

India-Kuwait Bilateral Relations

India and Kuwait enjoy traditionally friendly relations, which are 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 a legal tender in Kuwait. Till the discovery and development of oil, Kuwait's economy revolved around its fine harbour and maritime activities which included ship building, pearl diving, fishing and voyages to India on wooden *dhow*s carrying dates, Arabian horses and pearls that were traded for wood, cereals, clothes and spices.

Political Relations:

2. India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Kuwait following its independence from British Protectorate in 1961. Prior to establishment of diplomatic relations, India was represented by a Trade Commissioner. The year 2021-22 marked the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between two countries.

3. The VVIP visits from India to Kuwait were of Vice President Dr. Zakir Husain (1965), Prime Minister Smt Indira Gandhi (1981) and Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari (2009). The VVIP visits from Kuwait to India were of Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (1964); Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (1980) and again in 1983 (*for the NAM Summit*); Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (2006); Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (2013). Amir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmed Al Jabar Al Sabah visited India on a private visit in July 2017. The last high-level visit from either side was that of Prime Minister of Kuwait to India in 2013. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi met Kuwaiti Crown Prince Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah on the sidelines of UNGA in New York on 23 September 2024.

4. The Ministerial visits from India to Kuwait in the last few years include that of the visit of Minister of External Affairs Shri S. Jaishankar on 18 August 2024; Minister of State of External Affairs Shri Kirti Vardhan Singh on 13 June 2024 in the wake of tragic Mangaf fire incident; Minister of Oil and Natural Gas of India (MoPNG) Shri Hardeep Singh Puri on 17 December 2023 to convey condolences on the demise of the late Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; Minister of State of External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan in August 2023; EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar's visit in June 2021; Minister of Petroleum, Natural Gas and Steel, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, in October 2020 to offer condolences on the demise of late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah; Minister of State of External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan in September 2019 and EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj in October 2018.

5. The Ministerial visits from Kuwait to India in the last few years include that of Abdullah Al-Yahya, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 3-4 December 2024, Dr. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs in March 2021; Hend Barak Al Sabeeh, Minister of Labour and Social Welfare in October 2018 and Chief of Staff of Armed Forces Lt. General Mohd. Al Khoder in September 2017.

Bilateral Agreements / MoUs:

6. Around 26 bilateral agreements / MoUs have been signed between both sides in various domains. Around 14 agreements / MoUs are at different stages of finalization. The MoU on Defence Cooperation have been finalised for signing at an appropriate occasion. Kuwait has also been invited to join International Solar Alliance (**ISA**) and Coalition of

Disaster Resilient infrastructure (**CDRI**). Kuwait has conveyed its in-principle concurrence to join ISA.

Bilateral Mechanisms

7. **Joint Commission for Cooperation (JCC):** During the visit of Kuwaiti Foreign Minister to India in December 2024, the Memorandum of Understanding to establish a joint committee for cooperation at the level of Foreign Ministers was signed. It established new Joint Working Groups in areas of Trade, Investment, Education, Technology, Agriculture, Security and Culture, under the JCC in addition to the existing ones in areas including Hydrocarbons, Health and Consular matters.

8. **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". Three meetings of JMC have been held in 2006, 2018 and 2017. A Joint Statement on establishment of a Joint Ministerial Commission at the level of Foreign Ministers was issued during the visit of Foreign Minister of Kuwait to India in March, 2021. A bilateral MoU on setting up of Joint Commission with 7 new Joint Working Groups (JWGS) and 3 existing JWGs has been agreed to by both sides and will be signed at an appropriate occasion.

9. **Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs):** Six rounds of FoCs have been held so far in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2023 and 2024 at the level of JS(Gulf), MEA and Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Affairs, MoFA, Kuwait. The 6th FOC was held in Kuwait on 24 July 2024.

10. **UN/Multilateral consultations:** The first round of UN/multilateral consultations between India & Kuwait was held in Kuwait on 1 June 2023 at the level of JS(UNP), MEA and Assistant Foreign Minister (IO), MoFA. The second round has been proposed to be held in India at mutually convenient date.

11. **Hydrocarbon sector:** Kuwait remains a reliable supplier of crude oil & LPG to India. The Joint Working Group (JWG) on Hydrocarbons has been meeting regularly at the level of JS(IC), MoPNG and Assistant Undersecretary, Ministry of Oil of Kuwait. The 6th meeting was held virtually on 31 July 2023. Indian side has proposed to host the next JWG in India during the last quarter of 2024.

12. **Medical cooperation:** India and Kuwait signed an MOU on Medical Cooperation on April 23, 2012 at New Delhi. A Joint Working Group on Medical Cooperation (JWG) was set up and its first meeting was held in Kuwait in November 2013. The 2nd Meeting of JWG on Medical Cooperation was held virtually on 31 August, 2021. The 3rd meeting is proposed to be held this year in New Delhi.

13. **Cooperation during COVID-19 pandemic:** India and Kuwait demonstrated a shared sense of solidarity during the Covid-19 pandemic. An Indian medical team came to Kuwait in April 2020 to help fight COVID-19 in Kuwait. A consignment of 200000 doses of Covishield vaccines was provided to Kuwait on payment basis in February 2021. From the Kuwait side, during the Second wave of COVID-19 in India, an Air/Sea bridge was established to carry medical supplies from Kuwait to India. Kuwait sent a special aircraft with 282 oxygen cylinders, 60 oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other medical supplies onboard on 04 May, 2021. This was followed by Indian Naval Ships, INS Kolkata, INS Kochi, INS Tarkash, INS Tabar & INS Shardul carrying liquid medical oxygen in ISO tanks, Oxygen cylinders, concentrators & other medical supplies to India. Indian community in Kuwait also contributed to the efforts. In total, over 425 metric tons of

liquid medical oxygen, over 12,500 oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators, ventilators and other medical equipment was sent from Kuwait to India during the month and half long operation. Separately, under the Vande Bharat Mission (VBM), the Embassy facilitated travel of around 2,20,000 Indians back to India.

14. **Manpower cooperation:** Labour and Manpower issues form the core of our relations with a large number of workers, both white collar and blue collar, working in Kuwait. Indians are the largest expatriate community in Kuwait (approximately 1 million), both in terms of number of Indian citizens and also worker-wise. There is an existing mechanism of a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Labour, Employment and Manpower Development to discuss these issues, which has been meeting regularly. The 7th JWG meeting was held virtually in 2021. An MoU for 'Cooperation in the Recruitment of Domestic Workers' was signed in 2021. The next meeting is proposed to be held in October 2024 in New Delhi.

15. **Science & Technology:** A number of agreements and MoUs have been signed between India and Kuwait, including an S&T Agreement in April 2009, programme of cooperation between Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and DST, MoU between KISR and CSIR etc. Director General of KISR led a two-member delegation to India in October 2019 and held fruitful discussions with various research institutions, including ISRO, CSIR, and IISC. A delegation led by DG, KISR is expected to travel to India in October 2024 to meet with Secretary (DST) and DG (CSIR) to discuss areas of scientific collaboration.

Economic Relations:

16. **Bilateral Trade:** India-Kuwait relations have always had an important trade dimension. India has consistently been among the top trading partners of Kuwait. Total bilateral trade with Kuwait during FY 2023-24 was US\$ 10.47 billion. Indian Exports have increased from US\$ 1.56 billion in 2022-23 to US\$ 2.1 billion in 2023-24 with YoY growth of 34.7% with top Five export items being Aircraft parts, Cereals, organic Chemicals. Vehicles, Electric machinery. During FY 2023-24, Kuwait was the 6th largest crude supplier with about 3.0 % of India's total energy needs.

17. Indian PSUs viz. TCIL, New India Assurance, LIC, Oriental Insurance have offices in Kuwait in association with local sponsors, as per prevailing regulations. Indian top private sector companies such as Air India, L&T, Shapoorji Pallonji, Kalpataru Power Transmission Ltd, KEC, TERI, WIPRO, Tata, Ashok Leyland etc. are also present in Kuwait with local tie-ups.

18. **Investments:** Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) invests indirectly in India through global fund managers and most of these investments are in liquid asset classes like equities. KIA's estimated investments in India are more than US\$10 billion, a sovereign wealth fund with assets in excess of US\$ 800 billion.

19. Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection Agreement (BIPPA) was signed in June 2003 with the State of Kuwait with the initial tenure of 15 years and expired on 27 June 2018. Two rounds of negotiations for the new BIT have taken place, the last one in June 2023.

20. **Civil Aviation:** A weekly seat capacity arrangement of 12000 seats for carriers of each side is in place. The Kuwaiti side has been insisting on increasing the weekly seat capacity. From the Kuwaiti side, Kuwait airlines and Jazeera operates flights whereas from

Indian side, Air India, Air India Express and Indigo operates flight between India and Kuwait. There are multiple ports of call in India (*Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Goa, Kochi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai*). MoCA, India and DGCA, Kuwait have recently discussed this issue during the sidelines of ICAN in Malaysia in November 2024. and have agreed to further discuss the bilateral civil aviation talks in March 2025.

Cultural Relations:

21. Historically, India-Kuwait relationship has been anchored in and nurtured by close cultural contacts and people to people linkages. The Embassy has been promoting Indian culture and heritage through various programs and initiatives. During the year 2021-22, Embassy celebrated the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait by organizing various events. Over 200 cultural programmes were organized, including events like 'Splendors of India' and 'Namaste Kuwait'. A 'Festival of India' under the aegis of Ministry of Culture was held in Kuwait in March 2023. The Programme for Cultural and Information Exchanges (2013-16) was signed in 2013. A new draft MoU for Culture Exchange Programme has been agreed between both sides and is expected to be signed at an appropriate opportunity.

22. A weekly Hindi radio program 'Namaste Kuwait' has been started by Kuwait National Radio since April 2024. This also featured in PM's Mann Ki Baat episode on 30 June 2024. The translation of abridged versions of Ramayana and Mahabharata into Arabic by Kuwaiti nationals Abdullah Al-Baroun and Abdullateef Al-Nisf was highlighted in PM's Mann Ki Baat episode on 27 October 2024. Indian movies are shown every week on Kuwait National TV. Some Indian films are also screened in theaters in Kuwait on release.

23. **Education:** There are 26 Schools in Kuwait following CBSE curriculum with over 60,000 students, mainly Indians and some Arab and South Asian expats as well. There are not many Indian students pursuing higher education in Kuwait. Similarly, there are few Kuwaiti students in Indian Universities. Discussions are ongoing with Kuwaiti side on accreditation of Indian Universities in their NBAQ list that will allow Kuwaiti students to study in India. An "India Study Centre" at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Kuwait University was set up in December 2006. India Corners have been setup in GUST, Kuwait Technical College and Kuwait College of Science and Technology in 2024. An MoU on establishment of 'Hindi chair' was signed between ICCR and Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) on 12 September 2024.

24. **Land for Diplomatic Enclave:** A proposal for allocation of land in Mishref Diplomatic Enclave to build a residential complex for Indian diplomats/officials and allotment of similar plot of land for construction of Kuwaiti Consulate Office/Residence in Mumbai on reciprocal basis has been under consideration for a long time. Ministry has requested Government of Maharashtra to identify a suitable plot for Kuwaiti Consulate.

Consular Relations:

25. The Indian community with a strength of just over 1 million is the largest expatriate community in Kuwait and is regarded as the community of first preference among the expatriate communities. Professionals like engineers, doctors, chartered accountants, scientists, software experts, management consultants, architects; technicians and nurses; retail traders and businessmen are present in Kuwait, though a large proportion consists of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The Indian Business Community in Kuwait has carved a niche in the Kuwaiti market in retail as well as distributorship. There are over 200 Indian associations registered with the Embassy. These associations organize regularly

socio-cultural programmes and humanitarian activities.

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