

India - Syria Relations

Political:

India and Syria enjoy friendly political relations based on historic and civilizational ties, experience of imperialism and of being colonized, a secular, nationalist and developmental orientation, similar perceptions on many international and regional issues and membership of NAM, positive sentiments towards India at the popular level, and India's traditional support for just Arab causes notably the Palestinian cause and for the return of the occupied Golan Heights to Syria. Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore, Nehru and Indira Gandhi are remembered with great respect. The relationship at the political level has always been good. Details of exchange of visits at HOS/HOG/EAM/MOS(EA) levels are given in the following chart

Bilateral Visits at HOS/HOG/EAM/MOS (EA) Levels

From Syria to India

	Dignitary	Date
1.	President Dr. Bashar Al Assad	June 2008
2.	President Hafez Al Assad	1978 & 1983
3.	President Shukri Al Quwatli	1957
4.	Vice President, Mr. Zuhier Masharqa	1991
5.	Deputy PM Dr. Khalid Raad	July 2000
6.	Deputy PM & Foreign Minister Mr. Farouk Al- Shara	August 2002
7.	Deputy PM Dr. Abdullah Dardari	January 2008
8.	Foreign Minister Mr. Farouk Al- Shara	1988
9.	Foreign Minister Mr. Walid Al Mouallem	August 2007
10.	Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Farukh Taha	April 2006
11.	Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Fayssal Mikdad	July-August 2011

From India to Syria

	Dignitary	Date
1.	President H.E. Prathibha Singh Patil	November 2010
2.	Prime Minister Shri A.B. Vajpayee	November 2003
3.	Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi	1988
4.	Prime Minister Pt. J.L. Nehru	1957 & 1960
5.	External Affairs Minister Shri A.B. Vajpayee	1979
6.	External Affairs Minister Shri Pranab Mukherjee	1995
7.	External Affairs Minister Shri Jaswant Singh	Jan/Feb 2001
8.	External Affairs Minister Shri Yashwant Sinha	August 2003
9.	Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Anand Sharma	June 2010

President H.E. Prathibha Singh Patil paid a state visit to Syria from 26-29 November, 2010. She was accompanied by Union Minister of State for Power Shri Bharatsinh Solanki, two Members of Parliament, senior officials and a large business delegation. This was the first Presidential visit from India to Syria and was a highly successful one. During the visit, an offer of credit line of \$100 million was made by India to Syria. A contribution of 2 million Syrian Pound was made to a Syrian NGO- AAMAL and over 1 million Syrian Pounds to Missionaries of Charity, Aleppo. The number of scholarships offered to Syria under the ITEC programme was increased from 45 to 90. Two MOU's for cooperation in the field of Media and a Cultural Exchange Programme were signed during the visit. The India-Syria Joint Business Council was launched. Syria reiterated its support for India's permanent membership of UNSC. Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Fayssal Mikdad visited India in July-August, 2011.

Economic & Commercial

India-Syria economic relations have bright prospects. The high level visits from both sides in recent years have enhanced the desire to further enhance bilateral economic relations. The 1st Meeting of the **India Syria Joint Commission** was held in New Delhi in January 2008. The 2nd Session of the Joint Commission was held in Damascus in June 2010, with the Indian co-Chairman being Commerce and Industry Minister and the Syrian one being Minister of Trade and Economy.

Some of the bilateral cooperation projects that have been implemented or are being implemented in the last few years are:

- i) **A US \$ 25 million credit line** has been extended by India for the rehabilitation and modernization of the Hama Iron & Steel Plant. **Apollo International** had won the contract for the project through an international tender earlier for the same project. The project is under execution.
- ii) India has extended another **credit line of US\$ 100 million** (first tranche of US\$ 240 m credit) to part finance the extension of the Tishreen Power Plant. Indian public sector company, **BHEL** has signed the contract in October 2009 for installing 2X200 MW power plants and the project is underway.
- iii) **India-Syria Centre of Excellence in IT** has been set up at Damascus with the assistance from Government of India. The Centre was inaugurated in December, 2010 by the PM of Syria and is running successfully.
- iv) India is assisting Syria in carrying out a **feasibility study on augmentation of its phosphate production**. A consortium of Indian

companies, comprising of PDIL, RITES and MECON is carrying out the study. The Draft Feasibility Report (DFR) has been submitted to the Syrian side and the final report is under completion.

v) India has extended **US\$ 1 million assistance for the setting up of Biotechnology Centre** in Syria; the Centre was inaugurated during PM Vajpayee's visit in 2003.

vi) **An MOU on Cooperation in fertilizer sector** was concluded in October 2010. The MOU will facilitate Indian involvement in the development of phosphatic fertilizer sector in Syria.

vii) India has two significant investments in Syria in the **oil sector**. Firstly, an agreement signed in January 2004 between ONGC and IPR International for exploration of oil/natural gas in Block 24 near Deir-e-Zor in northern Syria. Secondly, investment by ONGC India and CNPC China to jointly acquire the 37% stake of PetroCanada in the Syrian Al Furat Petroleum Company.

viii) **Himalaya Herbals** has a joint venture providing technical know-how and materials for manufacture and marketing of herbal drugs and cosmetics in Syria.

ix) **Mahindra & Mahindra** has signed a 10 year contract with M/s Al Furat Tractor Company for supply of tractors with a provision for joint venture assembly in the future that could amount to over Euro 30 million.

Bilateral Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement and the **Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection Agreement** have been signed in June 2008 during the visit of President Bashar Al Assad to India and have come into force from 2009. An **MOU for cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors** has been signed. The MOU provides for a Work Plan and a Working Group. The Work Plan is in place and has been renewed up to November, 2011.

Syria-India Joint Business Council (JBC) was inaugurated in November, 2010 during the visit of Presidential visit. The JBC is headed by Mr. V.R.S. Natarajan, CMD, BEML from the Indian side and Mr. Ali Mehran Khwanda of Khwanda Group from the Syrian side.

Bilateral Trade:

(Figures in US\$ millions)

Year	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-10	2010-2011	2011-12 (Apr-June)
Export	672.78*	364.5	345.43	523.03	105.89
Import	20.24	157.92	144.69	35.61	6.81
Total	693.02	522.42	490.13	558.64	112.7

* includes onetime export of \$ 316mn HSD

Major commodities of Export to Syria

Textiles and yarn, petroleum products, transport equipment, machinery & instruments, drugs, pharmaceuticals & fine chemicals.

Major commodities of Import from Syria

Petroleum, crude & products and minerals, machinery except electric & electronic, leather, pearls, precious and semi-precious stones.

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