

India-Kuwait Bilateral Relations

India and Kuwait enjoy traditionally friendly relations, rooted in history and have stood the test of time. India has been a natural trading partner of Kuwait and until 1961 Indian Rupee was the legal tender in Kuwait. Till the discovery and development of oil, Kuwait's economy was driven by its fine harbour and maritime activities which included ship building, pearl diving, fishing and voyages to India on wooden *dhows* carrying dates, Arabian horses and pearls that were traded for wood, cereals, clothes and spices.

2. **Political Relations:** India and Kuwait have had a healthy tradition of high-level contacts, as outlined below:

3. **VVIP visits from India to Kuwait:** These have been made by Vice President Dr. Zakir Husain in 1965, by Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi in 1981 and by Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari in 2009. Last visit to Kuwait by an Indian PM was 38 years back.

4. **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, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 1980 and again in 1983 (for the NAM Summit), HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 2006 and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in November 2013.

Recent Exchanges:

5. **From India:** Minister of State of External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan paid an official visit to Kuwait on 14-15 September 2019 and met Minister of State for Economic Affairs of Kuwait and also held bilateral talks, on a wide range of issues, with the Deputy Foreign Minister of Kuwait. In a first high level bilateral visit since

November 2013, Hon. EAM paid an official visit to Kuwait on 30-31 October 2018 and called on the Amir H.H. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Prime Minister H.H. Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah; and held wide ranging discussions with H.E. Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait. The 4th Foreign Office Consultations(FOCs) between India and Kuwait were held in Kuwait on 01-02 August 2018. MOS(MJA) led a 10 member delegation for the 3rd Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting (JMC) on Economic, Trade, Scientific and Technological Cooperation between India and Kuwait, held in Kuwait on 18-20 September 2017.

6. Gen. V.K. Singh (Retd), Minister of State for External Affairs visited Kuwait from 10-11 January 2018 and met Minister of State for Social Affairs & Labour of Kuwait. MOS (VKS) had earlier visited Kuwait from 6-7 September 2016 and met Deputy PM and Interior Minister, Deputy Foreign Minister, Minister of Social Affairs & Labour and Governor of Farwaniya Governorate. MOS (MAJ) visited Kuwait on 13 February 2018 to attend International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq (ICRI) hosted by Kuwait. National Security Advisor, Shri Ajit Doval, led a five member official delegation to Kuwait for the 3rd India-Kuwait Security Cooperation Dialogue from 13-14 March 2017.

7. **From Kuwait:** A delegation led by President of the Kuwaiti DGCA, Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah participated in the Global Aviation Summit in Mumbai on 15-16 January 2019. H.E. Ms. Hend Barak Al Sabeeh, Minister of Labour and Social Welfare visited India and held delegation level talks in New Delhi on 26 October 2018. The Kuwaiti Army Chief of State Lt. General Mohd. Al Khoder visited India from 18-21 September 2017 and met Minister of Defence, Mrs. Nirmala Sitaraman and other senior officials to boost defence cooperation between the two countries. A 15 member Higher Command Course delegation from the Army War College visited Kuwait from 24-28 September 2017 on a study tour. The Prime Minister of Kuwait accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah,

Minister of Oil Mr. Mustafa Jassem Al-Shimali, Minister of Commerce and Industry Mr. Anas Khalid Al-Saleh, senior officials and business leaders visited India from 7-10 November 2013. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited India from 10-13 March 2013.

8. **Commercial Relations:** Historically, Indo-Kuwaiti relations have always had an important trade dimension. India has consistently been among the top ten trading partners of Kuwait. Bilateral trade registered a 2.7% yoy growth in FY 2018-19 and stood at US\$8.76 billion, with Indian exports totalling US\$1.33 bn and imports at US\$7.43 bn (POL imports of 10.78 MMT, equivalent to US\$ 6.43 billion in price terms). The total annual bilateral trade with Kuwait during 2017-18 was US\$ 8.53 billion. India's exports to Kuwait included food items, cereals, textiles, garments, electrical and engineering equipment, ceramics, machinery and mechanical appliances, cars, trucks, buses, tyres, chemicals, jewellery, handicrafts, metal products, iron and steel, etc.

9. As part of its trade/commerce, tourism promotion efforts, the Embassy organizes events like trade exhibitions/ seminars on a regular basis and facilitates participation of Indian delegation in international trade fairs/exhibitions in Kuwait. Mission organized roadshows to promote trade events in the States of Goa and Tamil Nadu in April and June 2019 respectively. In March 2019, the Embassy organized a two-day exhibition, 'Best of Indian Healthcare Expo 2019', which witnessed participation of over 20 exhibitors, including leading Indian hospitals and healthcare centers, alternative healthcare providers, wellness centers and prominent medical travel planners from various parts of India, showcasing India's finest healthcare advancements. Other such events organized by the Embassy in the recent past include: "Made in India Exhibition" in March 2018 and February 2017 showcasing a wide variety of Indian products ranging from tyres/motorbikes, to televisions/refrigerators; "Indian Handicrafts and Handloom Exhibition" on 23 October 2016; "Know India" seminar on 23 October 2016; "Indian Food,

Herbal & Handicrafts Exhibition” on 18 March 2015; Conference of EPC companies on 9 December 2015.

10. **Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC):** Following the visit of the Amir of Kuwait to India in 2006, both sides agreed to set up an “India-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation”. The 2nd JMC meeting was held in New Delhi in July 2008. The 3rd JMC meeting was held in Kuwait from 18-20 September 2017. MOS(MJA) headed the Indian side during the JMC.

11. **Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs):** The 1st FOCs between India and Kuwait were held in New Delhi on 7 May 2012, while the 2nd FOCs were held in Kuwait on 11 September 2014 and the 3rd FOCs were held in New Delhi on 16 November 2016. The Fourth FOCs were held in Kuwait in October 2018.

12. **Indian companies in Kuwait:** Indian PSUs like TCIL, LIC (International), LIC Housing Finance, New India Assurance Company, Oriental Insurance Company, Air India Ltd. (Air India and Air India Express) have offices in Kuwait. During the last two years, Indian EPC companies viz. Larsen & Toubro, Shapoorji Pallonji, Punj Lloyd, Simplex Projects, Essar, Kalpataru etc. were awarded EPC contracts worth over US\$ 6 billion in Kuwait.

13. **Kuwaiti Investment in India:** So far, estimated investments in India are over US\$ 3.5 billion, of which approximately US\$ 3 billion is by Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA). Other significant Kuwaiti presence in India includes those by Alghanim Group of Kuwait; the KAPICO group; National Aviation Services; Agility Logistics, Hasibat Holding Co, KGA Group, KCIC, KIPCO, Global Investment House, Kuwait Finance House etc. India related funds launched in Kuwait include India Fund (October 2005); Tijari India Fund (December 2006); India Equity Fund (January 2007); Kuwait Indian Holding Company; India Private

Equity Fund; 3rd Real Estate Islamic Fund (May 2007); and Mayur Hedge Fund (August 2008).

14. **Hydrocarbon sector:** Kuwait remains a reliable supplier of crude oil & LPG to India, meeting our crucial energy needs. To discuss and expand co-operation in the hydrocarbon sector, the 4th meeting of the India-Kuwait JWG on Hydrocarbon was held in New Delhi on 15-16 September 2015. Mr. Nizar Al-Adsani, CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) accompanied by two members of KNPC attended the PETROTECH-2016 at New Delhi from 5-7 December 2016.

15. **Civil Aviation:** Air India operates flights between Kuwait and Ahmedabad, Chennai, Goa & Hyderabad; Air India Express has flights between Kuwait and Kochi, Kozhikode & Mangalore; Jet Airways operated, until suspension of its operations, 2 flights a day between Mumbai and Kuwait, while Kuwait Airways has flights from Kuwait to Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Kochi, Mumbai & Thiruvananthapuram. National Aviation Services, Kuwait, has been handling contracts for 5 Indian airports. Jazeera Airways operates flights between Kuwait and Kochi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad & Hyderabad. Indigo Airlines started its operations in October-November, 2018.

16. **S&T:** India and Kuwait have signed an S&T Agreement in April 2009. A delegation from Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) visited India from 18-22 November 2013 and signed a Programme of Cooperation with Department of Science & Technology and an MOU with CSIR. An 8-member delegation from CSIR and Ministry of Earth Sciences visited Kuwait on 14-16 April 2014. An 8-member delegation from KISR visited India from 25-26 May 2015 and held meetings with CSIR.

17. **Youth Affairs & Sports:** A two-member Youth Delegation from Kuwait visited India from 9-15 March 2016 under the Youth Exchange Programme.

18. **Cultural Relations:** There is interest in Indian Culture and there have been regular exchanges in these fields. A “Festival of India in Kuwait” was held in Kuwait in 2009. Executive Programme for Cultural and Information Exchanges (2013-16) was signed in 2013. Renowned Indian artistes viz. Niladri Kumar and Ustad Shujaat Husain Khan (Sitar), Salil Bhatt (Veena), Kala Ramnath (Violin), Rupak Kulkarni (Flute), Yogesh Samsi (Tabla), Kathak & Odissi dance troupe of Ms. Parwati Dutta Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt (guitar), Ms. Amita Dalal (Sitar) and Himanshu Mahant (Tabla) and Ms. Sonam Kalra’s Fusion Group performed in Kuwait. Bhangra Groups sponsored by ICCR performed in Kuwait in 2015. The Embassy organized Hindi Divas celebrations and 4th Dinkar Poetry Awards in September 2017; and Hindi Diwas in 2019 with participation from Indian schools in Kuwait. In collaboration with ICCR, visit of a Kuwaiti National (Mr. Ali AlSayegh) to Kumbh Mela for participation in Vishwa Sahabagita Programme in February 2019 was facilitated. The 5th International Yoga Day was celebrated in the Embassy in June 2019.

19. A three-member Kuwaiti delegation led by Asstt Director General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Dr. Bader Al-Duweesh participated/ represented the Kuwaiti Information Minister Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah in the World Cultural Festival, organized by the Art of Living Foundation from 11-13 March 2016 in New Delhi. A 4-member delegation from Kuwait attended the two day 'International Conference on Yoga for Body and Beyond' organized by the Ministry of AYUSH from 22-23 June 2016 at New Delhi.

20. There are over 70 Indian associations registered with the Embassy. These associations organize regularly socio-cultural programmes for the benefit of their members.

21. **Agreements:** Prominent amongst the various bilateral agreements signed are: Reciprocal Protection of Investment (2001); Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (2004); Extradition (2004); Juridical and Judicial Cooperation in Civil and Commercial

Matters (2005); MoU on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development (2007); Scientific and Technological Cooperation (2009); Cultural and Information Exchanges (2009); Education and Learning Cooperation (2009); MoU on Medical Cooperation (2012); Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons (2013); MoU between Foreign Service Institute and the Saud N. Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute (2013); MOU on S&T Cooperation between CSIR and Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR); MoU on Sports & Youth Affairs (2013); MOU on cooperation between KISR and Ministry of Earth Sciences (2014); MOU between ISRO and KISR (2015). MOU between Office of CAG and State Audit Bureau of Kuwait (2016). The Protocol amending the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income between India and Kuwait, on 15 January 2017.

22. **Indian Community:** The presence of over one million Indian community members in Kuwait (the largest expatriate community in Kuwait) form an important dimension of our bilateral ties with Kuwait. They are present in all segments of society in Kuwait and are considered largely as disciplined, hardworking, and law-abiding. The Embassy set up an Indian Workers' Welfare Centre in September 2009 which provides a labour complaint redressal mechanism and accommodation 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 in respect of issues being faced by them. In June 2015, the Mission introduced e-Migrate system for on-line attestation of work-contracts.

23. The Embassy is providing prompt consular, passport, attestation, visa and community welfare services. During 2019 (upto August 2019), a total of 1,35,393 services were given by the Mission including 55,668 passports, 63,443 attestations and 9,177 visas in a most expeditious manner. To facilitate repatriation of distressed Indian nationals, 13,056 Emergency Certificates (travel document) were issued by the Embassy during 2018 and during the year, the Mission attested 26,921 employment contracts. During 2018, Embassy

registered the deaths of 659 Indian nationals in Kuwait. The Mission has been arranging transportation of mortal remains within 2-3 days in case of normal death and a week to 10 days in the event of unnatural death needing police investigation and post-mortem.

Useful Resources:

Embassy website: www.indembkwt.gov.in;

Embassy's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/indianembassykuwait>;

Embassy's Twitter account: <https://twitter.com/indembkwt>;

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