

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 a large number of Indian expatriates continue to sustain and nurture this long standing relationship. India has been a natural trading partner of Kuwait and a destination for higher learning. Until 1961, Indian Rupee was the legal tender in Kuwait. Till the discovery 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 *dhow*s carrying dates that were traded for wood, cereals, clothes and spices.

POLITICAL RELATIONS:

VVIP visits from India to Kuwait: These have been made by Hon'ble Vice President of India Dr. Zakir Husain in 1965, by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1981 and by Hon'ble Vice President of India Shri Hamid Ansari in 2009.

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 Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on November 7-10, 2013.

Recent High-Level Exchanges:

Minister of External Affairs of India Hon'ble Shri S. M. Krishna visited Kuwait in February, 2010 and met the Amir, the Prime Minister, and the Deputy PM and Foreign Minister of Kuwait. This stand-alone visit to Kuwait was EAM's first visit to the Gulf region since taking charge as Minister of External Affairs. EAM visited Kuwait again from February 25-27, 2011, to participate in the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of Independence of Kuwait, 20th anniversary of its Liberation and 5th anniversary of the Amir's Accession to office.

Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission visited Kuwait on July 1-3 to reinvigorate economic relations and met the Amir, DPM & Finance Minister, DPM & Foreign Minister (FM), Minister for Amiri Diwan, officials of Kuwait Investment Authority and Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Minister of State for External Affairs Shri E. Ahamed visited Kuwait on July 6-7, 2013 to address the concerns of Indian community against the security checks by Kuwaiti authorities. His also visited Kuwait on January 29-31, 2013 to represent India at the High-level International Humanitarian Pledging Conference on Syria held on January 30, 2013 and to attend the first Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) summit from October 14-17, 2012. Other recent high-level visits include those of Hon'ble Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Shri Vayalar Ravi, who visited Kuwait on November 10-11, 2012 to promote the

11th Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas held in Kochi in January 2013. MoS for Petroleum & Natural Gas and Corporate Affairs Shri R. P. N. Singh visited Kuwait on 17-19 April 2011 to attend the 4th Asian Ministerial Energy Round table Conference. Shri Rahul Gandhi, MP visited Kuwait from June 5-7, 2012 and met the Amir, Crown Prince and PM.

From Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) & Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, DPM & Minister of Oil Mr. Mustafa Jassem Al-Shimali, Minister of Commerce and Industry Mr. Anas Khalid Al-Saleh, senior officials and business leaders came on a State visit to India from November 7-10, 2013. He 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 UPA Chairperson. He addressed a business luncheon meeting jointly organised by the three business chambers- FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited India from March 10-13, 2013. During the visit, he met Vice President, PM, EAM, Finance Minister, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Textiles, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, besides having private meetings with Chairperson, UPA and Shri Rahul Gandhi. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Minister of Oil and Minister of Information of Kuwait, visited India from September 25-28, 2010. He inaugurated the “Sabah Cultural Library” at the India Arab Cultural Centre in Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi – the first and largest cultural project by Kuwait in India. Mr. Faisal Al Hajji Bukhadour, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs of Kuwait accompanied by the Under Secretary of Civil Service Commission Mr. Mohammed Al Roomi paid an official visit to India to meet his counterpart, Minister of State for Personnel from February 3-7, 2009. Dr. Ibrahim Alabdelhadi, Under Secretary, Ministry of Health of the State of Kuwait visited India on April 23, 2012 and signed a MOU on Health between India and Kuwait at New Delhi.

COMMERCIAL RELATIONS:

Trade and Economic Cooperation: Historically, India-Kuwait relations have always had an important trade dimension. India has consistently been amongst the top ten trading partners of Kuwait. Kuwait is an open, competitive and affluent market for capital and consumer goods and for project exports. Kuwait has been a reliable supplier of oil to India and meets about 10-11% of India’s energy needs. Bilateral trade during 2012-13 was \$ 17.63 billion. India’s exports to Kuwait during 2012-13 were \$ 1.060 billion. India’s imports from Kuwait were \$ 16.569 billion of which petroleum accounted for \$ 15.741 billion. Major items exported from India cover a broad range including food items, textiles, garments, electrical and engineering equipment, metal products, pressure vessel reactors, industrial valves, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances, articles of iron or steel, etc.

Joint-Ministerial Commission (JMC): An India-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation was set up in 1992. It is co-chaired by India's MoS for External Affairs and Kuwait's Minister of Finance. The second meeting of India-Kuwait JMC was held in New Delhi from July 1-3, 2008. The 3rd meeting of JMC is expected to be held in Kuwait in 2014.

Indian companies in Kuwait: Indian PSUs like TCIL, LIC (International), LIC Housing Finance, New India Assurance Company, Oriental Insurance Company, Bridge and Roof and National Aviation Company (Indian Airlines and Air India) have offices in Kuwait, while private companies like L&T, Punj Lloyd, Kalpataru, KEC International Ltd (subsidiary of RPG Group), Shalimar Valves, etc. are implementing major projects in Kuwait, including in petroleum and power sectors. TERI signed a soil remediation contract with Kuwait Oil Company worth US\$ 39.36 million in February 2012 while L&T currently has \$150 million worth of contracts in Kuwait. Indian pharmaceutical company Aurobindo Pharma launched its operations in Kuwait on September 20, 2012.

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. Significant Kuwaiti presence in India includes those by Alghanim Group of Kuwait; the KAPICO group; NAS; Agility Logistics, Hasibat Holding Co, KGA Group, KCIC, KIPCO, Global Investment House, Kuwait Finance House etc among others. India related funds launched in Kuwait include India Fund (October 2005); Tijari India Fund (December 2006); India Equity Fund (January 2007); Kuwait India Holding Company; Indian Private Equity Fund; India Private Equity Fund; 3rd Real Estate Islamic Fund (May 2007); and Mayur Hedge Fund (August 2008). Kuwait Petroleum Cooperation (KPC) signed an open renewable annual contract with Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum in September 2012 for exports of four types of Kuwaiti oil worth \$ 10 billion for five years.

Civil Aviation: Air India, Jet Airways and Kuwait Airways have direct flights to Indian cities. National Aviation Services, Kuwait, has been handling contracts for 15 Indian airports.

CULTURAL RELATIONS:

Culture: Regular exchanges take place in these fields. A "Festival of India in Kuwait" was held in Kuwait in 2009 which included exhibitions and performances by 130 Indian Artistes. Eminent artistes like Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Shiv Kumar Sharma, Rimpa Siva and Ranjana Gauhar participated in the event. The Embassy organized an Indian musical event on October 29, 2011, in which Sitar maestro Niladri Kumar and Tabla Maestro Yogesh Samsi enthralled a large audience. National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters (NCCAL), Kuwait in cooperation with the Embassy organized a musical concert by sitar maestro Ustad Shujaat Husain Khan at Kuwait National Museum Auditorium (On 29 June 2012), Indian classical music and dance concert by Satwik Veena mastero Mr. Salil Bhatt and Kathak & Odissi dance troupe of Ms. Parwati Dutta (on October 3-4,

2012) as part of the Asian Cultural Week celebrations in the run up to the 1st ACD Summit. In February 2013, an Indian classical music concert featuring Maestros Kala Ramnath (Violin), Rupak Kulkarni (Flute) and Yogesh Samsi (Tabla) was organized in Embassy's auditorium. Exhibitions of photographs of Islamic Monuments of India (on May 22-27, 2013) by Benoy K Behl and "The Travelling Lens" by Mr. Shreekant Somany (on November 17-21, 2013) were organized in Kuwait.

A delegation of Kuwait Journalist Association led by its Chairman Ahmed Yousuf Behbehani visited India from May 14-18, 2012 and called on Vice-President, Lok Sabha Speaker, EAM, Finance Minister and Commerce, Industry & Textile Minister. The delegation interacted with Indian industrialists and senior journalists and also attended a seminar titled "Society, Gender and Media: Experiences from Kuwait" at India-Arab Cultural Centre, Jamia Milia Islamia University. Kuwait Embassy in cooperation with ICCR organized the "Kuwait Cultural Week" from May 15-19, 2012 at New Delhi and Jaipur, which included joint arts and crafts exhibition, lectures at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Library (Jamia Milia Islamia University) and folklore performance by Kuwait Television Troupe.

Science & Technology and Education: An Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation between India and Kuwait was signed during the visit to Kuwait of Hon'ble Vice President in April 2009. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health of the State of Kuwait and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare of the Government of India on Medical Cooperation has been signed on April 23, 2012 at New Delhi, which envisages further cooperation in the field of health, including setting up of a JWG to elaborate the details of the MOU and its implementation; recognition of degrees and other qualifications issued by Indian institutions by the Kuwait Ministry of Health; training in traditional and modern medicine; and treatment to Kuwaiti patients in approved Indian hospitals and encourage medial tourism. About 550 Indian doctors and 8,000 nurses are employed in Kuwait hospitals. An "India Study Centre" at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Kuwait University was set up in December 2006. 19 Indian Schools in Kuwait are affiliated to our Central Board of Secondary Education where around 46,000 Indian students study.

A Kuwaiti delegation led by Dr. Naji M. Al-Mutairi, Director General, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) visited India from 18-22 November 2013 and signed a Programme of Cooperation with Department of Science and Technology; and an MOU with Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in areas of scientific and technical cooperation.

India-Kuwait Agreements: Numerous bilateral Agreements provide a framework for promoting relations. Prominent amongst them are: on Reciprocal Protection of Investment (2001); on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (2004); Extradition (2004); on Juridical and Judicial Cooperation in Civil and Commercial Matters (2005); MoU on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development (2007); on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (2009); Cultural and Information Exchanges (2009); Education and Learning Cooperation (2009) and MoU on Health (2012). During the visit

of the Prime Minister of Kuwait to India on November 7-10, 2013 Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons, MOU between Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and the Saud N. Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute, MOU on Cooperation in the field of Sports & Youth Affairs, Executive Programme for Cultural and Information Exchanges (2013-16) and Educational Exchange Program on Cooperation in Education and Learning (2013-16) were signed.

INDIAN COMMUNITY:

The Indian community of around 681,288 (on January 1, 2013) in Kuwait adds an important dimension to our ties. Indian nationals are the largest expatriate community in Kuwait. Indian nationals are present in practically all segments of society in Kuwait, and are known to be disciplined, hard working, talented and law-abiding. The total remittance from Kuwait to India is estimated to be about US\$ 4 billion annually. There are approximately 300 Indian community associations in Kuwait representing a variety of regional, professional and cultural interests, of which 134 Associations are presently registered with the Embassy. To keep pace with our expanding bilateral interaction and growing Indian community, the Embassy outsourced its passport and visa services in 2009. In order to enhance the support available to Indians in Kuwait, the Embassy set up an "Indian Workers Welfare Center" in September 2009, which provides a labour complaints redressal mechanism, accommodation and other facilities 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.

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