

PRE DEPARTURE INFORMATION MANUAL

FOR WORKERS ON

TEMPORARY CONTRACTUAL EMPLOYMENT

TO

LEBANON

PRE DEPARTURE INFORMATION MANUAL FOR WORKERS ON TEMPORARY CONTRACTUAL EMPLOYMENT TO LEBANON

PART – I

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR OVERSEAS MIGRANTS

Definition

Emigration, in this context, means the departure of any person from India with a view to taking up any employment (whether or not under an agreement or other arrangements to take up such employment, with or without the assistance of a registered Recruiting Agent or employer) in any country or place outside India.

The Present Situation

Every year hundreds of thousands of Indians emigrate in search of job. The effect of economic liberalization in India is visible on labour migrants too. One of the striking features of labour migration from India is that more than 90 per cent of the total outflow is to the Middle East.

The Emigration Act

The Emigration Act, 1983, seeks to safeguard the interests and ensure the welfare of emigrants. Only the recruiting agents registered with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs are eligible as per the Act to conduct the business of recruitment for overseas employment and they are required to obtain proper Registration Certificates (RC) from the Protector General of Emigrants.

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, administers the Emigration Act through the eight offices of Protector of Emigrants (POEs). The offices are located at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Chandigarh, Cochin, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram.

Service Charge

No recruiting agent shall collect from the worker the charges more than the equivalent of his wages for forty-five days as offered under the employment contract, subject to a maximum of twenty thousand rupees, in respect of the services provided and shall issue a receipt to that worker for the amount collected in this regard.

Emigration Check Required (ECR) Category

Categories of persons, whose passports have been endorsed as “Emigrant Check Required” (ECR), if intending to travel to an ECR country (Listed on page 3) for employment purposes, are required to obtain emigration from the Protector of Emigrants (POEs) either directly or through the recruitment agents or through the employer concerned.

Emigration Check Not Required (ECNR) Category

Section 22 of the Emigration Act, 1983 provides that no citizen of India shall migrate unless he obtains authorization from the concerned POE in the prescribed manner and form. However, with a view to facilitating the movement of the workers, 13 categories of persons (listed later in this chapter) have been exempted from this requirement and have been placed under “Emigration Check Not Required” (ECNR) category. Such persons are not required to obtain any emigration clearance from the offices of POEs before seeking employment abroad.

Countries with ECR/ ECNR status

There are total of 175 countries (called as ECNR countries) do not require emigration clearance, whereas 17 countries are listed as emigration check required countries, they are listed below:-

List of countries for which Emigration Clearance is Required (ECR)

1. Afghanistan
2. Bahrain
3. Indonesia
4. Iraq
5. Jordan
6. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
7. Kuwait
8. Lebanon
9. Libya
10. Malaysia
11. Oman
12. Qatar
13. Sudan
14. Syria
15. Thailand
16. United Arab Emirates
17. Yemen

List of Persons/Categories of Workers in whose case Emigration Check is not required

1. All holders of Diplomatic/ Official Passports
2. All Gazetted Government Servants
3. All Income-tax payers (including agricultural income tax payers) in their individual capacity.
4. All professional degree holders, such as Doctors holding MBBS degrees or Degrees in Ayurveda or Homeopathy; Accredited journalists; Chartered Accountants; Lecturers; Teachers; Scientists; Advocates etc.
5. Spouses and dependent children of category of persons listed from (2) to (4)
6. Persons holding class 10 qualification or higher degrees.
7. Seamen who are in possession of CDC or Sea Cadets, Desk Cadets (i) who have passed final examination of three years B>Sc. Nautical Sciences Courses at T S Chankya, Mumbai; and (ii) who have undergone three months pre-sea training at any of the government approved Training Institutes such as T S Chankya, T S Rehman, T S Jawahar, MTI (SCI) and NIPM, Chennai after production of identity cards issued by the Shipping Master, Mumbai/ Kolkata/ Chennai.
8. Persons holding permanent immigration visas, such as the visas of UK, USA and Australia.
9. Persons possessing two years' diploma from any institute recognized by the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) or State Council of Vocational Training (SCVT) or persons holding three years' diploma/ equivalent degree from institutions like polytechnics recognized by Central/ State Governments
10. Nurses possessing qualifications recognized under the Indian Nursing Council Act, 1947.
11. All persons above the age of 50 years.
12. All persons who have been staying abroad for more than three years (the period of three years could be either in one stretch or broken) and spouses.
13. Children below 18 years of age.

Guidelines for Emigration Clearance

- 1) Emigration clearance will be made on the passport when the individual approaches either directly or through a registered Recruiting Agent or through the employer concerned.
- 2) In cases in which the profession indicated in visa does not tally with the profession indicated in the passport, an affidavit may be obtained from the Recruiting Agent/ Employer concerned.
- 3) No clearance may be given for Iraq unless specifically authorized by Indian Embassy in Iraq.
- 4) No emigration clearance shall be granted for recruiting Indian nationals for any Foreign Employer placed in 'Prior Approval Category' (PAC)

Applying for Emigration Clearance

The application for emigration clearance should be made in the prescribed form with prescribed particulars by the applicant directly or through a Recruiting Agent or through the employer concerned to the POE.

Documents required for Semi-Skilled Workers

Semi-skilled individuals who seek emigration clearance directly from the Protectors of Emigrants (and not through Recruiting Agents) are required to produce the following documents in original for scrutiny and return:

- 1) Passport valid for a minimum period of six months with valid visa.
- 2) Employment contract from foreign employer duly attested by the Indian Mission.
- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy

Documents required for Unskilled Workers

Unskilled workers and women (not below 30 years of age) seeking employment abroad as housemaids/ domestic workers shall continue to furnish (in original) the following documents at the time of obtaining emigration clearance.

- 1) Passport valid for a minimum period of 2 years with valid Visa.
- 2) Work agreement from the foreign employer duly attested by the Indian Mission and signed by employer and employee or Permission letter from the concerned Indian Mission/ Post i.e. as per particulars below:

Embassy of India

No. 239, Ibrahim Abed El Aal Street,
Ras Beirut,
P.O. Box. Nos. 113-5240, Beirut (Lebanon)
ZIP CODE No. 2034-4411
Tel: 00961-1-741270, 735856, 735922
Fax : 00961-1-741283 (Chancery)
Email : hoc.beirut@mea.gov.in, cons.beirut@mea.gov.in

- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy.
- 5) Approval of the Ministry, if the female worker is below 30 years of age.

Documents required for Emigration Clearance (Through Project Exporter)

1. Valid Passport (valid for at least 2 years)
2. Valid visa in English language
3. Permit issued by Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, with effective date of validity.
4. Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy.
5. Valid Bank Guarantee.

The Protector of Emigrants (POE) shall, after satisfying the accuracy of the particulars mentioned in the application and in the other documents submitted along the application, grants emigration clearance in the prescribed manner and form. In case there is any deficiency, the POE shall intimate the same by order in writing to the applicant or, as the case may be, the Recruiting Agent or Employer, through whom the applications have been made about the deficiencies and require him to make good such deficiencies within such time as may be specified in the order or reject the application.

Details of the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY)

- The Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) was started in 2003. The PBBY was upgraded as the Pravasi Bhartiya Bima Yojana, 2006 to provide broader coverage to the emigrant workers.
- The scheme has been further modified in 2008. The emigrant workers get a minimum insurance cover of Rs. 10 Lakhs (instead of 5 Lakhs) and the policy will be for the period of employment contract, i.e. either 2 years or 3 years as the case may be. The reduce premiums along with other benefits have been made effective from 01.04.08.
- A comparative statement of PBBY 2006 and PBBY 2008 is as under:

Item	PBBY 2006	PBBY 2008
Minimum sum for which insured under PBBY	Rs. 5.00 Lakhs	Rs. 10.00 Lakhs
Hospitalization(medical expenses) covering injuries/sickness/ailment/diseases	Rs. 50,000/-	Rs. 75,000/-
Repatriation coversfor medical unfit	Actual one way economy class air fare	Actual one way economy class air fare
Family Hospitalization in India	Rs. 25,000/-	Rs. 50,000/-
Maternity	Rs. 20,000/-	Rs. 25,000/-
Attendant	Actual one way economy class air fare	Actual one way economy class air fare
Legal Expenses	Rs. 25,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-
Actual Premium to charged (without any hidden costs)	Rs. 475/- for the contract period	Rs. 275/- for 2 years policy period Rs. 375/- for 3 years policy period

This policy is available from under noted Insurance Companies:-

1. Oriental Insurance Company Ltd.
2. United Insurance Company Ltd.
3. National Insurance Company Ltd.
4. ICICI Lombard
5. Star Health & Allied Insurance Co. Ltd.
6. IFFCO Tokyo
7. Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Co. Ltd.

8. Reliance General Insurance Co. Ltx.

Claim Procedure

Insured worker is supposed to have the copy of PBBY insurance policy with him. Name of the nominee is so mentioned on the policy, in view of the eventuality of death of insured.

In the event of claim, insured worker/ claimant have to lodge a claim under the policy, with the respective insurance company's office wherefrom the policy was issued, if not specifically provided by the insurance company otherwise. While doing so, claimant has to indicate the policy number and details of accident. In the event of death, nominee has to lodge the claim.

After intimation of reported claim, insurance company intimates the insured/ claimant the details of documents required to settle the claim. After processing such requisite documents, claim amount is paid to the insured worker/ claimant, as the case may be.

Do's and Don't

In Lebanon, local laws demand that one must not move in public without "Ikama". "Ikama" is the residency permit issued to all expatriates after the employment contractual obligations are fulfilled.

Normally Lebanon does not allow change in job sponsorship. However, either through prior permission or by consent of the local employer, a change of job can be approved by local authorities.

- The emigrant workers must get their service agreements prepared in both English and Arabic. They should not part with their passports and copies of their service contracts.
- Non-payment or delayed payment of wages could be reported to Indian missions, for redressal of grievances.
- Workers are given gratuity equivalent to 15 days' wages for every completed year of service.

Verification of the genuineness of visa/ employment documents

The matter may be referred to the Embassy of India in the destination country, if necessary, with full particulars of the sponsor company (Name, Address, Telephone and Fax No.), which issued the visa, along with Passport particulars.

Employment Contract

Indian workers are advised to obtain written contract duly signed by the sponsor/ employer company before their arrival in the destination country.

The official language of the contract recognized by the Lebanon is Arabic. In a bilingual contract (English and Arabic), the Arabic version prevails in case of any dispute on the clauses of the contract.

Essential terms for a contract

The contract should contain all important terms of employment as per 15(2) of Emigration Rules.

- i) Period employment/ place of employment.
- ii) Wages and other conditions of service;
- iii) Free food or food allowance provision;
- iv) Free accommodation;
- v) Provision in regard to disposal, or transportation to India, of dead body of the Emigrant;
- vi) Working hours, overtime allowance, other working conditions, leave and social security benefits as per local labour laws;
- vii) To and fro air passage at the employers' cost; and
- viii) Mode of settlement of disputes;

Obtaining copy of the contract while in India

As per the instructions of the Government of India, recruitment body is expected to provide a copy of employment contract to each worker before his/ her departure. To safeguard his/ her own interest, an individual worker has to demand from the recruitment agent a copy of the duly signed contract before departure. Complaints may be lodged against defaulting agencies with the nearest Protector of Emigrants.

Important Documents

In addition to all the originals, copies of the following documents may be retained with the employee.

1. Employment contract;

2. Passport
3. Visa and
4. Certificates of educational qualification.

Check before Departure

- Ensure you have a valid passport at least for two years. A valid Visa must be either stamped on or accompany your passport. Always keep a photocopy of your passport and visa.
- You must possess a copy of the Employment Contract signed by you and your foreign employer duly attested by the registered recruiting agent.
- Insist on a copy of Employment Contract in English duly authenticated by the recruiting agent.
- Open a Savings Bank N.R.E. Account in one of the Banks in India to enable you to send your remittances from abroad.
- Get familiar with local labour laws, working and living conditions of the country of employment, keep complete address of the Indian Embassy there, with you.

In the country of your employment

- Obtain a Resident Permit or Identity Card, Labour Card or Ikama.
- DO NOT part with your passport and copy of employment contract signed by you in India.
- DO NOT sign any other employment contract or any blank paper.
- DO NOT strike work or resort to agitations. These are illegal under Lebanon's labour laws. You could be arrested, imprisoned and also deported.
- AVOID all contacts that may result in AIDS – a dreaded disease.
- Keep in touch with the nearest Indian Mission and report any complaints about non-payment or delayed payment of wages or compensation or any other problem to the Indian Mission.

Customs Formalities

- Personal baggage – Customs checking is VERY STRICT. Kindly cooperate with the Customs staff at the International airport.
- Ensure that one should not carry any narcotics.
- DO NOT accept any unchecked parcel from any one. If you have to take a parcel for someone, check thoroughly that it does not contain narcotics. Otherwise, it may land you in serious difficulties on arrival in the country of employment.

Precautions

- One must make and keep a photocopy of all the pages of your passport. DO NOT lose your passport or its photocopy.
- In case you misplace your passport, inform the nearest Indian Mission immediately giving those details i.e. passport number, date and place of issue, your name and date of your entry into the country of employment. You can give these details only if you keep a photocopy of your passport.
- DO NOT lose your copy of the employment contract. Make photocopies and always keep them with you.
- You must have a full name, address telephone/ fax number of your foreign employer, before you leave India.
- If you have difficulty in locating your foreign employer, contact the nearest Indian Mission immediately.
- DO NOT accept temporary or permanent employment with another person or establishment other than the sponsoring company/ establishment/ person. Employment with persons other than your original sponsor is strictly prohibited and attracts severe punishment.
- Before the visa or employment contract expires, get them renewed. If you are returning to India for a short while during the tenure of your Employment Contract abroad, ensure that the validity period of visa does not expire before you return to the country of employment.
- Ensure also that one's passport is valid. Get it revalidated from the concerned Indian Mission abroad or from the Regional Passport Office (RPO) in India, at least two months before its expiry.

Embassy of India

No. 239, Ibrahim Abed El Aal Street,
Ras Beirut,
P.O. Box. Nos. 113-5240, Beirut (Lebanon)
ZIP CODE No. 2034-4411
Tel: 00961-1-741270, 735856, 735922
Fax : 00961-1-741283 (Chancery)
Email : hoc.beirut@mea.gov.in, cons.beirut@mea.gov.in

Important contacts

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
Government of India
Akbar Bhavan, Chanakya Puri
New Delhi-110021
Telephone No. 0091-11-24197900
Fax No. 0091-11-24197919
Email : info@moia.nic.in
Shri Vayalar Ravi, Minister
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
Telephone No. (O) 0091-11-24676836 / 37 / 39
Fax No. (O) 0091-11-24197985
Email : minister@moia.nic.in
Telephone No. (R) 0091-11-23792148 / 49
Fax No. (R) 0091-11-23792142
Dr. A Didar Singh, Secretary
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
Telephone No. 0091-11-24674143 / 44
Fax No. : 0091-11-24674140
Email : secretary@moia.nic.in

Shri Karan A. Singh, Protector General of Emigrants
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs
Telephone No. 0091-11-26874250
Fax No. : 0091-11-24197984
Email : pge@moia.nic.in

List of Offices of Protector of Emigrants in India

1. Protector of Emigrants, New Delhi, Jaisalmer House, Canteen Block, Mansingh Road, New Delhi-110001, Tel : 011-23382472, Fax : 011-23073908
2. Protector of Emigrants, Bombay, Building E, Khira Nagar, S V Road, Santa Cruz (West), Mumbai-400054. Tel : 022-26614393, Fax : 022-26614353

3. Protector of Emigrants Thiruvananthapuram, Sugandh, 24/846 (1), Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram-695014, Tel : 0471-2741790
4. Protector of Emigrants Kochi, 3rd floor, Putherikal Building, Market Road, Kochi-682035. Tel : 0484-2360187
5. Protector of Emigrants, Chennai, TNHB, Ashok Nagar Shopping Complex (Annexe), Ashok Nagar, Chennai-600083, Tel : 044-24891337
6. Protector of Emigrants Chandigarh, Kendriya Sadan, Fifth Block, Ground Floor, Sector-9A, Chandigarh-160017, Tel : 0172-2741790
7. Protector of Emigrants, Kolkata, Room No. 18, A-Wing, 3rd floor, M S O Building, D F Block, Salt Lake, Kolkata-700084, Tel : 033-23343407
8. Protector of Emigrants, Hyderabad, Gruhkalpa, Ground Floor, Opposite to Gandhi Bhawan, Nampally, Hyderabad, Tel : 040-24652557

Information available on the website of MOIA

- Revised emigration requirements
- Recruiting agents having suspended RC
- Online emigration clearance system
- List of registered recruiting agents with valid RC at poeonline.gov.in
- Internal watch-list of recruiting agents
- Recruiting agents having cancelled RC
- Foreign employers on PAC
- Project Exporters at peonline.gov.in
- Emigration Act, 1983
- Emigration Rules, 1983
- Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana
- Redressal of Public Grievances Information on Recruiting Agents and Black Listed foreign employers
- Guidelines for recruiting agents/ guidelines for prospective Emigrant workers.

Part-II

FACTS ABOUT LEBANON

Introduction

Area: 10452 Sq Km (4036 Sq miles)

Population: 4.3 Million

Capital City Beirut (Population: 2.1 million estimated 2007)

People: 4.3 million. The population is predominantly Arab with a sizeable Armenian minority (figure does not include an estimated 400,000 Palestinian refugees). The Lebanese Diaspora is estimated at 12 million.

Language (s) : Arabic (official), English, French, Armenian.

Religion (s): There are 18 registered sects in Lebanon including, Maronite Christian, Shia Muslim, Sunni Muslim and Druze.

Currency: Lebanese Pound/ US dollars is used interchangeably.

GEOGRAPHY

Lebanon is a small country which extends about 50 Km. from the East to West and 225 Km from the North to the South. The Lebanese coastline runs along the Mediterranean Sea. Its northern and eastern borders touch Syria while it shares its southern borders with Israel. The country forms part of the Fertile Crescent, a high arc of well-watered land connecting Egypt to Iraq. Lebanon's three biggest cities, Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon lie along the coastline. Two large mountain ranges run parallel to each other down the length of the country i.e. Mount Lebanon and Anti Lebanon. The Mount Lebanon range runs along the coastline and in some cases the flat coastal strip is limited to a matter of meters before the land starts to climb. The highest point in the Mount Lebanon range stands at over 3000 m and is covered by snow around half the year. The vast and fertile plateau of the Bekaa valley runs between the two mountain ranges and forms the northern extremity of the Great Rift Valley. Along the coast, the climate is mild with hot dry summers and wet winters, but in the mountains, heavy winter snow is usual.

Major political parties

Numerous political groupings exist in Lebanon, organized mostly along sectarian lines. The main political parties are the Free Patriotic Movement, Amal Movement, Hezbollah, Progressive Socialist Party, El Marada Glory Movement, Syrian Socialist National Party, Lebanese Democratic Party, Baath Party, Armenian Revolutionary Federation, Solidarity Party, Islamic Action Front, Popular Bloc, Lebanese Republican Party, Christian Democratic Party, Lebanese Communist Party, Arab Liberation Party, Lebanese Unification Movement, Alawite Youth Movement, Future Movement, Lebanese Socialist Democratic Party of Kateeb, National Liberation Party, Democratic

Left, Islamic Group, Armenian Democratic Liberal Party, Independent Movement, Free Lebanese Armenian Movement and the Free Shiitte Movement.

Government	:	Republic
Head of State	:	President General Michel Sleiman
Prime Minister	:	Najib Mikati
Speaker	:	Nabih Berri

HISTORY

Lebanon was created with its present boundaries in 1920 under the French mandate. It became independent in 1943. Inter-community rivalries have been endemic, but until the 1970s were generally kept within bounds by a complex confessional system, enshrined in the 1943 National Pact and subsequently in the Taif Accord of 1989. Under this system, the President is a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim, the Speaker of Parliament is Shia Muslim. These divisions are reflected throughout the Cabinet and the civil service, where posts are distributed on a confessional basis.

GOVERNMENT

Lebanon is a parliamentary democracy in which the right to change the government is vested by the constitution in the people. However, from the mid 1970s until the parliamentary elections in 1992, civil war precluded the effective exercise of political rights. According to the Lebanese Constitution, direct elections must be held for the parliament every four years. Parliament, in turn, is tasked to elect a new president every six years. A presidential election scheduled for the autumn of 2004 was pre-empted by a parliamentary vote to extend the sitting president's term in office by three years. An election for a new president was held in May 2008. The last parliamentary elections were held on June 7, 2009. The President, based on binding consultations with the parliament, appoints the prime minister. Political parties may be formed. However, the political parties that do exist are mostly based on sectarian interests.

Since the emergence of the post-1943 state, national policy has been determined largely by a relatively restricted group of traditional regional and sectarian leaders. The 1943 national pact, an unwritten agreement that established the political foundations of modern Lebanon, allocated political power essentially on a confessional system based on the 1932 census. Until 1990, seats in parliament were divided on the basis of a six to five ratio of Christians to Muslims (with Druze included in the category of Muslims). With the Taif Agreement, the ratio changed to half and half. Senior positions in the government bureaucracy are allocated on a similar basis. Getting selected political office is virtually impossible without the firm backing of a particular religious or confessional group. The pact also allocated public offices along religious lines, with the top three positions in the ruling "troika" distributed as follows :-

- The position of the President of the Lebanese Republic is a Maronite Christian;
- The Prime Minister is a Sunni Muslim, and
- The speaker of Parliament is a Shia Muslim.

Efforts to alter or abolish the confessional system of allocating power have been at the center of Lebanese politics for decades. Those religious groups most favored by the 1943 formula sought to preserve it, while those who saw themselves at a disadvantage sought either to modify its demographic formula or to abolish it entirely. Nonetheless, many of the provisions of the national pact were codified in the 1989 Taif Agreement, perpetuating sectarianism as a key element of Lebanese political life. Although moderated somewhat under Taif, constitutionally, the president has a strong and influential position.

The president has the authority to promulgate laws passed by the Chamber of Deputies, to issue supplementary regulations to ensure the execution of laws, and to negotiate and ratify treaties. The Chamber of Deputies is elected by adult suffrage (majority age is 21) based on a system of proportional representation for the various confessional groups. Political blocs are usually based on confessional and local interests or on personal/ family allegiance rather than on left/ right policy orientations. The parliament traditionally has played a significant role in financial affairs, since it has the responsibility for levying taxes and passing the budget. It also exercises political control over the cabinet through formal questioning of ministers on policy issues and by requesting a confidence debate. Lebanon's judicial system is based on the Napoleonic Code. Juries are not used in trials. The Lebanese court system has three levels of courts - Courts of first instance, Courts of appeal, and the Court of cassation. There also is a system of religious courts having jurisdiction over personal status matters, such as marriage divorce, and inheritance, within particular religious communities.

Politics

Lebanon's political spectrum has been split sharply into two rival factions since the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005 namely March 14 and March 8. This political difference has been exacerbated by the outbreak of war between Lebanon and Israel in July 2006, as March 14 blamed Hezbollah for the outbreak of war.

Tensions increased further when Imad Mughniyah, Hezbollah's second in command was assassinated in a car bomb in Damascus on 12 February, 2008. Mughniyah had been one of the most wanted terrorist for over twenty years, for his suspected involvement in a number of terrorist attacks during the 1980s. Hezbollah accused Israel of having conducted the assassination and are ostensibly committed to revenge.

Inter-communal clashes that erupted on 7 May 2008 led to the Doha Agreement among rival political leaders. General Michel Sleiman, the Lebanese army commander was elected as President on 25 May 2008, ending a seven-month vacuum in the presidency after the mandate of the former President Emile Lahoud expired on 23 November 2007. A National Unity Government was agreed on 11 July, 2008 headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.

In June, 2009 Parliamentary elections were held under the observation of the European Union. Though Saad Hariri's March 14 alliance obtained a majority in the election, Hariri formed a National unity government. After 12 months of Saad Hariri's governance, Hariri's [national unity government](#) collapsed on 12th January 2011 after ten ministers from March 8 and one Presidential nominee resigned over the payment of Lebanon's share to the STL's annual budget. On 25th January, 2011, the Hezbollah-led opposition [March 8 Alliance](#) nominated Najib Mikati for Prime Ministership. Subsequently, on 13 June 2011, Mikati became the Prime Minister of Lebanon for the second time and formed a thirty-member cabinet.

Despite the challenges, the Mikati government has been able to maintain peace and stability in Lebanon. The Mikati government has also passed a few laws which have been pending for long such as the Maritime law, Oil and Gas exploration law, law for increasing generation of power etc. The Mikati government has also avoided the possible international isolation of Lebanon by paying the UNSTL dues.

ECONOMY (Basic Economic facts)

GDP : US\$ 32.2 billion (2009)
GDP per head : \$ 12,902 (2009) (source EIU)
Annual Growth : 7.0% (2009) Target for 2010 is 5.8% (source EIU)
Inflation : 4.5%
Major industries : Financial Services, Agriculture, Tourism, Food Processing, Jewellery, Textiles, Mineral and Chemical products.

Major trading partners:

Exports:

S.No.	Country	Percentage
1	Switzerland	22.3%
2	UAE	9.6%
3	Saudi Arabia	7.0%,
4	Iran	7.8%
5	Syria	6.5%
6	Belgium	3.3%

Imports:

S.No.	Country	Percentage
1	USA	10.9%
2	France-,	9.7%
3	China	8.9%
4	Germany	7.6%
5	Italy	7.5%
6	Japan	4.1%

Transport and communications

Roadways are the principal means of transportation with Lebanon. Railways and waterways do not exist. In Beirut, there is an airport for international flights. Communication facilities are reasonably developed in Lebanon with a modern land and mobile telephone network in most parts of the country. Internet connectivity has recently been upgraded with the opening of the India-Middle East-West Europe (IMEWE) undersea cable link. However, optimum speeds are still to be achieved due to lack of fiber optic network in the country. Internet services in Lebanon still tend to be expensive.

Labour Laws

To work in Lebanon legally foreigners must obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labour. To get a work permit, one must have a work contract with a Lebanese legal entity. Once, this contract is registered with the department of General Security [which supervises immigration and visa issues], the worker cannot change his sponsor unless this change is approved by the previous employer regardless of the duration of the work contract. Since the official language in Lebanon is Arabic, all the formalities pertaining to the work contract are to be specified in Arabic only. Work permits for expatriates are of three categories designated according to salary prescribed in the work contract i.e. Category I, Category II and Category III. Monthly minimum wages (8 hrs/day) is LL675, 000 (US\$ 450). All workers are entitled to get overtime for extra hours or for working on weekly off or public holidays as per Lebanese labour law. Minimum obligatory insurance for foreign workers are as under:-

Hospitalization	:	US\$ 23,330
Death compensation	:	US\$ 8000
Handicap compensation	:	US\$ 10,000

In case of sickness of the employee, the employer has to pay full salary to the employee during his sickness period. Besides, the regular salary each worker is entitled for 15 days extra wages as bonus. The local authority initially issues work visa with single entry valid for 90 days. Upon the arrival of the worker in Lebanon,

immigration authorities at the airport grants 90 days valid temporary work visa against payment of LL 50,000 to facilitate the employer to complete the formalities for obtaining the work permit. In case the foreign worker fails to obtain the work permit with the stipulated period (90 days), he is required to return to his country. The work permit is generally issued for one year (which can be renewed every year). Mostly, foreign workers are not allowed to bring in their family. The only category of foreign workers allowed to bring their family members are those who fall under Category I (i.e. foreign workers drawing monthly salary of US \$ 1000/- per month and above)

In June, 2010, the Ministry of Labour, Lebanon has established a complaint office for migrant workers to safeguard their rights and obligations. This office looks after the complaints of domestic workers, who are being subjected to exploitative work conditions or where their passports have been confiscated by their employers or their salary has been withheld or they are victims of Psychological, sexual or verbal abuse. The establishment of the complaint office is to avoid shortage of foreign domestic workers as countries like Ethiopia and Philippines have imposed a ban on employment of household service workers from their countries on the ground that Lebanon denies basic rights to their citizens.

Criminal Law

Lebanese criminal and civil law is mainly modeled on the French civil code. Foreigners convicted of illegal entry are sentenced to 30 days imprisonment. Drug abuse is an offence and even a minor crime carries a maximum sentence of 3 years. Drug trafficking is a crime that carries a sentence of minimum 3 years to maximum 5 years.

Domestic helpers i.e. “housemaids” are not covered by the labour laws. They are covered by the basic Civil Law, which applies to Lebanese and other residents. Therefore, they do not benefit from the minimum wage limit set by the government.

Domestic helpers i.e. “housemaids” are not covered by the labour laws and but are instead covered by the basic Civil Law, which applies to Lebanese and other residents. Therefore, they do not benefit from the minimum wage limit set by the government.

Note: According to the law no one (sponsor/ employer) can hold the passport of any person. But, actually holding the passport of foreign workers is widely practiced and not opposed by government agencies.

Greeting:

Ahlan wa sahan – you are welcome
Hello - Marhaba

Sabah al-kher - Good morning reply Sabah al-nur
Masaa al-kher – Good afternoon reply same

Note that tisbah ala-kher, meaning 'good night', is said on parting, as in English and the reply is wa anta bi kher.

You should always shake hands when greeting and parting from Lebanese. In the case of many women from a particular sect won't shake hands with men, although educated women might. This is normal even with close friends whom one meets frequently. If the handshake you receive when leaving somebody is longer than the one you received when meeting him, it indicates that you have made a good impression.
