

India-Libya Bilateral Relations

Background

India and Libya have traditionally enjoyed historic warm and friendly relations. India opened its Diplomatic Mission in Tripoli in 1969. The relations further strengthened with the visit of the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Libya in 1984. India has regularly supported Libya at international fora and welcomed the UNSCR 1506 adopted on 12 September 2003, lifting sanctions imposed on Libya.

Following 2011 political turmoil, India recognized the National Transition Council (NTC) on 16 November 2011 and continued to extend support at various fora. India provided humanitarian assistance of US\$ 1 million through the United Nation's Office of Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid. This was followed by another humanitarian assistance in the form of life saving drugs and medical equipment worth US\$ 1 million delivered to NTC in January 2012. A Libyan delegation visited India in December 2011 to explore the possibility of treatment of injured Libyans in India. Govt. of India also sent a team of prosthetic experts 'Jaipur Foot' to Libya for fitting artificial limbs.

In view of the fragile political and security situation in Libya, about 3800 Indian nationals were evacuated in 2014, which included 6 Indians kidnapped by ISIS. The Mission was temporarily relocated in Tunisia in 2011, then to Malta, and resumed its operations Tripoli in 2012, but was closed down in April 2019 due to worsening security situation. A skeletal staff of a consular clerk and a gardener was maintained at the Embassy Residence in Tripoli, while EoI, Tunis was accredited to look after affairs of Libya.

With improvement in security situation in Libya, the Mission in Tripoli has been reopened since July 2024 in order to revive the momentum of bilateral relationship, and subsequently, the ban on travel of Indians to Libya was lifted in August 2024, which was in force since April 2016 on security considerations.

Recent Engagements

During the political disturbance in Libya, the exchange of visits was restricted to bare minimum, particularly from India. However, the post-pandemic period has witnessed gradual increase in the number of business visas being issued to Libyans, reflecting resurgence of interest among Libyan importers for Indian products, particularly in the engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, and foodstuff. This tendency continues to grow.

A 4-member delegation from Libyan Ministry of Health visited India in October 2022 at the invitation of a pharmaceutical company in India for inspection of their manufacturing facilities. This contributed to generate a business of approximately US \$ 2 million. A 13-member delegation from Central Bank of Libya visited India in October 2023 for training session at the invitation

of M/s Dun & Bradstreet - a company dealing in commercial data, analytics and insights for businesses.

EAM's meeting with Libyan Foreign Minister:

EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar met the then Foreign Minister of Libya H.E. Dr. Najla Al Mangoush on 20 September 2022 on the sidelines of UNGA at New York. The two leaders reviewed various aspects of enhancing bilateral relations and the evolving political and security situation in the region.

Participation in VOGSS:

Libyan side has actively participated in the Voice of Global South Summits. In January 2023, Libyan Minister of Oil & Gas Mohammed M. Oun participated in the Energy Minister's Session and emphasized that Libya has the potential to be the 5th largest source of energy. In November 2023, Libyan Environment Minister Ibrahim Al Arabi Munir participated in the Environment Ministers' session at VOGSS 2.0 and shared his country's concerns on environment issues.

Higher Education Minister's visit:

A 4-member delegation led by Libyan Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research HE Imran Al-Qaib visited India to participate in the 1st India-Arab Universities Presidents' Conference held in New Delhi from 05-06 February 2025.

Later in the same month, a 4-member delegation led by Under Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resources Mr. Mohamed B. M. Turki visited India to attend 21st General Session of African-Asian Rural development Organization (AARDO) held in New Delhi on 21-22 February 2025.

Visit of Foreign Minister:

A 5-Member Delegation led by Acting Foreign Minister Mr. Taher Al-Baour participated in India-Arab Foreign Ministers Summit on 31 January 2026. The visiting delegation also held bilateral meeting with EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and reviewed the prospects of strengthening bilateral relations in diverse fields. This was the first visit by a Libyan Foreign Minister to India after a gap of over 15 years.

Economic and Commercial Relations

India and Libya have enjoyed close economic ties. In 1978, the two countries signed a framework agreement on "Protocol on Industrial, Economic and Scientific Cooperation". This was the beginning of consultations on economic cooperation between the two countries under Indo-Libyan Joint Commission (ILJC). Till now, a total of 10 sessions of JCM have been held.

The economic cooperation between the two countries spans the entire spectrum of commercial activities. Indian companies have been active in Libya for over 30 years. A number of projects have been executed in Libya by major Indian PSUs like BHEL, NBCC, OVL, IOC, Oil India, and private companies Punj

Llyod, Unitech, KEC, SSB, Dastur Engineering, Shapoorji Pallonji, SECON, Global Steel (Ispat Group Company), NIIT, Sun Pharma, Simplex Projects, DS Construction, etc. The projects included construction of hospitals, housing units, schools, roads, power plants, airports, dams, transmission lines, etc.

Indian companies, especially in oil & gas, power generation, infotech and construction sectors, have several projects in Libya. Indian Oil, Oil India and ONGC Videsh were involved in the Libyan hydrocarbon sector. In April 2014, Punj Lloyd won a contract of US\$ 665 million to set up infrastructure facilities at Zliten city. Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has successfully completed execution of prestigious Western Mountain Gas Turbine Power Project. Many Indian IT companies like JMR, DSS Software, I-flex Solutions and others have continued to provide software solutions to various Libyan companies especially in banking sector. Several Indian companies are seeking to resume stalled projects in Libya once the security situation improves.

Bilateral Trade

India – Libya bilateral trade is largely in India’s favour. In the post-pandemic era, the trade has witnessed steady growth. Primary items of India’s exports include engineering goods, drugs & Pharmaceuticals, mica, coal and other ores, minerals, rice, tea, coffee, ceramic products and glassware. The main items of India’s import from Libya are petroleum (crude and products) and Aluminum ores.

Bilateral trade figures (US\$ Mn) for the last 5 years:

F. Year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
India’s ex- port	153.91	239.60	337.91	565.12	650.38
India’s Im- port	70.52	358.20	729.89	238.55	223.86
Total	224.43	597.80	1067.80	803.67	874.24

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry, GoI

Economic and Commercial Visits from India

In order to revive the momentum of bilateral trade and investment, A 7-member Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) delegation visited Tripoli on 08-09 September 2025 and held series of fruitful meetings with General Union of Chambers of Commerce and Agriculture; Ministry of Health, General Electricity of Libya (GECOL); Ministry of Tourism; Ministry of Housing; and Ministry of Commerce and Trade.

Recently, 15 Indian producers and exporters of Tea, Coffee, Basmati Rice, Grains, etc. participated in the Libyan International Food Exhibition “LibyaFood7” held in Tripoli from March 29 to April 01, 2026. Response from Libyan importers has been encouraging.

Earlier Engagements

A 14-member Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) delegation had visited Libya from 30 October-1 November 2012 and had meetings with the Libyan Business Council and Chamber of Commerce and individual meetings with government authorities including Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, etc. A meeting with Prime Minister of Libya was also arranged during which the Prime Minister was accompanied by his three Ministers and senior officials.

A 2-member OVL delegation participated in the CWC “Libya Forum on Oil and Gas” held in Tripoli on 17-18 September 2013. A 2-member technical delegation from BHEL headed by the CMD Mr. B P Rao visited Libya to finalize completion of their power plant and also attended board meeting of ECCO. Three Indian companies participated in the Pharma Expo from 10-12 September 2013. Some Indian companies participated in the 11th Tripoli International Book Fair from 01-10 October 2013 that was held for the first-time post-revolution of 2011. Dr. Tamanna Chaturvedi, from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) visited Libya on 24-25 March 2014 to discuss Executive Development Programme under the aegis of IAFS with the Libyan Ministry of Economy.

An ‘India Pavilion’ with around 80 participating firms from a range of consumer product sectors (the highest Indian participation in recent times and the largest foreign country participation out of the eight countries participating in the TIF 2014) led by ITPO that marked the return of India to one of Africa’s oldest fairs after three years post February 2011 revolution was organized successfully. Also, an ‘India Day’ event fully funded by ITPO was organized on 6 April 2014 for B-2-B interaction and BSM.

A 16-member CII-led CEOs delegation visited Tripoli to scout for business opportunities in ‘New Libya’ from 5-7 April 2014 and also called on the first Deputy President of the GNC Ezzidine Mohammed Al-Awami among others. Mr. J.K. Pandey, Group General Manager, TCIL, the nodal agency visited Libya from 11-14 May 2014 as part of the efforts to help revive the Pan-African E-Network Initiative launched in Libya in 2008-09 which was stalled following the February 2011 revolution.

Economic and Commercial Visits from Libya

A 6-member Libyan delegation led by Mr. Saeed Ibrahim Al-Khattali, Assistant Under Secretary of Technical Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited India to attend 9th CII-EXIM Bank Conclave on India Africa Project Partnership from 17-19 March 2013 in New Delhi. A 5-member delegation from the Libyan Ministry of Health led by Deputy Minister Ali Saad Saeid Saad visited

India to attend “Health and Wellness Tourism Meet” from 26-29 April 2013 in Delhi. A 27-member business delegation headed by Chairman of Tripoli Chamber of Commerce and Vice Chairman of Libya Business Council (LBC) participated in ‘I for Afrika’ event organized by the Indo-African Chamber of Commerce from 3-6 October 2013 in Mumbai.

Two businessmen dealing with agriculture products attended the 33rd India International Trade Fair held from 14-27 November 2013 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. Dr. Abdulbari A. Arousi, Minister of Oil & Gas led a 6-member delegation to India from 12-14 January 2014 to attend the biennial international Oil & Gas Conference & Exhibition ‘PETROTECH’. A 10-member business delegation from Libya visited India to participate in the Marble stone & granite (STONA) expo held in Bangalore during 12-15 February 2014. Chairman of the Libyan Privatization and Investment Board (PIB) visited India to attend the CII-EXIM Bank conclave held in New Delhi from 9-11 March 2014. In April 2015 Mr. Ahmed Nuredin Ali Salem, Minister of Electricity in the Tripoli Salvation Government visited India at the invitation of BHEL.

Development Assistance and Capacity Building Cooperation

Libya has been among ITEC partner countries. However, the participation was less due to political disturbance in the country and closure of Indian Mission in Tripoli. The number of ITEC slots being offered to Libya were reduced from 30 in 2013 to 10 in following years. However, with re-opening of Mission in Tripoli, the ITEC slots have now been increased up to 45 in January 2025. During the current FY 2026-27, a total of 34 slots have already been utilized for Digital Health Innovations, Cyber Security, and IT training programmes. The Mission is working on optimization of the allocated slots.

Moreover, a total of 31 Libyan diplomats have attended the Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats (PCFD), at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, New Delhi – 10 each in December 2024, August 2025, June 2026 and 1 in February 2026.

India-Libya Cultural Relations

A Cultural Exchange Programme was signed in 2007 during the then EAM’s visit to Libya following which some ICCR-sponsored cultural troupes visited Libya and staged cultural performances in major cities. An 8-member Cultural Group of Kathakali, led by Shri Kalamandalam Raman Kutty, visited Libya in August 2008 and gave two performances in Tripoli and in Sirte. An 8-member Libyan cultural troupe sponsored by the ICCR visited India to perform during the first India-Africa Forum Summit in February 2008. A 12-member “Anart” Kathak group visited Libya from 16 - 22 November 2009 and performed in Tripoli, Sirte and Benghazi. Coinciding with Indian Republic Day Reception, an exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi was held in Tripoli on 26 January 2013 that was attended by a number of high dignitaries, foreign diplomats and prominent Indians.

Mission celebrated International Day of Yoga on 21 June 2025. Earlier, the IDYs were celebrated in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 in Tripoli. The event was however kept restricted to the Mission staff and Indian community members due to the fragile security situation.

Indian community in Libya & repatriation

Since the reopening of Embassy of India in Tripoli in July 2024 and subsequent relaxation of travel ban to Libya, the number of Indian workforce in Libya is gradually increasing. Currently, over 6000 Indians are in different parts of Libya, which predominantly include blue collar workers and few hundred professionals as well as those who have married Libyans and have been living there for several years.

Prior to the 2011 uprising, the number of Indians in Libya was estimated to be around 18,000. Indian professionals were mainly engaged in hospitals and teaching institutions, whereas major part of manpower was employed in construction projects. During the revolution, most of them were repatriated to India in February/March 2011. A few thousand Indians, however, continued to stay in Libya. The assistance rendered by Indian doctors and paramedics in Libya during the revolution was deeply appreciated. In July 2014, due to deterioration in security situation following the destruction of Tripoli International Airport, GOI carried out a second evacuation exercise, bringing back 3793 Indians, out of which 1330 were repatriated at GOI cost. In view of security considerations, GOI imposed a ban on travel of Indian nationals to Libya in April 2016, which has now been lifted since August 2024. However, Indian workers in small number continued to reach Libya through third countries in search of jobs.

Since the reopening of the Mission in Tripoli in July 2024, a total of 26 national have been rescued and repatriated to India. Earlier, in 2020, 7 Indian nationals were abducted in Asshwerif while they were on their way to Tripoli airport. This case also received much media attention. With Embassy's intervention, they were released and repatriated to India. In February 2022, 27 Indian workers were evacuated by the Mission from Benghazi in Eastern Libya with the help of International Organization for Migration. In 2023, the mission secured the release of 35 Indian Nationals and 09 Seamen, who were left stranded by unscrupulous agents and were kidnapped by militants and repatriated them to India. The Mission further facilitated the return of 3 Indian workers in 2024, 16 in January 2025 and 14 in January 2026.

(June 2026)
