

As on June, 2021

**Embassy of India
Beirut

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 4000-5,000 Indian nationals in Lebanon, with a majority of them employed as workers in companies, construction sector, 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. In light of Covid-19 pandemic and the travel restrictions the Embassy facilitated three special community charter flights for repatriating Indians between June-August 2020.

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. The INDBATT contingent currently consists of 900 personnel, but for the first time, Kazakh troops 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.
5. Upon transfer of authority, 9 Dogra Infantry Group passed on the Baton of the Indian Battalion UNIFIL-PIO to 19 Madras Group on 15 March, 2021.

High level visits and invitations:

7. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, during his tenure as Prime Minister of India visited Lebanon in 1956 and 1960. Mr. E. Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs visited Lebanon in 2013. Mr. M.J. Akbar, the then Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India visited Beirut in August, 2016 and had wide ranging discussions with the Lebanese side. Mr. Amar Sinha, then Secretary (Economic Relations), Ministry of External Affairs visited Lebanon in May, 2017. Mr. T.S. Tirumurti, Secretary (Economic Relations), MEA, also visited Lebanon in May, 2019. The Lebanese Minister of Agriculture Akram Chehayeb visited India in 2016.

8. Former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Mr. Fouad Siniora visited India at the invitation of IDSA in February 2020. During his visit he also met with External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar. External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar also had a telepathic conversation with the Foreign Minister of Lebanon, Mr. Nasif Hitti in April 2020 and reviewed the bilateral relations.

MOUs/Agreements

9. The status of MOUs/Agreements with Lebanon are as follows:

I. The MoU on holding FOC between India and Lebanon is under consideration.

II. MoUs for cooperation in Agriculture & Allied sectors is under consideration.

III. Cultural Exchange Agreement (signed in April 1997, ratified in February 2000, which is automatically renewed every 5 years).

IV. MoU for an Educational Exchange Programme (signed in June 2013, valid for 5 years, to be automatically renewed every 5 years).

V. A draft MoU between our Ministry of AYUSH and the Lebanese Ministry of Health has been forwarded to the Lebanese side and their response is awaited.

India's Humanitarian Assistance:

10. 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. In the aftermath of tragic explosions of August 4 in Beirut, Government of India provided 58 MT of medical, food and relief supplies to Lebanon on August 14. On 25 August, Ambassador handed over the consignment of medical aid, containing 70 boxes of PPEs, to Lebanon for its fight against Covid-19. The

consignment was received by H.E. Hamad Hassan, Minister of Public Health of Lebanon. On 22 December, 2020, Embassy of India, Beirut made a donation of office equipment to the Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) as part of its continuing assistance to Lebanon in light of the devastation caused by August 4 blasts in Beirut in 2020. The donation was handed over by the Ambassador Dr. Suhel Ajaz Khan to the Lebanese MOFA and was received by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, HE Mr. Charbel Wehbe and Secretary General of MOFA HE Mr. Hani Chemaitelly. Minister Wehbe and Secretary General both were extremely grateful for this kind gesture from the Government of India.

Quick Impact Projects:

11. In 2020, Government of India undertook 2 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in the area of operations of INDBATT in Lebanon and completed in March, 2021. The Projects pertain to "Provision of Hanger for New Garbage Dump & Garbage Pressing Machine at the Kafar Chouba Village" and "Construction of Furnishing of Red Cross Civil Defence Building in Chebaa Village".

ITEC:

12. 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.

13. A DSSC slot was offered to the Lebanese side in 2020. in light of Covid -19 pandemic most of the courses have moved online in 2020-21 and are available to the Lebanese candidates.

Economic and Commercial Relations:

14. Total volume of trade between India and Lebanon during Jan-Dec 2020 was \$ 162.00 million with Indian exports to Lebanon at \$ 150.00 million and Indian imports from Lebanon at \$12.00 million. Main exports from India are Chemicals, Pearls, precious stones and metals, machinery, textile articles, plastic, 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.

15. Some Lebanese companies like M/s Khatib and Alamy, Future Pipes and Dar Al Handasah have businesses in India. An Indian company OEG has been operating two power plants in Lebanon in association with its partners.

16. The following business/ trade events were held during the period **January 2020 – June 2021**

SI	Name of the Event	Date	Description
1	Beirut Business Seminar	14 January 2020	Business Seminar to promote Indian Business in Lebanon in association with ADLIR
2	Business meeting with a business delegation in Tyre	13 February, 2020	Meeting with a business delegation in Tyre
3	Business meeting with the Tripoli Chamber	20 February, 2020	Meeting with the President and office bearers of the the Chamber of Industry, Agriculture of Tripoli and North Lebanon to promote Indian Business
4	Tripoli Business Seminar	20 February, 2020	Business Seminar in cooperation with the Chamber Industry, Agriculture of Tripoli and North Lebanon to promote Indian Business
5	Virtual Healthcare & Hygiene Expo 2020 -DVC with EOI and FICCI	25 June, 2020	<p>Focus: a- Pharmaceuticals, Pharma Machinery & Technology b-Medical devices c- AYUSH & Wellness d- Medical Textile e- Hygiene & Sanitization</p> <p>Number of Lebanese businessmen virtually participated in the Expo.</p> <p>On the sidelines, a separate India-Lebanon buyer-seller meet was organized.</p>
6	Web Buyer- Seller Meet in association with TPCI	13 July, 2020	<p>Focus: Food Sector</p> <p>A successful virtual buyer-seller meet was organized by the Mission with the TPCI.</p>
7	FIEO Virtual Conference on	20 July, 2020	Focus:

	Trade and Investment opportunities between India & Lebanon		<p>Business Opportunities in multiple sectors, particularly Food and Pharma.</p> <p>A Business Seminar was organized by the Mission with the help of FEIO. During the Seminar, Ambassador and a prominent lawyer from Lebanon addressed interested businesspersons from India on opportunities and doing business with Lebanon.</p>
8	Meeting with the Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture in Sidon & South Lebanon led by President Mr. Mohammad Saleh	10 November, 2020	<p>Focus: Discussion on ways to enhance and diversify India - Lebanon Business Relations</p>
9	Meeting with the Association of the Bekka Industrialists in Zahle led by President Mr. Nicolas Abou Faissal	11 November, 2020	<p>Focus: Discussion on the ways to enhance and diversify India-Lebanon Business Relations particularly in Food Sector. It was decided to organize an Online Seminar in December and a delegation of the Association is ready to visit India in February.</p>
10	Meeting with the Commercial Association of Zahle led by President Mr. Ziad Saadeh	4 December 2020	<p>Focus: Discussion on the ways to enhance and diversify India-Lebanon Business Relations.</p>
11	Indo-Middle East E-Exhibition organized by FEIO	14 December 2020	<p>Focus: Food, Pharma and Construction materials sectors. Ambassador gave address in the inaugural session of the even. About 10 Lebanese businessperson visited the E-exhibition and interacted with Indian exporters.</p>

12.	Signing of MoU b/w Association of Bekaa Industrialists, Lebanon and Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI), India on trade promotion.	28 January 2021	Article 1: Promote co-operation Article 2: Information Exchange Article 3: Trade Missions Article 4: Trade Promotion Activities
13.	FICCI: Namaskar Arabia	23 February 2021	Emerging Economic Opportunities between India and Arab Nations
14.	Ambassador's Meeting with Lebanese delegation to India for Indus Food	16 March 2021	4 Buyers from Lebanon participated in IndusFood 2021 event in India.
15.	Conference on Bilateral Trade & Investment Opportunities between India & Lebanon	04 June 2021	The Embassy and TPCI organized a Virtual Conference on Bilateral Trade & Investment Opportunities between India & Lebanon on June 4, 2021. The Conference was also supported by the Lebanese Embassy in New Delhi.

Culture:

17. 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. Between 2016 and 2020 ICCR has deputed a dance teacher who trained many Lebanese youth in Indian dances and organized various events and dance workshops. 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.

18. Commemorating the celebration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, 'Liban Post', the Department of posts of Lebanon issued a stamp on Mahatma Gandhi which was formally released by the Embassy on 1 October 2019.

Lebanese-Indian Friendship Fora:

19. 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.
