

Embassy of India
Tunis

India – Tunisia Bilateral Relations

India has traditionally maintained cordial and friendly relations with Tunisia since establishment of diplomatic relations in 1958. The first resident Indian Mission at the level of Cd'A was established in Tunisia in 1963 and was raised to the Ambassadorial level in 1976 with the first Resident Ambassador in 1978. The Tunisian Embassy in New Delhi was set up in 1981. Tunisian leaders have expressed admiration for India's democracy and its leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and India's freedom struggle has served as an inspiration for Tunisia. Bilateral relations of the two countries are built on shared values including secularism and rule of law. Both the countries cooperate extensively on the international fora including the UN and other multilateral agencies.

Visits to India:

Date	Visit
November 1982	First Lady of Tunisia, Wassila Bourguiba visited India
1983	Prime Minister Mohamed Mzali
1991	FM Habib Boulares
December 2000	FM Habib Ben Yahya
5-8 April, 2015	Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi, President of Ennahda Party as a guest of the ICCR
26-29 Oct, 2015	Mr. Taieb Baccouche, then Foreign Minister of Tunisia to attend the 3rd India Africa Forum Summit.
20-21 Jan, 2016	Mr. Mongi Marzouk, Minister of Energy & Mines led a delegation to India-Africa Hydrocarbons Conference in New Delhi.
3-8 Feb, 2016	Tunisian Naval Chief attended the Int'l Fleet Review in Vishakapatnam.
28-31 Oct, 2017	Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui led the Tunisian delegation for the 12th session of the India-Tunisia Joint Commission in New Delhi.
10-12 April 2018	Mr Hachem Hmidi, Secretary of State of Energy Mining and Renewable Energies of Tunisia visited India to participate in the International Energy Forum meeting.

Visits from India:

July 1964	Vice-President Shri Zakir Hussain
April 1984	PM Smt. Indira Gandhi
May 1984	Vice-President Shri M. Hidayatullah
20 November 1992	PM Shri P V Narasimha Rao and Dr. Najma Heptullah, Dy. Chairman of Rajya Sabha
1999	Former PM Shri I.K. Gujral paid a visit to Tunisia in 1999
2000	Shri A K Panja, former MOS(EA) visited Tunisia to attend the 8 th JCM
June 2003	Textiles Minister Shri Kashi Ram Rana, visited Tunis and inaugurated an exhibition by the Synthetic and Rayon Textiles Export Promotion Council (SRTEPC)

26-30 April 2005	Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister for Science and Technology and Ocean Development. A programme of Cooperation in the fields of Science & Technology between India and Tunisia for the period 2006-2008 was also signed.
16-18 November 2005	Minister for Communications and IT, Shri Dayanidhi Maran, led a high-level India delegation comprising representatives from a number of Central Government Departments, Public Sector Undertakings, NGOs, to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) which was held in Tunis from November 16-18, 2005.
5-7 November 2012	Shri E. Ahmed, Minister of State for External Affairs paid an official visit to Tunisia at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Tunisia
11-13 July, 2013	Shri Srikant K. Jena, MoC (I/C) for Chemicals & Fertilizers paid a 3-day visit to Tunisia to mark the commencement of TIFERT plant, the India-Tunisia joint venture for manufacturing phosphoric acid.
2-3 February 2014	External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid paid a 2-day official visit to Tunisia. First Indian EAM visit ever.
2-3 June 2016	Vice President Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari visited Tunisia. Two agreements, i.e. Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Handicrafts and Agreement on Cooperation in Information and Communications Technology were signed.
9-10 July 2015	Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Hon'ble Minister for Textiles and Special Envoy of Prime Minister of India paid a 2-day visit to Tunisia.
26 Feb to 1 March, 2017	Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs visited Tunisia.
9-11 May 2018	MoS for Home Affairs Shri Kiren Rijiju visited Tunisia.
22-23 January 2020	EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Tunisia and met FM Mr. Othman Jerandi and discussed all aspects of bilateral relations. During the visit, an MoU was signed for setting up an 'India-Tunisia Centre for Innovation' to support innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, creation of an institutional link between universities, training centres in advanced technologies, start-ups and small and medium enterprises.

Foreign Office Consultations(FOC) and Joint Commissions Meeting(JCM): The 12th Joint Commission Meeting was held on 30th October 2017 in New Delhi. The 4th FOC was held on 30th April, 2021 virtually.

Bilateral Treaties, Agreements and MoUs: Several Agreements and MOUs have been signed between India and Tunisia. These include an Indo-Tunisian Trade Agreement (1960), Agreement on Friendship and Technical, Economic and Scientific Cooperation (1965), Cultural Agreement (1969), Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation (1994), Agreement on Scientific and Technology Cooperation (1995), Extradition Treaty (2000), Protocol of Cooperation between Diplomatic Institutes of the two countries (2002), Agreement in the field of Small and Medium Enterprises (2007), Air Services Agreement (2007) and Cooperation Agreement between Tunisia Radio and All India Radio (2012). The MOUs include those on utilization of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes (1997), on Agriculture (2000), on Tourism (2000), Cooperation in Communication & Information Technology, Cooperation in the field of Handicrafts(2016), agreements on Judicial Cooperation, Cooperation in Youth Matters, Bilateral Trade and Investment (2017) Establishment of Soil,

Water and Tissue Testing Laboratory in Tunis (2017), Establishment of India-Tunisia Centre for Innovation(ICT) (2020).

Joint Working Groups: Following JWG's exist between the two countries:

(a) **JWG on Drugs and Pharmaceuticals:** The seventh meeting of India-Tunisia JWG on Drugs and Pharmaceuticals met virtually on 14 January, 2022.

(b) **JWG on S&T:** The 4th meeting was held in New Delhi on 23-24 March 2017. A new programme of cooperation in the field of S&T for the period 2017-2019 was signed.

(c) **JWG on ICT:** The 2nd Session was held on 29 June 2015 in New Delhi.

(d) **JWG on SMEs:** The 3rd meeting of JWG on SMEs was held at New Delhi on 02 April, 2014.

(e) **JWG on Textiles:** The first meeting was held in Tunis on 16-17 March, 2009. An MoU on Handicrafts was signed in June 2016.

(f) **JWG on Oil and Natural Gas:** First meeting was held in New Delhi in August 2007.

(g) **JWG on Judicial Cooperation:** First meeting was held virtually on 13 January 2022.

(h) **JWG on Space Cooperation:** The first meeting was held on 23 March 2021.

(i) **JWG on Trade Cooperation:** First meeting was held on 15 December 2020 virtually.

Science & Technology Cooperation: India-Tunisia Cooperation in Science & Technology is guided by the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation signed between the two countries in October 1995 and the Programmes of Cooperation there under. The 4th session of the Joint Committee on S&T was held in New Delhi on 23-24 March 2017.

Cooperation under India-Africa Forum Summit: Under this initiative, Institute Pasteur of Tunis (IPT) is among the 3 institutes selected by the African Union Commission for support by the Indian scientific community to work on specific problems of the African continent and to find practical solutions for them. Accordingly, a close cooperation programme has been initiated between IPT and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), New Delhi. Tunisia avails of a number training programmes in different fields under IAFS.

Pursuant to the agreement signed during the JCM in October 2017, a Soil, Water and Tissue Testing Laboratory will be set up in Tunis by the Indian Institute of Soil Science, Bhopal under IAFS-III programme. Proposal for setting up a Next Generation Centre of Excellence by CDAC in the field of IT is under consideration. Proposal for setting up a Regional Civil Aviation Centre under IAFS is also under consideration of the Ministry.

Training courses under ITEC, IAFS, CV Raman and ICCR Scholarships:

Even during the pandemic, the exchange remained unaffected through our e-ITEC programme, wherein we had provided training to 200 Tunisian nationals during the pandemic period. Over the past 7 years, more than 700 Tunisian nationals have availed of this facility. The number of slots offered and utilized in the last few years are as follows:

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Slots allotted	55	75	110	115	100	100 (e-ITEC)	100 (e-ITEC)	100
Slots utilized	38	78	120	122	116	19	181	76 (e-ITEC) 23 (ITEC)

A group of 50 young Tunisian diplomats visited India from 28 October 2021 for a two-week special training programme at FSI. Foreign Minister of Tunisia Khemaies Jhinaoui, expressed his deep appreciation and thanked GOI for this initiative, saying such a gesture would go a long way in reinforcing and strengthening bilateral ties with India.

As a follow-up of the only stand-alone CT dialogue with Tunisia in January 2018, Tunisian Security Officers took part in a specialized training course in Tactical Driving, and bomb disposal organized by NSG at its Manesar training centre in October-November.

A three-member IIFT delegation under IAFS programme imparted a week-long training course in Tunis on international trade law and trade negotiations to members of Tunisian export organizations, chambers of commerce, government functionaries and private sector. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in-charge of Economic Diplomacy inaugurated the course along with senior government officials from Ministry of Trade.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in Tunisia: India has completed two ‘Quick Impact Projects’ in Tunisia. The first QIP is for landscaping and beautification of a park in Jendouba University (where a bust of Mahatma Gandhi has also been installed), at a cost of US \$ 8100 and the second QIP is for creation of a play area in Mreghma School in Jendouba, Tunisia at a cost of US \$ 6277. A third QIP under construction is that of a mini synthetic football ground for Raoued Municipality in Ariana at a cost of US \$ 63,547. The total cost of the QIPs is US \$ 77,924 USD. All three QIPs are located in remote/underprivileged areas in Tunisia, which goes in line with Tunisia’s policy of promoting development in those areas.

Bilateral Trade:

India accounts for almost 50% of Tunisia’s global phosphoric acid exports. India exports a wide range of products including knocked-down kits, automobiles, electrical items, cotton, mechanical engines, organic chemical products, rubber, rice, coffee/spices etc. Indian Exports to Tunisia increased by 47.4% during the calendar year 2021 compared with 2020. In 2022, 211 business visas have been issued from January till October.

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

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 (Jan – Oct)
Indian export	299.810	315.19	351.16	296.81	418.8	446.23
Indian Imports	103.903	79.86	93.86	71.51	169.5	235.19
Total	403.713	395.05	445.02	368.32	588.3	681.42

A 12-member multi-sectoral FICCI trade delegation visited Tunisia on 27-30 July 2016. This was the first trade visit after a gap of several years. Four B2B meetings were held in Tunis and Sfax, the second largest city. There was overwhelming response and eagerness from the Tunisian companies in all four B2Bs.

A 9-member business delegation launched by the Plastics Export Promotion Council visited Tunis from 9-11 November, 2016. A Buyer-Seller Meet was organized with CONECT, the apex chamber of commerce in Tunis, and a business meeting with two other prominent chambers of commerce, UTICA and Tunisian Chamber of Commerce and Industry were held.

A 12-member business delegation from Tunisia accompanied Tunisian FM in October 2017. They had business meetings with CII, FICCI and FIEO.

Pursuant to the agreement between FIEO and Tunisian CEPEX for export promotion signed in October 2017, a 26-member multisectoral FIEO business delegation visited Tunisia on 15-17 January, 2018. The delegation called on the Investment Minister and also had meetings with apex chambers of commerce and industry in Tunisia.

A seven-member Tunisian business delegation sponsored by the Indian side participated in Chemical and Plastics exhibition organized by CAPEXIL, CHEMEXIL and Plastics Export Promotion Council in Mumbai from 22-24 March.

A five-member ICT business delegation sponsored by the Indian side participated in media, entertainment and creative art organised by the Services Export Promotion Council of India in Mumbai from 6-8 March.

A 13 member CII business delegation visited Tunisia from 10-13 July 2018. The delegation met Minister of Trade and Commerce, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, Minister of Mining Energy and Renewable and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in charge of Economic Diplomacy. A MoU was signed with CONECT, and B2B meetings were organized with CONECT and UTICA Sousse

India Tunisia Joint Venture: Tunisia-India Fertilizer SA (TIFERT) is a joint venture company, worth US\$450 million with a capacity to produce 360,000 tonnes of phosphoric acid per annum, which was made operational in 2013. Two Indian companies, Coromandel Fertilizers Ltd and the Gujarat State Fertilizers Ltd, own 30% equity in the company.

Other Indian companies: Indian companies, M/s KEC International Ltd and Jyoti Structures Ltd, are in Tunisia since several years putting up electric transmission lines. An assembly plant of Mahindra pickup trucks is operational in Tunisia since October 2013 which is selling more than 1200 vehicles per year with a target to produce up to 2,500 per year. Mahindra and Mahindra provide the vehicles as knocked-down kits, which are assembled by the Tunisian company in Tunisia. A new passenger SUV model has been launched by Mahindra; the company has plans to set up its assembly line for these SUV/KUV Mahindra vehicles in 2020 if the response is good. M/s TATA Motors have commenced production of pick-up trucks with Tunisian companies 'Le Moteur' and 'Icar' in June 2015. TATA's flagship Tunisian model Tata Xenon has been very popular as 2000 vehicles have been sold in short span of 2 years. TATA is also exploring possibility to introduce small commercial and heavy vehicles. M/s. VA Tech WABAG, an Indian multinational headquartered in Chennai, specializing in setting

up sustainable water and waste water infrastructure has been awarded the contract for setting up Zarat Desalination Plant in south of Gabes.

Other Activities: A five-member composite delegation led by Ministry of Ayush and a private Ayurveda products company took part in the first International Congress of Phytotherapy 2017 in Monastir, Tunisia from 29 April-1 May 2017. This was part of the follow-up of the JWG meeting on Drugs and Pharmaceuticals held in January 2017 when the Indian delegate from Ministry of Ayush had evinced interest in the Tunisian research entity in traditional medicine.

Culture: Under the Cultural Exchange Programme between the two countries, cultural troupes from both sides visit each other country regularly (except the pandemic when travel restrictions were stringent). The Tunisian artisans have been regularly participating in Surajkund Mela since 2016.

The first-ever ICCR chair on Indian civilisation was established for one month at the University of Manouba in Tunis in February-March 2017. Prof Srivastava, former Director, National Archives of India taught Indian civilisation, evolution of ancient, medieval and modern Indian history to PG students of literature, languages and history in the Faculty of Humanities and Languages, Manouba University.

A 20-member young Tunisian women delegation, invited by Ministry of Youth and Sports, visited India from 26 February-5 March 2018. Similarly, a 15-member young Indian women group visited Tunisia in October 2018. The Indian delegation was received by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sabri Bachtobji and Secretary of State for Youth Abdel Kaddous Saadaoui. Both the Ministers highlighted the importance of people-to-people exchanges, especially youth interactions for a better understanding of modern advances made by India in technology, education, research and scientific studies. The Indian delegation also visited Parliament and interacted with Tunisian parliamentarians.

A 10-member cultural band from Tunisia participated in Africa Day celebrations organized by ICCR in New Delhi on 25 May 2018.

Two prominent Tunisian journalists visited India from 19-26, August 2018 as part of XP Division's familiarization programme for journalists from Francophone African countries.

As part of celebrations of the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Tunisia, a Festival of India in Tunisia was held in 2018 that showcased India's culture, food, cinema and rich traditions. Two food festivals sponsored by ITDC – one in April and the second in August 2018 were held in Tunisia. In all, nine cultural groups sponsored by Ministry of Culture of India and ICCR visited Tunisia in 2018 and performed at different places including the prestigious summer cultural festival in Sousse and El Djem.

A symposium on Gandhian philosophy was organized on 2nd October 2018 to mark his 150th birth anniversary. Mahatma Gandhi's photo exhibitions, setting up of Gandhi Corner and India Corner at various universities and prestigious institutes, donation of books to schools and colleges also took place as part of year-long celebrations. A commemorative postage stamp on Mahatma Gandhi was released by Tunis Post in November 2018. A quiz on Mahatma Gandhi was also conducted on social media.

In November, 2018 India participated as Guest of Honour and Focus International partner at the prestigious Carthage Film Festival for the first time since its inception in 1966. The Indian segment was inaugurated by the Minister of Culture Mohammed Zine El Abedine and Director General of Carthage Film Festival Nejb Ayad on 5 November 2018. In all, 8 Indian films including two films by Satyajit Ray were screened in the festival. The Manipuri Film Director of the acclaimed Manipuri documentary “Lady of the Lake” Haobam Paban Kumar and a well-known film critique Premendra Nath Mazumdar were invited at the festival. A Manipuri cultural group from ICCR was also invited.

Two Tunisian films were screened at the International Film Festival of India, Goa from 3-10 November 2018. Tunisia was the partner country at the Kolkata Film Festival held in Kolkata from 10-17 November 2018. Two Indian films were screened at the Tozeur International Film Festival in southern Tunisia in December 2018. A Tunisian film festival was held in Manipur from 25-26 May 2019 with participation of six Tunisian art and commercial films.

Tourism promotion campaigns were launched through Incredible India posters on city buses and billboards in the capital Tunis and on highways during August and November 2018.

Two Tunisian films – ‘Whispering Sands’ and ‘The Beauty and the Dogs’ participated in the world panorama section of IFFI, Goa from 20-28 November. Two Indian films were screened at the Tozeur International Film Festival held in Tozeur (*550Km from Tunis*) from 5-8 December.

Two Members of Parliament of Ennahda, the largest political party in Tunisian Parliament, participated in The Raisina Dialogue from 8-10 January, 2019. Four Tunisian representatives had participated in the 2018 edition.

For the first time, ICCR Foundation Day was celebrated on 9th April 2019 at Sheraton hotel, Tunis with a cultural performance in collaboration with the Tunisian-Indian Friendship Foundation. Several activities, including classical and contemporary Indian dance and music, quiz and yoga demonstrations, distribution of books on Indian culture and on Mahatma Gandhi were undertaken. A Power Point presentation on year-long cultural activities undertaken by the Mission was shown. Over 100 guests, including Tunisian friends of India and Indian community members, attended the event. On the occasion, a special publication “India through the eyes of Tunisia” in French was brought out by the Mission. It included an introduction about ICCR and its vision and motto, ICCR’s scholarship programmes and other flagship programmes such as DVP, AVP, promotion of Hindi, various cultural activities, yoga, Hindi classes, lectures on Indian culture etc. undertaken by our Mission in Tunisia under the aegis of ICCR.

A group of 22 senior Tunisian administrators underwent a specially-tailored training programme on e-governance and cyber security at Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi from 15-26 April 2019.

A 3-member delegation headed by JS (DPA-II) visited Tunisia in May 2019 to lay the groundwork for the launching of a project that aims to create a Tunisian-Indian centre for the renewal of ICTs in the Ghazala technology park and to study ways to strengthen Tunisian-Indian cooperation in the areas of advanced technologies and support for start-ups.

In May 2019, the first-ever Gandhi Udyan was inaugurated in Riadh Ennasr (Ariana governorate) as part of the city's initiative to build partnership with India in various cultural, social and environmental fields. The project involved planting fruit and ornamental trees in memory of Mahatma Gandhi. Over 130 trees were donated by the Embassy for the purpose. The ceremony took place in the presence of the Mayor, former Foreign Minister of Tunisia, school children and many residents of Ariana municipality. A plaque depicting ICCR's logo and that of Ariana municipality was unveiled.

International Day of Yoga 2021 was, like other such events, celebrated by the Mission virtually in view of the pandemic. Ambassador sent out a video message in Arabic, encouraging Tunisians to join "Do at home Yoga" programme. Ms. Beya Hamrouni, a local yoga practitioner conducted a yoga session for the Embassy staff. The Mission also promoted the "mYoga" application inaugurated by Hon'ble Prime Minister on its social media platforms.

A Teacher of Indian Culture (TIC) was deployed by ICCR from February 2018 to January 2021, who conducted classes in the Chancery premises and at other places in coordination with Ministry of Youth & Sports, Ministry of Education, Ministry of S&T, Ministry of Higher Education and others.

ITEC Day has been celebrated virtually in 2020 and 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. A message from Ambassador was sent to all ITEC participants, conveying greetings and encouraging them to share photos of their visit to India, which were shared on Mission's social media.

In February 2022, certificates were awarded to Ms. Maha Gaida and Mr. Mohamed Ali Bounaouara from Tunisia for successfully completing a course on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy organized by ICCR and conducted by Dr. Shobhana Radhakrishna.

A Yoga session was organised by the mission on the occasion of International Day of Yoga 2022 to promote yoga and create awareness on the benefits of yoga among the Tunisians, in Belvedere Park in Tunis. The event witnessed a sizeable yoga enthusiast turnout. The event was also graced by local Tunisian authorities such as the Mayor & 4 Vice-Mayors of the Ain Khadra, Deputy Representative of Ministry of Youth and Sports for the Governorate of Tunis.

The Independence Day 2022 was celebrated on a grand scale. The occasion was graced by Guest of Honour, Ms. Neila Nouria Gongi, Tunisian Minister of Industry, Energy and Mines.

On the occasion of 153rd birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, homage was paid to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on 2 October 2022 at the campus of Manouba University.

A virtual seminar was organised on the occasion of Ayurveda Day on 23 October 2022 with two ayurveda experts - one Indian and one Tunisian to share insights on the benefits of Ayurveda.

Rashtriya Ekta Diwas was celebrated in the form of a Unity Run which witnessed an impressive participant turnout including Indians and friends of India. Mayors of Ain Khadra and Representative from Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs also joined the Embassy on the occasion.

Indian Community: The permanent Indian community consists of a couple of families who have been here since several decades. There are some Indian professionals working in different projects; strength of the Indian community stands at about 50.

(November 2022)

Useful resources: <https://www.embassyofindiatunis.gov.in/index.php>
<https://www.facebook.com/IndiainTunisia/>
<https://twitter.com/IndiainTunisia>