

## **India- Israel Bilateral Relations**

### **Political Relations**

1. India and Israel are strategic partners. India announced its recognition of Israel on September 17, 1950. Soon thereafter, the Jewish Agency established an immigration office in Bombay (Mumbai). This was later converted into a Trade Office and subsequently a Consulate. Regular Embassies were opened in 1992 when full diplomatic relations were established between the two countries. India and Israel are celebrating 30 years of the upgradation of bilateral ties to full diplomatic relations in 2022.

2. The political ties between India and Israel are very warm and forward-looking. On November 2, 2021, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett met on the sidelines of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, UK. India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar paid an official visit to Israel on October 17-21, 2021, at the invitation of the Alternate Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel Yair Lapid. India's Chief of Army Staff Gen. M.M. Naravane visited Israel in November 2021. India's Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria visited Israel in August 2021.

3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook a historic first-ever visit to Israel by an Indian Prime Minister on July 4-6, 2017 during which the relationship was upgraded to a strategic partnership. The then Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu made a return visit to India on January 14-19, 2018. Joint statements were issued during both visits. Hon'ble President of India Pranab Mukherjee paid a state visit to Israel in October 2015 while Hon'ble President of Israel Reuven Rivlin paid a state visit to India in November 2016.

4. Earlier, Indian External Affairs Ministers Jaswant Singh (2000), S.M. Krishna (2012), and Sushma Swaraj (2016) paid visits to Israel. From the Israeli side, Hon'ble President Ezer Weizman visited India in December 1996 while Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited India in September 2003, during which the 'Delhi Statement on Friendship and Cooperation' was signed.

5. India and Israel have established bilateral consultation mechanisms in all sectors of collaboration, including water, agriculture, counter-terrorism, and defense. The 16<sup>th</sup> Foreign Office Consultations were held in December 2020. The first Policy Planning Dialogue was held in October 2020. The Joint Working Group on Defense was held in October 2021 in Israel. The annual India Israel Management Committee was held in New Delhi in November 2021. The Track-2 14<sup>th</sup> India-Israel Forum was held in December 2021.

## **Economic and Commercial Relations**

*(Further details: <https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/pages?id=nel5a&subid=7ax9b>)*

6. India and Israel have restarted negotiations for the Free Trade Agreement with an aim to conclude it by mid-2022. From US\$ 200 million in 1992, bilateral merchandise trade stood at US\$ 4.66 billion in 2020-21 and US\$ 4.82 billion during the period April-November 2021 with the balance of trade being in India's favor. India is Israel's third-largest trade partner in Asia and seventh largest globally. In recent years, bilateral trade has diversified into several sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agriculture, water, IT and telecom. Major exports from India to Israel include precious stones and metals, chemical products and textiles. Major imports by India from Israel include precious stones and metals, chemicals and mineral products, base metals and machinery and transport equipment.

7. Indian software companies, notably Jain Irrigation, Sun Pharma, Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Tech Mahindra, State Bank of India, Larsen&Toubro, Infosys, and Cyient are expanding their presence in Israel. Israeli companies have invested in India in renewable energy, real estate, water technologies and are also setting up R&D centres and production units in India. During PM Modi's visit in July 2017, the first meeting of the newly established India-Israel CEO Forum took place, while its second meeting took place during PM Netanyahu's visit to India.

## **Investment**

8. Cumulative FDI from India, as of September 2019, was about US\$ 118 million. During April 2000 – September 2021, Israel’s direct FDI into India was reported at US\$ 254.66 million.

### **Agriculture**

9. Under a comprehensive work plan for cooperation in agriculture signed on May 10, 2006, bilateral projects are implemented through MASHAV (Center for International Cooperation of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and CINADCO (Centre for International Agricultural Development Cooperation of Israel’s Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). Agricultural cooperation between the two sides is formalized through three-year action plans. The two sides are currently implementing the fifth phase of the joint action plan (2021-23).

10. Thirty Centers of Excellence for Horticulture have been established in thirteen Indian states.

### **Defense & Security**

11. As part of regular goodwill visits of Indian ships, three Indian naval ships from the Western Fleet made a port call in Haifa in May 2017. *INS Tarangini*, a naval training ship, made a port call in Haifa in September 2018. India participated in the multilateral Airforce exercise *BlueFlag-2021* held in October 2021 in Israel.

### **Innovation**

12. Start-Up Nation Central and India's International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology (iCREATE) signed a bilateral program to accelerate innovation and tech cooperation in September 2020.

13. India's Defense Research and Development Organization and Israel's Directorate of Defense R&D, signed Bilateral Innovation Agreement in November 2021.

### **Science & Technology (S&T)**

14. India-Israel cooperation in S&T is overseen by the Joint Committee on S&T, established under the S&T Cooperation Agreement signed in 1993. During the visit of PM Modi to Israel in July 2017, a MoU for establishing India-Israel Industrial R&D and Innovation Fund (i4F) by the Department of Science and Technology, India and the National Authority for Technological Innovation, Israel was signed. This MoU, with a contribution of US\$ 20 million from each side over 5 years, is playing an important role in enabling Indian and Israeli enterprises to undertake joint R&D projects. It funded more than ten R&D projects, including the Apollo-Zebra Medical Artificial Intelligence-based project for the early detection of tuberculosis.

### **Health**

15. On December 21, 2020, India and Israel signed an agreement on cooperation in the fields of health and medicine. The agreement envisages the deepening of bilateral strategic partnership in the

health sector including in R&D in health between the two countries. India and Israel also continue to support and cooperate in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **People-to-people relations**

16. The civilizational relations between the two peoples date back to more than two millennia. India has welcomed Jews for several centuries and their contribution, in turn, has enriched Indian culture. India is known in Israel as an ancient nation with strong cultural traditions and as an attractive tourist destination.

17. Tourism and people-to-people contacts have been given a major boost with the commencement of the Air India flights from March 2018 between New Delhi and Tel Aviv, with five flights per week (reduced to two flights per week currently owing to Covid-19). Israeli carrier El Al operates direct flights between Mumbai and Tel Aviv whereas Israeli Arkia Airlines operates flights to Goa (Panaji) and Kerala (Kochi).

### **Students**

*(Further details: <https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/pages?id=mep2b>)*

18. There are approximately 900 Indian students studying in Israel, mostly at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels. Since 2012, Israel has been offering post-doctoral scholarships to students from India in all fields. The Government of Israel also offers short-term summer scholarships for Indian students. India offers ICCR scholarships to

Israeli students every year for various courses in Indian institutions. Several courses related to India are taught at Israeli universities.

## **Indian Community**

(Further details:<https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/pages?id=xboja> )

19. There are approximately 85,000 Jews of Indian-origin in Israel, who are Israeli passport holders. The main waves of immigration into Israel from India took place in the 1950s and 1960s. The majority are from Maharashtra (*Bene Israelis*) and relatively smaller numbers are from Kerala (*Cochini Jews*) and Kolkata (*Baghdadi Jews*). In recent years, some Indian Jews from the North-Eastern states of India (*Bnei Menashe*) have been immigrating to Israel. While the older generation still maintains its cultural links with India, the younger generation is increasingly assimilated into Israeli society.

20. Shri Eliyau Bezalel hailing from Chennamangalam, Kochi has distinguished himself as an eminent agriculturalist in Israel and became the first Israeli of Indian-origin to receive *BhartiyaPravasiSamman* in 2005. Sheikh Munir Ansari, who is the trustee of the Indian Hospice in Jerusalem, which represents a unique Indian connection to the Holy City, was honoured with the *PravasiBharatiya Samman* in 2011. In 2017, Dr. Lael A. Best, an Israeli cardiothoracic surgeon of Indian origin, was conferred this award.

21. In 2013, the Embassy facilitated the first-ever National Convention of Indian Jews in Israel that was held on September 23, 2013, in Ramla municipality. The event brought together around 5,000 people from all four major groups of Indian-origin Jews of Israel. Four more annual conventions have since been held in subsequent years in the cities of Yeruham (2014), Ramla (2015), Kiryat Gat (2016) and Ashkelon (2017). The community plans to hold its next convention in 2022. The *Know India Programme* has been effective in binding the Indian origin youth to India.

22. There are about 15,000 Indian citizens in Israel, mostly caregivers employed by Israeli elders to take care of them, diamond traders, IT professionals and students.

23. PM Modi addressed a gathering of around 8000 PIOs and Indian nationals working in Israel at the Tel Aviv exhibition grounds during his visit in July 2017. EAM Dr. Jaishankar interacted with the Indian-origin community in Israel during his visit to Israel in October 2021.

## **Culture**

24. India and Israel signed a Cultural Exchange Programme (for 2020-23) in August 2020 to facilitate bilateral cultural exchanges spanning all fields of art and culture, including youth exchanges. Yoga and Ayurveda are popular in Israel and the International Day of Yoga is always well-attended and celebrated with

great enthusiasm. The Indian Cultural Centre in Tel Aviv started functioning in January 2020 and regularly organizes events to promote cultural ties. A list of activities organized by the Indian Cultural Centre can be found on the website of the Indian Embassy.

### ***January 2022***

#### **Useful Resources:**

Website: <https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/>

Facebook: @IndiaInIsrael

Twitter: @indemtel

Instagram: @indiainisrael

#### **Indian Cultural Center:**

Twitter: @iccr\_israel

Facebook: @ICCRinIsrael

Instagram: @iccr\_israel