

Embassy of India
Tunis, Tunisia
India- Tunisia Bilateral Relations

India - Tunisia Bilateral Brief

India has traditionally maintained cordial and friendly relations with Tunisia since establishment of diplomatic relations in 1958. The first resident Indian Mission at the level of Cd'A was established in Tunisia in 1963 and was raised to the Ambassadorial level in 1976. The Tunisian Embassy in New Delhi was set up in 1981. Tunisian leaders have expressed admiration for India's democracy and its leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and India's freedom struggle has served as an inspiration for Tunisia. Two countries share values such as secularism and rule of law. Both the countries have been cooperating and espousing many common causes in international fora including the UN and have been supporting each other's candidates for several international bodies.

In 2021, both the countries cooperated extensively as the non-permanent members of UNSC and Tunisia extended support to all our candidatures in UN and other multilateral agencies.

Visits to India:

Date	Visit
5-8 April, 2012	Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi, President of Ennahda Party as a guest of the ICCR. He met with Shri Hamid Ansari, then Vice President, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, EAM and Mr. ThambiDurai, Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha. He interacted with the Indian student community at two universities at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and at the Aligarh Muslim University. He also delivered a lecture on Tunisia's Transition to Democracy at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi.
26-29 Oct, 2015	Mr. TaiebBaccouche, then Foreign Minister of Tunisia to attend the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit. He met with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj and called on PM Shri Narendra Modi.
20-21 Jan, 2016	Mr. Mongi Marzouk, Minister of Energy & Mines led a delegation to India-Africa Hydrocarbons Conference in New Delhi.
3-8 Feb, 2016	Tunisian Naval Chief attended the Int'l Fleet Review in Vishakapatnam.
28-31 Oct, 2017	Foreign Minister KhemaiesJhinaoui led the Tunisian delegation for the 12th session of the India-Tunisia Joint Commission in New Delhi. He called on PM and handed over a letter of invitation from the Tunisian PM. To give a new impetus to bilateral relations, a Roadmap for India-Tunisia Partnership was initiated by EAM and Tunisian FM. This was the first time India-Tunisia JCM was held at Foreign Minister level. An MoU was signed for establishment of Soil, Water and Tissue Testing Laboratory in Tunis, as part of India's soft assistance under IAFS. In all, six agreements encompassing judicial cooperation, cooperation in Youth matters, ICT, bilateral trade and investment were signed. Two

	new JWGs, viz, JWG on Trade and JWG on Agriculture were decided to be set up. A target of bilateral trade to reach US\$ 1 billion in the next five years was set.
10-12 April 2018	Mr HachemHmidi, Secretary of State of Energy Mining and Renewable Energies of Tunisia visited India to participate in the International Energy Forum meeting. On the sideline of IEF, he met with Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Minister of Mines and Shri R.K. Singh, MoS for Renewable Energy.

Visits from India:

2-3 June 2016	Former Vice President Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari visited Tunisia. He met with President, Prime Minister, President of the House of Representatives of People and President of Ennahda Party. Hon'ble VP also received Mufti of Tunisia. Two agreements, i.e. Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Handicrafts and Agreement on Cooperation in Information and Communications Technology were signed. He delivered a keynote address "India and the World" organized by the Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies.
9-10 July 2015	Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Hon'ble Minister for Textiles and Special Envoy of Prime Minister of India paid a 2-day visit to Tunisia.
26 Feb to 1 March, 2017	Shri M.J. Akbar, MOS (EA) visited Tunisia. He called on President Essebsi and had discussions with Minister of Energy & Mining Mrs. Hela Cheikhrouhou, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Mr. Sabri Bachtobji, Minister of Trade & Industry ZiedLaadhari and Ennahda party President Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi. He interacted with intellectuals, political experts, think tanks at Tunisian Institute of Strategic Studies and addressed a business meet organised by UTICA. He visited Mahindra assembly plant in Sousse and TIFERT plant in Skhira. Discussions, among others, focused on revival of TIFERT plant which was not producing targeted results due to administrative, labour and social issues.
9-11 May 2018	MoS for Home Affairs Shri Kiren Rijiju visited Tunisia. He met the Interior Minister, called on the Foreign Minister and President of Ennahdha Movement, Tunisia's largest political party.
22-23 January 2020	EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Tunisia and met Foreign Minister Mr. Othman Jerandi and discussed all aspects of bilateral relations, holding of next JCM and issues related to TIFERT, the joint venture for production of Phosphoric Acid. He called on Tunisia to work with India in UNSC as non-permanent members. Discussions were also held on issues of regional and international interest. He called on President Kais Saied and Speaker of the Parliament RachedGanouchi. During the visit, an MoU was signed for setting up an 'India-Tunisia Centre for Innovation in ICT in Tunis' to support innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, creation of an institutional link between universities, training centres in advanced technologies, start-ups and small and medium enterprises.

FOCs, Joint Commission and JWG: A mechanism for Foreign Office Bilateral Consultation exists between the two countries. Three consultations at Secretary-level have been held in December 2001, October 2002 and April 2015. All three FOCs have been held in Tunis. Shri Anil Wadhwa, Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs headed the Indian delegation for the third FOC. The two sides signed an Agreement on Exemption of Visas for Diplomatic and Official Passports. Secretary (East) also called on Foreign Minister Mr. Taieb Baccouche; Minister of Commerce & Handicrafts Mr. Ridha Lahwel, Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister Mr. Ridha Ben Mosbah; Minister for Information and Communication Technology Mr. Nooman Fehri; and Secretary of State for Investment and International Cooperation, Ms. Amel Azouz.

Joint Working Groups: Following JWGs exist between the two countries:

(a) **JWG on Drugs and Pharmaceuticals:** The seventh meeting of India-Tunisia JWG on Drugs and Pharmaceuticals met virtually on 14 January, 2022. The Indian delegation was led by Dr. N. Yuvaraj, Joint Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals, while the Tunisian side was led by Dr. Myriam Khrouf, Director of the Unit of Pharmacy and Drugs at the Tunisian Ministry of Health. The JWG agreed on the need for a mechanism for exchange of information and experience on the grant of marketing authorizations and technical control on import of medical devices, vaccines and drugs, exploring technology transfer by Indian manufacturers to Tunisian manufacturers and increased collaboration on R&D.

(b) **JWG on S&T:** The 4th meeting was held in New Delhi on 23-24 March 2017.

(c) **JWG on ICT:** The 2nd Session was held on 29 June 2015 in New Delhi. The Tunisian delegation was led by Tunisian Minister of IT Mr. Nooman Fehri. The next session is due to be held in Tunis.

(d) **JWG on SMEs:** The third meeting of JWG on SMEs was held at New Delhi on 02 April, 2014.

(e) **JWG on Textiles:** The first meeting of the Joint Expert Committee on Textiles (JECT) between India and Tunisia was held in Tunis on 16-17 March, 2009.

(f) **JWG in the Oil and Natural Gas:** During the 10th India-Tunisia Joint Commission Meeting, a JWG in the Oil and Natural Gas Sector was established and its first meeting was held in New Delhi in August 2007.

(g) **The first meeting of JWG on Judicial Cooperation between India and Tunisia** was held virtually on 13.1.2022. Representatives from Ministry of Law & Justice of India and those from Ministry of Justice of Tunisia held comprehensive discussions on how to further strengthen collaboration between the two judiciaries and learn from each other's best practices.

Security Cooperation: During the India-Tunisia JCM in October 2017, the two sides decided to strengthen cooperation on security, which resulted in the first stand-alone Counter Terrorism Dialogue with Tunisia that was held on 11-13 January 2018. The first India-Tunisia Deputy NSA-level Security Dialogue between the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) and Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies (TISS) took place on 14 December 2017 in New Delhi. The Tunisian side was led by Mr. Neji Jalloul, former Education Minister and the current Director General of TISS.

Science & Technology Cooperation: India-Tunisia Cooperation in Science & Technology is guided by the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation signed between the two countries in October 1995 and the Programmes of Cooperation there under. The 4th session of the Joint Committee on S&T was held in New Delhi on 23-24 March 2017. Both sides agreed to support 19 new R&D projects in areas including material science, ICT, health science, agriculture, biotechnology, renewable energy and water technology. It was agreed that scientists from both countries would collaborate to develop affordable drugs and vaccines to tackle TB and Leishmaniasis. Pasteur Institute of Tunisia and ICGEB, New Delhi will cooperate through IAFS. NIT, Srinagar has signed an MoU with the Sfax University for joint collaboration and research in material science in December 2018. IIT, Indore has signed an agreement with National School of Engineers, Sfax for ongoing collaboration in wind energy.

Cooperation under India-Africa Forum Summit: Under this initiative, Institute Pasteur of Tunis (IPT) is among the 3 institutes selected by the African Union Commission for support by the Indian scientific community to work on specific problems of the African continent and to find practical solutions for them. Accordingly, a close cooperation programme has been initiated between IPT and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), New Delhi. It was decided that the Institute Pasteur would be twinned with several leading laboratories of India towards capacity building in vaccine research and production. As a follow up, since June 2014, Pasteur Institute of Tunisia and Indian Department of Science & Technology, and ICGEB are in twinning arrangement for capacity building, research & training. Both sides also discussed further cooperation during 4th Session of India-Tunisia JWG on S&T in March 2017 in New Delhi. Tunisia avails of a number training programmes in different fields under IAFS.

Pursuant to the agreement signed during the JCM in October 2017, a Soil, Water and Tissue Testing Laboratory will be set up in Tunis by the Indian Institute of Soil Science, Bhopal under IAFS-III programme. Proposal for setting up a Next Generation Centre of Excellence by CDAC in the field of IT is under consideration. Proposal for setting up a Regional Civil Aviation Centre under IAFS is also under consideration of the Ministry.

Training courses under ITEC, IAFS, CV Raman and ICCR Scholarships: In 2021-22, 166 Tunisian nationals utilized ITEC slots for various courses. ICCR scholarships could not be availed because of the pandemic.

A group of 50 young Tunisian diplomats visited India from 28 October for a two-week special training programme at FSI. Foreign Minister of Tunisia Khemaies Jhinaoui, expressed his deep appreciation and thanked GOI for this initiative, saying such a gesture would go a long way in reinforcing and strengthening bilateral ties with India. As a follow-up of the only stand-alone CT dialogue with Tunisia in January 2018, Tunisian Security Officers took part in a specialized training course in Tactical Driving, and bomb disposal organized by NSG at its Manesar training centre in October-November.

A three-member IIFT delegation under IAFS programme imparted a week-long training course in Tunis on international trade law and trade negotiations to members of Tunisian export organizations, chambers of commerce, government functionaries and private sector. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in-charge of Economic Diplomacy inaugurated the course along with senior government officials from Ministry of Trade.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in Tunisia: The Mission is undertaking three ‘Quick Impact Projects’ in Tunisia at a total cost of US \$ 77,924 USD. The first QIP is for the construction of a mini synthetic football ground for Raoued Municipality in Ariana at a cost of US \$ 63,547. The second QIP is for landscaping and beautification of a park in Jendouba University, Tunis at a cost of US \$ 8100 and the third QIP is for creation of a play area in Mreghma School in Jendouba, Tunisia at a cost of US \$ 6277. All three QIPs are located in remote/underprivileged areas in Tunisia, which goes in line with Tunisia’s policy of promoting development in those areas.

Bilateral Trade:

India accounts for almost 50% of Tunisia’s global phosphoric acid exports. India exports a wide range of products including knocked-down kits, automobiles, electrical items, cotton, mechanical engines, organic chemical products, rubber, rice, coffee/spices etc. Indian Exports to Tunisia increased by 47.4% during the calendar year 2021 compared with 2020 and the Indian-Tunisian bilateral trade reached a record of **588.3 USD million**(418 US \$ million export to Tunisia and 169 US \$ million import from Tunisia) during 2021, and the highest in the last 5 years despite the Covid-19 pandemic. MoC had assigned an export target of US \$ 435 mn during FY 2021-22, out of which 69% had been achieved till December 2021 and at the projected rate, 92% of the target is likely to be achieved.

Bilateral trade figures for the last 5 years

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
India ‘s Exports to Tunisia	299.810	315.19	351.16	296.81	418.8
India ‘s Imports from Tunisia	103.903	79.86	93.86	71.51	169.5
Total	403.713	395.05	445.02	368.32	588.3

A 12-member multi-sectoral FICCI trade delegation visited Tunisia on 27-30 July 2016. This was the first trade visit after a gap of several years. Four B2B meetings were held in Tunis and Sfax, the second largest city. There was overwhelming response and eagerness from the Tunisian companies in all four B2Bs.

A 9-member business delegation launched by the Plastics Export Promotion Council visited Tunis from 9-11 November, 2016. A Buyer-Seller Meet was organized with CONECT, the apex chamber of commerce in Tunis, and a business meeting with two other prominent chambers of commerce, UTICA and Tunisian Chamber of Commerce and Industry were held.

A 12-member business delegation from Tunisia accompanied Tunisian FM in October 2017. They had business meetings with CII, FICCI and FIEO.

Pursuant to the agreement between FIEO and Tunisian CEPEX for export promotion signed in October 2017, a 26-member multisectoral FIEO business delegation visited Tunisia on 15-

17 January, 2018. The delegation called on the Investment Minister and also had meetings with apex chambers of commerce and industry in Tunisia.

A seven-member Tunisian business delegation sponsored by the Indian side participated in Chemical and Plastics exhibition organized by CAPEXIL, CHEMEXIL and Plastics Export Promotion Council in Mumbai from 22-24 March.

A five-member ICT business delegation sponsored by the Indian side participated in media, entertainment and creative art organised by the Services Export Promotion Council of India in Mumbai from 6-8 March.

A 13 member CII business delegation visited Tunisia from 10-13 July 2018. The delegation met Minister of Trade and Commerce, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, Minister of Mining Energy and Renewable and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of Economic Diplomacy. A MoU was signed with CONECT, and B2B meetings were organized with CONECT and UTICA Sousse

India Tunisia Joint Venture: Tunisia-India Fertilizer SA (TIFERT) is a joint venture company, worth US\$450 million with a capacity to produce 360,000 tonnes of phosphoric acid per annum, which was made operational in 2013. Two Indian companies, Coromandel Fertilizers Ltd and the Gujarat State Fertilizers Ltd, own 30% equity in the company.

Other Indian companies: Indian companies, M/s KEC International Ltd and Jyoti Structures Ltd, are in Tunisia since several years putting up electric transmission lines. An assembly plant of Mahindra pickup trucks is operational in Tunisia since October 2013 which is selling more than 1200 vehicles per year with a target to produce up to 2,500 per year. Mahindra and Mahindra provide the vehicles as knocked-down kits, which are assembled by the Tunisian company in Tunisia. A new passenger SUV model has been launched by Mahindra; the company has plans to set up its assembly line for these SUV/KUV Mahindra vehicles in 2020 if the response is good. M/s TATA Motors have commenced production of pick-up trucks with Tunisian companies 'Le Moteur' and 'Icar' in June 2015. TATA's flagship Tunisian model Tata Xenon has been very popular as 2000 vehicles have been sold in short span of 2 years. TATA is also exploring possibility to introduce small commercial and heavy vehicles. M/s. VA Tech WABAG, an Indian multinational headquartered in Chennai, specializing in setting up sustainable water and waste water infrastructure has been awarded the contract for setting up Zarat Desalination Plant in south of Gabes.

Export potential: Pharmaceuticals, commercial/farm vehicles and spare parts, machinery, renewable energy, agro products, heavy construction equipment, two wheelers, software exports and services sector (tourism and hospitality) are the main areas where we can enhance our exports.

Other Activities: A five-member composite delegation led by Ministry of Ayush and a private Ayurveda products company took part in the first International Congress of Phytotherapy 2017 in Monastir, Tunisia from 29 April-1 May 2017. This was part of the follow-up of the JWG meeting on Drugs and Pharmaceuticals held in January 2017 when the Indian delegate from Ministry of Ayush had evinced interest in the Tunisian research entity in traditional medicine.

Culture: Cultural activities have been restricted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Under the Cultural Exchange Programme between the two countries, cultural troupes from both sides visit each other country regularly. The Tunisian artisans have been regularly participating in Surajkund Mela since 2016.

The first-ever ICCR chair on Indian civilisation was established for one month at the University of Manouba in Tunis in February-March 2017. Prof Srivastava, former Director, National Archives of India taught Indian civilisation, evolution of ancient, medieval and modern Indian history to PG students of literature, languages and history in the Faculty of Humanities and Languages, Manouba University.

A 20 member young Tunisian women delegation, invited by Ministry of Youth and Sports, visited India from 26 February-5 March 2018. Similarly a 15-member young Indian women group visited Tunisia in October 2018. The Indian delegation was received by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sabri Bachtobji and Secretary of State for Youth Abdel Kaddous Saadaoui. Both the Ministers highlighted the importance of people-to-people exchanges, especially youth interactions for a better understanding of modern advances made by India in technology, education, research and scientific studies. The Indian delegation also visited Parliament and interacted with Tunisian parliamentarians.

A 10-member cultural band from Tunisia participated in Africa Day celebrations organized by ICCR in New Delhi on 25 May 2018.

Two prominent Tunisian journalists visited India from 19-26, August 2018 as part of XP Division's familiarization programme for journalists from Francophone African countries.

As part of celebrations of the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Tunisia, a Festival of India in Tunisia was held in 2018 that showcased India's culture, food, cinema and rich traditions. Two food festivals sponsored by ITDC – one in April and the second in August 2018 were held in Tunisia. In all, nine cultural groups sponsored by Ministry of Culture of India and ICCR visited Tunisia in 2018 and performed at different places including the prestigious summer cultural festival in Sousse and El Djem.

On the occasion of 152th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, homage was paid to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on 2 October 2021 at the campus of Manouba University. A symposium on Gandhian philosophy was organized on 2nd October 2018 to mark his 150th birth anniversary. Mahatma Gandhi's photo exhibitions, setting up of Gandhi Corner and India Corner at various universities and prestigious institutes, donation of books to schools and colleges also took place as part of year long celebrations. A commemorative postage stamp on Mahatma Gandhi was released by Tunis Post in November 2018. A quiz on Mahatma Gandhi was also conducted on social media.

In November, 2018 India participated as Guest of Honour and Focus International partner at the prestigious Carthage Film Festival for the first time since its inception in 1966. The Indian segment was inaugurated by the Minister of Culture Mohammed Zine El Abedine and Director General of Carthage Film Festival Nejjib Ayad on 5 November 2018. In all, 8 Indian films including two Satyajit Ray's were screened in the festival. The Manipuri Film Director of the acclaimed Manipuri documentary "Lady of the Lake" Haobam Paban Kumar and a

well-known film critique Premendra Nath Mazumdar were invited at the festival. A Manipuri cultural group from ICCR was also invited.

Two Tunisian films were screened at the International Film Festival of India, Goa from 3-10 November 2018. Tunisia was the partner country at the Kolkata Film Festival held in Kolkata from 10-17 November 2018. Two Indian films were screened at the Tozeur International Film Festival in southern Tunisia in December 2018. A Tunisian film festival was held in Manipur from 25-26 May 2019 with participation of six Tunisian art and commercial films.

Tourism promotion campaigns were launched through Incredible India posters on city buses and billboards in the capital Tunis and on highways during August and November 2018.

Two Tunisian films – ‘Whispering Sands’ and ‘The Beauty and the Dogs’ participated in the world panorama section of IFFI, Goa from 20-28 November. Two Indian films were screened at the Tozeur International Film Festival held in Tozeur (*550Km from Tunis*) in the Tunisian desert from 5-8 December.

Two Members of Parliament of Ennahda, the largest political party in Tunisian Parliament, participated in The Raisina Dialogue from 8-10 January, 2019. Four Tunisian representatives had participated in the 2018 edition.

For the first time, ICCR Foundation Day was celebrated on 9th April 2019 at Sheraton hotel, Tunis with a cultural performance in collaboration with the Tunisian-Indian Friendship Foundation. Several activities, including classical and contemporary Indian dance and music, quiz and yoga demonstrations, distribution of books on Indian culture and on Mahatma Gandhi were undertaken. A Power Point presentation on year-long cultural activities undertaken by the Mission was shown. Over 100 guests, including Tunisian friends of India and Indian community members, attended the event. On the occasion, a special publication “India through the eyes of Tunisia” in French was brought out by the Mission. It included an introduction about ICCR and its vision and motto, ICCR’s scholarship programmes and other flagship programmes such as DVP, AVP, promotion of Hindi, various cultural activities, yoga, Hindi classes, lectures on Indian culture etc. undertaken by our Mission in Tunisia under the aegis of ICCR.

A group of 22 senior Tunisian administrators underwent a specially-tailored training programme on e-governance and cyber security at Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi from 15-26 April 2019.

A 3-member delegation headed by JS (DPA-II) visited Tunisia in May 2019 to lay the groundwork for the launching of a project that aims to create a Tunisian-Indian centre for the renewal of ICTs in the Ghazala technology park and to study ways to strengthen Tunisian-Indian cooperation in the areas of advanced technologies and support for start-ups.

In May 2019, the first-ever Gandhi Udyan was inaugurated in RiadhEnnasr (Ariana governorate) as part of the city's initiative to build partnership with India in various cultural, social and environmental fields. The project involved planting fruit and ornamental trees in memory of Mahatma Gandhi. Over 130 trees were donated by the Embassy for the purpose. The ceremony took place in the presence of the Mayor, former Foreign Minister of Tunisia,

school children and many residents of Ariana municipality. A plaque depicting ICCR's logo and that of Ariana municipality was unveiled.

International Day of Yoga 2021 was, like other such events, celebrated by the Mission virtually in view of the pandemic. Ambassador sent out a video message in Arabic, encouraging Tunisians to join "Do at home Yoga" programme. Ms. Baya Nair, a local yoga practitioner conducted a yoga session for the Embassy staff. The Mission also promoted the "mYoga" application inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister on its social media platforms.

A Teacher of Indian Culture (TIC) was deployed by ICCR from February 2018 to January 2021, who conducted classes in the Chancery premises and at other places in coordination with Ministry of Youth & Sports, Ministry of Education, Ministry of S&T, Ministry of Higher Education and others.

ITEC Day has been celebrated virtually in 2020 and 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. A message from Ambassador Shri N.J. Gangte was sent to all ITEC participants, conveying greetings and encouraging them to share photos of their visit to India, which were shared on Mission's social media.

On 21.2.22, Ambassador Shri N.J. Gangte awarded Certificates to Ms. MahaGaida and Mr. Mohamed Ali Bounaouara from Tunisia for successfully completing a course on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy organized by ICCR and conducted by Dr. Shobhana Radhakrishna.

Indian Community: The permanent Indian community consists of a couple of families who have been here since several decades. There are some Indian professionals working in different projects; strength of the Indian community stands at about 50.

Source: Embassy of India, Tunisia Web site April 2022.