Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA) (2007);
- Cultural Exchange Agreement (2007);
- MoU between the two Election Commissions in 26-30 Nov 2012.

Indian community in Libya & repatriation:

Prior to the 2011, uprising the number of Indians in Libya was estimated to be around 18,000. The Indian professionals were mainly engaged in hospitals and other teaching institutions whereas major part of manpower was employed in construction projects. During the revolution most of them were repatriated to India at GoI cost in February/March 2011. A few thousand Indians however continued to stay in Libya. The help and assistance rendered by Indian doctors and paramedics in Libya during the revolution was deeply appreciated. Gradually more Indians returned to Libya, and in early 2014 there were about 6000 Indians. However, in July 2014, due to deterioration in security situation following the destruction of Tripoli International Airport GOI carried out a second repatriation exercise, bringing back 3793 Indians, out of which, 1330 were repatriated at GOI cost. GOI has imposed a ban on travel of Indian nationals to Libya since April, 2016 in view of security considerations. However, still a few Indian workers manage to reach Libya through third countries in search of jobs. About 3000 Indian nationals are currently in Libya, which predominantly includes blue collar workers and a few professionals as well as those who have married Libyans and have been living there for several years. In February, 2022, the Mission repatriated 27 Indian workers from Benghazi with the assistance of International Organisation for Migration.

Economic and Commercial Relations

India and Libya have enjoyed close economic ties. In 1978, the two countries signed a framework agreement on “Protocol on Industrial, Economic and Scientific Cooperation”. This was the beginning of consultations on economic cooperation between the two countries under Indo-Libyan Joint Commission (ILJC). Till now, a total of 10 sessions of ILJC have been held.

The economic cooperation between the two countries spans the entire spectrum of commercial activities. Indian companies have been active in Libya for over 30 years. A number of projects

have been executed in Libya by major Indian PSUs like BHEL, NBCC, OVL, IOC, Oil India, and private companies Punj Llyod, Unitech, KEC, SSB, Dastur Engineering, Shapoorji Pallonji, SECON, Global Steel (Ispat Group Company), NIIT, Sun Pharma, Simplex Projects, and DS Construction. These projects included building of hospitals, housing, schools, roads, power plants, airports, dams, transmission lines etc.

Indian companies, especially in oil & gas, power generation, infotech and construction sectors, have several projects in Libya. Indian Oil, Oil India and ONGC Videsh are involved in the Libyan hydrocarbon sector. In April 2014, Punj Lloyd won a contract of US\$ 665 million to set up infrastructure facilities at Zliten city. Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has successfully completed execution of prestigious Western Mountain Gas Turbine Power Project. Many Indian IT companies like JMR, DSS Software, I-flex Solutions and others have continued to provide software solutions to various Libyan companies especially in banking sector. Several Indian companies are seeking to resume stalled projects in Libya once the security situation improves and the ban on travel is lifted.

Economic and Commercial Visits from India

A 14-member Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) delegation visited Libya from 30 October-1 November, 2012 and had meetings with the Libyan Business Council and Chamber of Commerce and individual meetings with government authorities including Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, etc. Delegation's meeting with Prime Minister of Libya was also arranged during which the Prime Minister was accompanied by his three Ministers and senior officials.

A 2-member OVL delegation participated in the CWC "Libya Forum on Oil and Gas" held in Tripoli on 17-18 September 2013. A 2 member technical delegation from BHEL headed by the CMD Mr. B.P.Rao visited Libya to finalize completion of their power plant and also attended board meeting of ECCO. Three Indian companies participated in the Pharma Expo which was held from 10-12 September, 2013. Some Indian companies participated in the 11th Tripoli International Book Fair from October 1-10, 2013 that was held for the first time post-revolution of 2011. Dr. Tamanna Chaturvedi, from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) visited Libya on 24-25 March 2014 to discuss Executive Development Programme under the aegis of IAFS with the Libyan Ministry of Economy. An 'India Pavilion' with around 80 participating firms from a range of consumer product sectors (the highest Indian participation in recent times and the largest foreign country participation out of the eight countries participating in the TIF 2014) led by ITPO that marked the return of India to one of Africa's oldest fair after three years post February 2011 revolution was organized successfully. Also an 'India Day' event fully funded by ITPO was organized on 6 April 2014 for B-2-B interaction and BSM. A 16 member CII led CEOs delegation visited Tripoli to scout for business opportunities in 'New Libya' from 5-7 April 2014 and also called on the first Deputy President of the GNC Ezzidine Mohammed Al-Awami among others. Mr. J.K. Pandey, Group General Manager, TCIL, the nodal agency visited Libya from 11-14 May, 2014 as part of the efforts to help revive the Pan-African E-Network Initiative launched in Libya in 2008-09 which was stalled following the February 2011 revolution.

Economic and Commercial Visits from Libya

A 6-member Libyan delegation led by Mr. Saeed Ibrahim Al-Khattali, Assistant Under Secretary of Technical Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited India to attend 9th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India Africa Project Partnership from 17-19 March 2013 in New

Delhi. A 5-member delegation from the Libyan Ministry of Health led by Dy. Minister, Ali Saad Saeid Saad visited India to attend “Health and Wellness Tourism Meet” from 26-29 April, 2013 in Delhi. A 27-member business delegation headed by the, Chairman of Tripoli Chamber of Commerce and Vice Chairman, Libya Business Council (LBC) participated in ‘I for Afrika’ event organized by the Indo-African Chamber of Commerce in Mumbai from 3-6 October, 2013 in Mumbai. Two businessmen dealing in agriculture products attended the 33rd India International Trade Fair held on 14-27 November, 2013 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Dr. Abdulbari A. Arousi, Minister of Oil & Gas led a 6-member delegation to India from 12-14 January 2014 to attend the biennial international Oil & Gas Conference & Exhibition, PETROTECH. A 10-member business delegation from Libya visited India to participate in the Marble stone & granite (STONA) expo held in Bangalore during 12-15 February, 2014. Chairman of the Libyan Privatization and Investment Board (PIB) visited India to attend the CII-EXIM Bank conclave held in New Delhi from 9-11 March, 2014. In April 2015 Mr. Ahmed Nuredin Ali Salem, Minister of Electricity in the rump GNC Tripoli salvation government visited India on the invitation of BHEL.

Recent Engagements

There have not been many exchange of visits, particularly from India in the last few years because of ban on travel of Indian nationals in force since April, 2016 and subsequently because of Covid-19 pandemic. But now there has been an increase in the number of business visas being issued to Libyans reflecting resurgence of interest among Libyan importers for Indian goods, particularly in the engineering goods and pharmaceutical sector. While 156 business visas were issued in the whole of 2021, 221 business visas have already been issued till October in 2022. A Four member-delegation from Ministry of Health of Libya visited India on the invitation of a pharmaceutical company in India for inspection of their manufacturing facilities. This is expected to generate a business of approximately US \$ 2 million.

Closing of Embassy of India, Tripoli: Embassy of India, Tripoli has been closed since April 2019.

Bilateral Trade

Primary items of India’s exports included engineering goods, drugs & Pharmaceuticals, mica, coal and other ores, minerals, coffee, ceramic products and glassware. The main item of India’s imports from Libya is petroleum (crude and products) and Aluminum ores.

Bilateral trade figures for the last 5 years (US\$ Mn)

| Year | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 (Jan-Sept) |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Indian Export | 119.23 | 133.80 | 199.03 | 142.17 | 207.91 | 209.32 |
| Indian Import | 26.94 | 177.47 | 82.03 | 12.73 | 368.37 | 305.53 |
| Total | 146.17 | 311.27 | 281.06 | 154.9 | 576.28 | 514.85 |

India-Libya Cultural Relations

India and Libya signed a Cultural Exchange Agreement in 2007 during the then EAM’s visit to Libya following which some Indian cultural troupes sponsored by ICCR visited Libya and staged cultural performances in major cities. An 8-member Cultural Group of Kathakali, led by Shri Kalamandalam Raman Kutty, visited Libya in August 2008 and gave two performances in Tripoli and in Sirte. An 8-member Libyan cultural troupe sponsored by the ICCR had visited

India to perform during the first India-Africa Forum Summit in February 2008. A 12-member “Anart” Kathak group visited Libya from 16 November to 22 November, 2009, and performed in three cities of Tripoli, Sirte & Benghazi. Coinciding with Indian Republic Day Reception, an exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi was held in Tripoli on January 26, 2013 that was attended by a number of high dignitaries, foreign diplomats, and prominent Indians.

Mission celebrated International Days of Yoga on June 21, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 in Tripoli. The event was however kept restricted to the Mission staff due to the civil strife and fragile security situation.

Air links with India

Presently there is no direct flight from India to Libya. Following the destruction of Tripoli International airport in July 2014, Mitiga airbase is being used for a limited number of domestic and international flights.

Ban on travel of Indian nationals to Libya: Because of deteriorating security situation in Libya since the start of Civil War in 2014, Government of India imposed a ban on travel of Indian nationals to Libya on 16 April, 2016. The internal security situation in Libya has once again deteriorated in the last few months following the nomination of Government of National Stability, even as the incumbent GNU has refused to give up power, resulting in rising tension and intermittent clashes between different factions. While the Libyan side as well as Indian professionals and workers have been pressing hard to lift the travel ban to take advantage of economic / employment opportunities, it is under consideration.

Source- Website MEA.

(November, 2022)