
India-Iraq Bilateral Relations

Historical ties: India and Iraq have historical and civilizational ties. Iraqi port of Basra was not only the market par excellence of the Indian merchandise for the Arab world but also of the famous pearl trade hub for Indian traders and jewelers. During Colonial era Indian soldiers and railway workers have left an imprint in the region. The Iraqi Philosophers and Sufi saints had such an impact on the spiritual movements in India that Guru Dev Nanak Saheb came personally to Baghdad to deliberate on the ontological and the epistemological questions with Sheikh Behlul who hosted him for nearly three months. Indian and Iraqi enjoys centuries old spiritual ties. Thousands of Indians visit the shrines of Imam Hussein and Imam Abbas in Karbala every year and also the shrine of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani in Baghdad.

2. Since the outbreak of war in Iraq in 2003, India has been supporting a free, democratic, pluralistic, federal and unified Iraq. India responded to the urgent needs of Iraq for relief and economic reconstruction directly and as part of international efforts under the UN auspices. India not only supported Iraq with financial assistance, through UN agencies, for its reconstruction but also made statements at UN Security Council Briefing on the situation in Iraq from time to time.

3. **High-level visits: There have been high-level political exchanges between the two countries which are summarized below:**

- (i) Minister of External Affairs, Dr. S. Jaishankar met Iraqi DPM and Foreign Minister, Mr. Fuad Hussein on 25 September, 2024 on the sidelines of 79th session of UN General Assembly in New York.
- (ii) DPM and Foreign Minister of Iraq as well as Deputy Minister for Upstream Affairs, Ministry of Oil participated online in the Foreign Ministers' & Energy Ministers sessions respectively during the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit held on August 17, 2024.
- (iii) A 3-member Iraqi Naval delegation led by the Iraqi Commander of the Naval Force visited Vishakhapatnam to participate in MILAN-2024, a multi-national naval exercise being held in India from February 19 to 27, 2024.
- (iv) DPM and Minister of Oil Mr. Hayan Abdul Ghani visited New Delhi on June 19-20, 2023 to hold 18th session of the India-Iraq Joint Commission Meeting with Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Hardeep S. Puri. Iraqi Minister of Oil called on Hon'ble VP and met Minister of Health and Chemicals and Fertilizers. He also addressed a business meeting organized by CII.
- (v) Iraqi NSA Mr. Qassem Al-Araji visited India in March 2023 for the India-Iraq Security Dialogue and met Indian NSA and visited several facilities in India.

- (vi) Dr. Ausaf Sayeed, Secretary (CPV&OIA), Ministry of External Affairs visited Baghdad on February 20, 2023 to hold 2nd round of the India-Iraq Foreign Office Consultations with Dr. Hisham Al-Alawi, Undersecretary for Political Planning Affairs from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq. The Indian delegation also had meetings with Deputy PM and Minister of Oil, Minister of Trade, NSA and President of Sunni Awqaf Board. The Indian delegation also visited Kurdistan Region of Iraq and met KDP President, Mr. Masoud Barzani, Prime Minister of KRG and met Deputy Prime Minister, Minister and Head of Department of Foreign Relations, and Minister of Trade and Industry of KRG.

4. **Messages and Greetings between India and Iraq:** The President of India, Prime Minister of India, Speaker of Lok Sabha, External Affairs Minister of India and the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas had sent congratulatory messages to their Iraqi counterparts on the occasion of formation of the new government in Iraq after November 11, 2025 parliamentary elections. New Year Greetings from the President and the Prime Minister of India were sent to the President and Prime Minister of Iraq. Prime Minister Modi also sent Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-al Adha greeting for 2026 to both the President and the Prime Minister of Iraq and to the Prime Minister of Kurdistan Regional Government, Erbil.

Economic and Commercial relations

5. The economic and trade relations between India and Iraq slowed down after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, the total bilateral trade has grown steadily since 2010, mainly due to increasing crude oil imports. Due to regional conflicts (June 2025 and Feb-April 2026) there has been a decline of 14.46% in the bilateral trade during the FY 2025-26 in comparison to last FY. Total trade FY 2025-26 amounts to US\$ 27.51 billion, this includes imports worth US\$ 24.55 (-15.03%) billion and exports worth US\$ 2.958 (-9.68%) billion. During FY 2024-25, the bilateral trade amounted to US\$ 33.36 billion. This includes imports worth US\$ 30.01 billion and exports worth US\$ 3.354 billion. Iraq is the 7th largest trade partner of India. India opened its Consulate in Erbil, the Capital of Kurdistan region, in August 2016 to further strengthen economic and commercial relations with Iraq. Iraq maintains its consulate in Mumbai, largely for religious visas to Indians. India has also announced to open its Consulate in Najaf to facilitate Indians visiting for pilgrimage as well as large Indian diaspora living in the area.

6. Iraq has been the most significant partner for India's energy sector since 2017. Iraq was the largest supplier of crude oil to India from 2017 to 2022. Since the Russia-Ukraine war, Iraq has become the second largest supplier of crude oil to India. Crude Oil is the mainstay of India-Iraq trade relations, which accounts for over 95% of the total bilateral trade. Iraq had supplied 47.11 MMT crude oil to India during the financial year 2025-26 which accounts for 19.16 % of India's total oil imports in value. India is the second-largest importer of Iraqi oil after China. Iraq's State Organization for Marketing of Oil (SOMO) is closely engaged with Indian public sector oil companies viz. IOCL, HPCL and BPCL. The Iraqi Oil Ministry delegation attended the 9th Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable in

Bengaluru in February, 2023 and India Energy Week at the invitation of the Indian Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Iraqi oil Minister visited India for the 18th session of India-Iraq JCM and interacted extensively with India businesses and oil companies and addressed a Business Forum hosted by CII. In addition to import of crude in bulk oil, India also imports commodities like raw wool and Sulphur from Iraq

7. India's exports to Iraq declined by 9.6% in FY 2025-2026 compared to the same period last year, reaching USD 2.958 billion from USD 3.354 during the FY 2024-25. Indian exports to Iraq consist of cereals, iron and steel, meat and meat products, pharmaceutical products, agro chemicals, cosmetics, rubber manufactured products, paints, gems and jewellery, ceramics, manufactures of metals, machine tools, electrical machinery and instruments, transport equipment, electronic goods, handicrafts, sugar, tea, garments. A significant volume of exports takes place through Dubai and other destinations.

8. SEPC Ltd. (formerly Mokul-Shriram JV) has been reallocated US\$ 235 Million project to build Al Qibla sewerage system in Basra in December 2012 which was completed in June 2023. Transformers & Rectifiers India Ltd. (TARIL) - won a contract to supply electrical transformers to Al Sabha group in March 2025 and the project is ongoing. Shapoorji Pallonji Group constructed Ministry of Youth and Sports funded hotel project in Basra. Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) won an order for compressor package for Baiji Refinery in Iraq, placed by Northern Refineries Company (NRC), a National Oil refinery company owned by the Ministry of Oil, Iraq. BHEL has also executed a turnkey order for the construction of the 4x125 MW gas turbine-based Sulaymaniyah Power Project in Iraq. Kalpataru group has undertaken \$ 60 million power transmission lines project recently in southern Iraq.

9. **Trade delegations:**

- Indian pavilion was set up at the 49th Baghdad International fair held from 1-7th February 2026 in Baghdad under the sponsorship of FIEO with participation of 22 companies and about 40 Indian businessmen.
- Indian companies HPL and Oswal cables participated in the 11th International Iraq Energy Exhibition and conferences in Baghdad from 10-12 January 2026.
- An Indian pavilion was set up at the 5th Health Expo in Baghdad from 18-21 September 2025 under the sponsorship of ETSIPL, where 28 Indian companies from various health sector participated. In addition to it few Indian companies were also present in the expo under the banner of their Iraqi partners.
- Three Indian companies, viz Redington, Birla Cables and TJDEED Technologies participated in ITEX 2025 in Baghdad.
- About a dozen Iraqi business men participated in Indusfood-2025 in Greater Noida from 8-10 January 2025.
- Eight Indian companies participated in Iraq International Exhibition for Marble, Alabaster and ceramics on Baghdad Fair Ground for the period from 12-15 December 2024.

- More than 20 multisectoral Indian Companies visited Erbil and Sulaymaniyah under the sponsorship of FIEO in June 2024 and held business meetings and BSMS.
- An India Oil Delegation from IOCL and GAIL met Dr. Ezzat Sabir Ismail, Deputy Minister for Gas Affairs and Mr. Hadi A. Abdulhassan, Director, Quantities and Shipping Division, Oil Marketing Company (SOMO) on 23rd May 2024.
- About 20 Indian Construction Companies participated in Erbil Construction Trade Fair held in May 2024. Many ceramics and marble supplying companies are actively doing business in Kurdistan and Iraq.
- About half a dozen Iraqi businessmen participated in India Soft Exhibition held in New Delhi from 17-19 January, 2024.
- An India pavilion was set up at the 47th Baghdad International Fair held from 10-19 January, 2024 in Baghdad under the sponsorship of FIEO with participation of 47 companies and about 100 Indian businessmen.
- About a dozen Iraqi businessmen participated in Indusfood-2024 in Greater Noida from 8-10 January, 2024.

10. Iraqi pharmaceutical companies have been actively participating in various trade promotion events organized in India. A number of Indian hospitals are on the panel of Iraqi Health Ministry where the latter sends eligible Iraqi patients. About 29,826 Indian visas, mostly for medical treatment, were issued in Baghdad and 5117 in Erbil totaling 34,943 visas in 2025. A number of Indian doctors /medical teams are visiting or organizing medical camps for short duration in various parts of Iraq. During the year of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, a Jaipur Foot Camp was organized in Karbala from November 24, 2018 to January 4, 2019. A similar camp but on a much larger scale with 1000 artificial limbs was held in Baghdad in November 2023.

11. **People-to-people contacts:** The people-to-people and institutional contacts have resulted in India becoming one of the most preferred destinations for Iraqis seeking quality medical treatment. More than 10,000 Iraqi students obtained their PhD, Masters and undergraduate studies in India. Government of India has revised Travel Advisory for Iraq in February 2019 allowing Indian nationals to selectively travel to safer areas of Iraq.

12. India remained a preferred destination for Iraqis to undergo medical treatment and pursue higher education in India. In light of recent West Asia conflict Iraqi Airways is operating five flights per week on Delhi-Baghdad-Delhi route. In addition to it Iraqi Airways also operates on the sector Najaf-Mumbai and Najaf-Ahmedabad. Air India also started its operation to Iraq after more than 25 years for a short period from February to November 2014 to Najaf.

13. Iraq Post unveiled a special commemorative postage stamp in Baghdad on 15 February 2022 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between India and Iraq (The Friendship Treaty was signed between India and Iraq in 1952), 75 years of India's Independence (Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav) and 100 years of establishing Iraqi state.

14. A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled in the largest public park, Hawary Shar of Sulaymaniyah on 09 April 2022 and another one at the American University in Baghdad on 25th January, 2023. In all, there are four Mahatma Gandhi busts (two in Kurdistan, one in Baghdad and one in the Embassy premises).

15. Capacity building:

- 34 Young diplomats from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Iraq completed 5th Special Course for Diplomats conducted by the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, New Delhi in June 2025.
- India has allocated 200 ITEC slots to Iraq for providing assistance in training officials of the Government of Iraq. More than 100 Iraqi professionals availed of ITEC training in 2025-26.
- 12 Iraqi Yoga Students participated in a Yoga teachers training course under ITEC held in Bangalore during January 2026
- India under its 'General Scholarship Scheme' (GSS) organized by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) has been offering opportunity to Iraqi students for higher studies in Indian Universities. 75 scholarship slots have been allocated for the academic year commencing from 2026-27. 49 out of 50 scholarships were availed by Iraqi students during the academic year 2025-26
- Two counsellor level officers from Iraqi MoFA participated in ITEC Executive Programme on "Data for Development Capacity Building Initiative "(D4D-CBI)" conducted by NILRED (National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development) in October, 2024.
- 13 Iraqi Yoga students participated in advance level course for Yoga teachers training under ITEC held in Bangalore during Feb-March, 2024.

16. Engagement with Iraqi Think-Tanks

- The Al Nahrain Centre for Strategic studies was set up with the help of US Govt. The Centre is currently under the administrative control of National Security Council with direct reporting to NSA. The Nahrain Centre has an association with IDSA.
- The Al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue (RCD) is a well-known Iraqi think-tank based in Najaf City and is being run by Shia Zaid Al Talaqani. The center receives extensive funding and assistance from US, Europe, and etc. Global South Centre of Excellence at RIS has signed a Letter of Association (LoI) and an MoU for Cooperation with Al-Rafidain Centre for Dialogue (RCD) in June 2024. In May 2026 a delegation led by Ambassador visited RCD headquarters in Najaf and had interaction with Prof. Dr. Asaad Kadhim Shabib (AKS), Executive Director of RCD. AKS stressed the need to deepen ties with India, organizing intellectual webinars, translating English books into Arabic, promoting the heritage of India in Iraq through stronger exchanges and economic/cultural relations.
- M/s Accelerate India has signed an agreement for entrepreneurship development and innovation with the Koya University in Sulaymaniyah.

- Middle East Research Institute (MERI) is an independent, not-for-profit organization, focused on policy issues relating to the people, the land and the system of governance in the Middle East in general, and Kurdistan and Iraq in particular. It is based in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. MERI collaborates widely with internationally academic leaders and senior fellow from leading research institutions of USA, Europe, Turkey, UNDP, FAO, etc. A virtual meeting was held between Global South Centre of Excellence at RIS and MERI on 3 April, 2024. RIS has signed a Letter of Association (LoA) to MERI in April 2024. MERI has invited Global South Center of Excellence (GSCE) for its flagship annual conference in October, 2024 in Erbil.

17. **Indian community:** Before the Gulf war in 1991, there were more than 80,000 Indian nationals in Iraq. Most of them left Iraq before the war started. After the 2003 invasion, thousands of Indian workers were recruited by contractors to provide various services to foreign military bases in Iraq. Many of them left with the deteriorating security situation in the country. With the lifting of ban on Indians to travel to Iraq in May 2010, the number of Indian workers had steadily increased in the more stable Kurdistan region comprising Erbil, Sulaimaniya and Dohuk governorates, with better salaries and working conditions in steel mills, oil companies and construction projects. When the ISIS took over large parts of Iraq in 2014, Government of India evacuated thousands of Indian nationals from Iraq. There has been influx of Indian workers to Iraq after the revision of travel advisory in February 2019. *The total number of Indians in Iraq is now estimated to be around 25,000, mostly in Baghdad, Kurdistan region, Basra, Najaf and Karbala*

18. **Religious pilgrimage:** A large number of Indian pilgrimages visits the Holy shrines in Baghdad, Najaf and Karbala every year. About 1,00,000 Indians visited Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf and Baghdad for pilgrimage during, 2025. Several Indian tourists also visit the holy shrine of a revered Sufi Saint, Sheikh Syed Abdul Qadir Jeelani in Baghdad.

June 2026