

Brief on 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 long expressed admiration for India's support of anti-colonial struggles in Africa, its democratic traditions, and iconic figures such as Mahatma Gandhi. India's freedom movement and its enduring commitment to democracy have served as a profound source of inspiration for Tunisia. Two countries share values such as secularism and rule of law and south-south solidarity as well as Non-Aligned movement. Both the countries have been cooperating and espousing many common causes in international fora including the UN and have been supporting each other's candidates for several international bodies.

2. **High-level visits from Tunisia to India:** Notable high-level visits from Tunisia include the visits of Wassila Bourguiba, First Lady of Tunisia, in November 1982, and Prime Minister Mohamed Mzali in January 1983, followed by Habib Boulares and Habib Ben Yahya, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, in March 1991 and December 2000 respectively. After the spring revolution of 2011, Sheikh Rached Ghannouchi, President of the Ennahda Party, visited India in April 2015, engaging with Indian leaders and students, while Foreign Minister Taieb Baccouche led the Tunisian delegation to the 3rd India-Africa Forum Summit in October 2015. Other high-level visits include Mongi Marzouk, Minister of Energy & Mines, in January 2016, Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui in October 2017 for the India-Tunisia Joint Commission and Agriculture Minister Ezzeddine Ben Cheikh in February 2025 for attending AARDO Conference in New Delhi.

3. **High-level visits from India to Tunisia:** Early high level visits included Vice-President Shri Zakir Hussain in July 1964,

Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi in April 1984, and Vice-President Shri M. Hidayatullah in May 1984. Subsequent engagements included transit visit of Prime Minister Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao in November 1992, former Prime Minister Shri I.K. Gujral and Dr. Nejma Heptullah, Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, in November 1999, and Shri A.K. Panja, Minister of State for External Affairs, in 2000. Vice President Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari visited Tunisia in June 2016. Other high-level visits encompassed ministers responsible for textiles, science & technology, communications & IT, chemicals & fertilizers, home affairs, and external affairs, including Shri Kapil Sibal (2005), Shri Dayanidhi Maran (2005), Shri E. Ahmed (2007, 2012), Shri Srikant K. Jena (2013), Shri Salman Khurshid (2014), Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar (2015), Shri M.J. Akbar (2017), Shri Kiren Rijju (2018) and EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar (2020).

4. **Bilateral Dialogue Mechanism (FOC and JCM):** Bilateral cooperation between India and Tunisia is guided by a Ministerial-level Joint Commission and a structured Foreign Office Consultation mechanism. The 12th JCM was held in New Delhi in October 2017, led by Tunisian FM Khemaies Jhinaoui, accompanied by a 12-member business delegation that held meetings with CII, FICCI, and FIEO; the next session of JCM is proposed to be held in May/June 2026. The FOC, with its first session in December 2001, has so far held six Secretary-level sessions, the latest in Tunis in March 2026.

5. **6th Session of FOC:** The 6th Session of India–Tunisia Foreign Office Consultations took place in Tunis on **27 March 2026**, co-chaired by Dr. Neena Malhotra, Secretary (South), MEA and Mr. Mohamed Ben Ayed, Secretary of State, Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During her visit, Secretary (South) also paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Mohamed Ali Nafti. During the consultations, both sides reviewed the full spectrum of bilateral ties, including political engagement, high-level visits, trade and economic cooperation, capacity building, cultural exchanges and people-to-people cooperation. The two sides also reaffirmed their close cooperation and mutual support at the UN and other multilateral fora. They exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, including India-Africa cooperation

forums. Both sides also underscored the significance of high-level interactions, including the India-Tunisia Joint Commission Meeting, in advancing bilateral political and economic cooperation and unlocking new opportunities.

6. **Joint Working Groups:** India and Tunisia maintain a network of Joint Working Groups (JWGs) across multiple sectors to strengthen bilateral cooperation: **Drugs and Pharmaceuticals** – 7th meeting held virtually on 14 January 2022; **Scientific & Technological Cooperation** – 5th meeting in Tunis on 6 January 2025; **ICT** – 2nd session in New Delhi on 29 June 2015; **SMEs** – 3rd meeting in New Delhi on 2 April 2014; **Textiles and Handicrafts** – 1st meeting in Tunis on 16–17 March 2009; **Oil and Natural Gas** – 1st meeting in New Delhi in August 2007; **Judicial Cooperation** – 1st virtual meeting on 13 January 2022; **Space Cooperation** – 2nd virtual meeting on 15 February 2024; and **Trade and Investment** – 1st virtual meeting held on 15 December 2020; the 2nd meeting is proposed to be held on 11-12 May 2026 in New Delhi.

7. **MOUs/Agreements in process:** Several MoUs and agreements are currently in process between India and Tunisia, covering areas such as prevention of human trafficking; combating international terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking; cyber security; mutual assistance in criminal matters; avoidance of double taxation; preferential trade, bilateral investment, traditional systems of medicine and homeopathy; maritime transport; meteorology and climate; mutual recognition of educational qualifications; tourism; renewable energy; technical cooperation in transport and logistics; and cooperation in digital solutions and digital transformation.

8. **South-South Cooperation:** Tunisia has actively engaged in the **Voice of Global South Summits**, with participation in Foreign Ministers' session (January 2023), Education Ministers' session (November 2023), and Energy and IT sessions (August 2024), contributing to discussions under India's G-20 Presidency. To strengthen South-South cooperation, Mission has been engaging with the leading strategic institutions and think tanks actively. The Mission facilitated the signing of a **Letter of Association** in

July 2025 between the Center for Mediterranean and International Studies (CEMI), Tunis and RIS, Delhi. An India-Tunisia Dialogue Forum on Security and Counter-Terrorism, was co-hosted by the Mission on 17 February 2026 in Tunis with the International Center for Strategic, Security and Military Studies (CIESSM). The hybrid forum brought together security and counter-terrorism experts and academics from both countries to discuss shared challenges in combating terrorism, radicalization, and post-conflict reintegration.

9. **India-Africa Forum Summit Cooperation:** Under the IAFS framework, the Institute Pasteur of Tunis collaborates with Indian institutions, including the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), on joint research, training, and capacity-building initiatives. Key projects include the planned establishment of a Soil, Water, and Tissue Testing Laboratory in Tunis and an India-Africa Civil Aviation Academy. Additionally, a Centre of Excellence in El Ghazala Technopark was proposed under a January 2020 MoU to enhance Tunisia's technological capabilities. While progress was initially delayed due to site allocation, the Tunisian side has now proposed to align the project with current technological developments.

10. **Quick Impact Projects (QIPs):** The Mission has successfully implemented two Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in Tunisia and is currently executing a third, all aimed at improving community infrastructure in remote and underprivileged areas. The first project involved the landscaping and beautification of a park at University of Jendouba, at a cost of US\$8,100, featuring a bust of Mahatma Gandhi as a symbol of peace and friendship. The second project, implemented at Mreghma School in Jendouba City at a cost of US\$6,277, focused on the creation of a dedicated play area to enhance recreational facilities for students. A third QIP, currently under progress in Raoued Municipality, Ariana, involves the construction of a mini synthetic football ground to provide improved sports infrastructure for local youth and foster greater community engagement.

11. **Bilateral Trade:** During the 12th Session of the Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) held in New Delhi in October 2017,

both sides set an ambitious target of achieving USD 1 billion in bilateral trade within five years; however, this goal remains to be achieved. Nevertheless, India continues to be a key trading partner for Tunisia, accounting for nearly 50% of its global phosphoric acid exports. Tunisia's principal exports to India include inorganic chemicals and fertilizers, while India exports automobiles, electrical equipment, machinery, cotton, rice, coffee, spices, and sugar. Bilateral trade has remained steady, reaching **US\$ 521.71 million** in **2024–25**. During the period **April 2025–January 2026**, total trade stood at **US\$ 449.56 million**, comprising Indian exports of US\$ 316.76 million and imports from Tunisia of US\$ 132.80 million. *(Source: D/o Commerce)*

12. There is considerable potential under the **3T** (Trade, Technology and Training) initiative to deepen India–Tunisia cooperation in trade and investment, digital public infrastructure such as Aadhaar and Unified Payments Interface, renewable energy including through the International Solar Alliance, and capacity-building initiatives to support Tunisia's economic modernization.

13. During the 6th Session of Foreign Office Consultations held in Tunis in March 2026, both sides agreed on the need for focused efforts to expand and diversify bilateral trade to reach \$ 1 billion target. They also agreed to further expand cooperation in emerging areas such as fertilizer, agriculture, water management, renewable energy, digital public infrastructure and other sectors of mutual interest.

14. **Tunisia-India Fertilizer Joint Venture:** The Tunisia–India Fertilizer Joint Venture (TIFERT) was established in Skhira in 2006 as a collaboration between two Tunisian state-owned companies—M/s Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa (CPG) and M/s Groupe Chimique Tunisien (GCT)—and two Indian partners, M/s Gujarat State Fertilizers Corporation (GSFC) and M/s Coromandel International Limited (CIL). In this USD 465 million project, the Indian partners, GSFC and CIL, each hold a 15% equity stake, while the remaining 70% is jointly held by GCT and CPG. TIFERT, which became operational in 2013, is **a flagship project** to

produce phosphoric acid with an expected capacity of 360,000 tonnes annually.

15. **Indian Companies in Tunisia:** Indian companies also have a strong presence across sectors: Mahindra and Tata Motors in automotive assembly, KPIT Technologies in software, Larsen & Toubro and Kalpataru in infrastructure, Dr. Reddy's and Advans Pharma in pharmaceuticals, and Va Tech Wabag in water desalination project. An Indian company M/s Jakson Green has been awarded an EPC contract for 100 MW Solar PV Project in Kairouan Governorate of Tunisia.

16. **Capacity Building and Training:** Since 2014, under India's ITEC program, around 1000 Tunisian nationals have received training across various sectors. Additionally, 4 Tunisians received ICCR scholarships and 26 benefited from the CV Raman Scholarship. Specialized programs have included 50 young diplomats at India's Foreign Service Institute (2018), Tunisian security officers trained in tactical driving and bomb disposal with NSG (2018), and 22 senior administrators trained in e-governance and cyber security (2019).

17. **Cultural and People-to-People Connect:** India and Tunisia share a vibrant cultural relationship, strengthened through the **Cultural Exchange Program (2023–2026)**. Since 2014, initiatives include ICCR-sponsored music, dance, and theatre performances, yoga sessions, exhibitions, and film festival participation. Key activities include the Festival of India (2018), establishment of Gandhi Udyan (2019), Tunisian participation in Surajkund Mela (since 2016– till 2026), and the formation of the Tunisia-India Friendship Association (2024), fostering sustained educational, artistic, and wellness exchanges.

18. **Events Organized by the Mission:** The Mission has actively fostered bilateral engagement and cultural cooperation through a series of high-profile events. Key initiatives include the first **International Day of Yoga** in Tunis (2015) and its subsequent annual celebrations, a symposium on Gandhian philosophy in 2018 marking **Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary** alongside a **commemorative postage stamp** by Tunis Post, the

Festival of India (2018), and the **Indian Food Festival** (2025), all highlighting India's rich culture, cinema, and cuisine. In November 2018, India participated as Guest of Honour and Focus International partner at the **Carthage Film Festival**, while two Tunisian films were featured at the International Film Festival of India, and Tunisia served as a partner country at the **Kolkata Film Festival**.

19. Recent activities include a **Rajasthani folk performance** at the Carthage International Festival (August 2025), the hybrid "India Ayurveda and Tourism Day" webinar (September 2025) promoting wellness and medical tourism, and the **Viksit Bharat Run** (November 2025) involving community tree planting, pledges for sustainability, and participation of a Member of Tunisian Parliament.

20. **Indian Community:** The permanent Indian community consists of a couple of families who have been here since several decades. As per records available in the Mission, the strength of the Indian community is around 300, which includes Indian professionals working in various projects and Indian businessmen. There are around 25 Indian students and a majority of them are undertaking Pilot Training courses.

10 April 2026