

India-Libya Relations

Background

Though separated by geography, India and Libya enjoy strong bilateral ties. India established its Diplomatic Mission in Tripoli in 1969. The high water mark of Indo-Libya relations was the visit of Late Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Libya in 1984. India has supported Libya in international fora. India welcomed the United Nations Security Council resolution 1506 adopted on September 12, 2003, lifting sanctions imposed on Libya.

Liberation of Libya

In early 2011 Libya witnessed powerful nationwide uprising which led to the change of regime. On 23 October, 2011, Libya was formally declared 'liberated' and in late November 2011 an interim government, National Transitional Council (NTC), was formed. In July 2012 general elections for 200-member General National Congress were conducted and in November 2012 Cabinet sworn in. The elected representatives would write Libya's Constitution as per which general elections are likely to be conducted in 2014.

India recognized the NTC

The Government of India from the very beginning interacted with the National Transitional Council (NTC) of Libya in London, Istanbul, Paris and in New York and had conveyed its support to the NTC. The formal recognition was conveyed in November 2011. The Government of India provided humanitarian assistance of US\$ 1 million in cash through the United Nation's Office of Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid. Another supply of humanitarian assistance, consisting of mainly life saving drugs and medical equipment worth US\$ 1 million, was also provided to the NTC in Tripoli in January 2012.

Bilateral Interactions during the last few years:

There have been several high-level visits between India and Libya in the last few years. Shri EVKS Elangovan, Hon'ble Minister of State for Commerce & Industry visited Libya in November 2004 to attend the 9th Session of Indo-Libya Joint Commission. In the same month, Shri Gulam Nabi Azad, Hon'ble Minister for Parliamentary Affairs & Urban Development also visited Libya at the invitation of the Libyan side. In May 2005 Shri E. Ahamed, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs visited Libya. In July 2005, Shri Rao Inderjit Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs visited Libya. In January 2007 Shri Murli Deora, Hon'ble Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, visited Libya. In May 2007 Shri Pranab Mukherjee, External Affairs Minister, visited Libya. In September 2009, Shri K. Rehman Khan, Deputy Speaker of Rajya Sabha visited Libya. In September 2010 Shri Jayant Prasad, Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, paid a short visit to Libya. Recently, Shri. E Ahmed, Minister of State for External Affairs visited Libya from

14th to 16th April 2013 when he called on Libyan President, PM and held discussions with Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy, Oil & Gas and Housing & Utilities. Also the Libyan Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Mohamed Abdelaziz met Hon. EAM on the sidelines of 68th UNGA September 2013 in New York.

From the Libyan side, in March 2007 Mr. Burrani, Minister for Asian Affairs, visited India. In July 2007 Mr. Al Isawi, Minister for Economy, Trade & Investment, visited India on the occasion of 10th session of Indo-Libya Joint Commission. In April 2008, Dr. Abdussalam Treki, Minister for African Affairs, led the Libyan Delegation to New Delhi to participate in the India-Africa Forum Summit. In March 2009 Captain Ramadan, Secretary, Administration Committee of Harbours Authority (Minister of State), visited India to negotiate the bilateral Shipping Agreement. In 2010 Dr Treki, President of the United Nations General Assembly, visited India. In July 2011 Mr. Abdelati Al-Obeidi, Foreign Minister of Libya, paid a short visit to India. In September 2012 a 5-member delegation led by Ambassador Ramadan Rahim, Director General (Asia) in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited India and held consultations with WANA Division and Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of External Affairs, for enhancing cooperation between Diplomatic Academy of Libya and Foreign Service Institute. In November 2012 a four-member delegation, led by the Deputy Chairman of the High National Election Commission of Libya, visited India and an MOU was signed between the two Election Commissions.

A Libyan Defence delegation visited India to attend the Air Defence Show held in February 2013 in Bangalore. An 11-member Parliamentary delegation from the General National Congress of Libya to interact with the Indian Parliament made a study visit to India in April 2013. A Libyan delegation led by Deputy Minister of Health visited India to attend International Summit on Health & Wellness Tourism held on 26-28 April, 2013 in New Delhi.

Bilateral Cooperation

The Government of India has offered Government of Libya to provide assistance in the area of artificial limbs and prosthetics to the injured Libyans in Libya itself by setting up an initial camp with about 1,000 artificial limbs to be conducted by a visiting Indian medical team who would also provide training to the Libyan medical professionals in Libya itself.

Pursuant to the decisions of the India-Africa Forum Summit I & II, setting up of Centers for Agricultural Seed Production-cum-Demonstration; Material testing Laboratories; Farm Science; and Soil, Water and Tissue Testing Laboratories, in Libya are under process. Setting up of a Vocation Training Center in Libya by the Government of India is also under process.

Under the Government of India's Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Program 30 slots have been allocated for Libya for 2013-14. These are fully funded short term technical and professional courses spread over 280 programs in 50 reputed institutions in India.

Apart from ITEC courses, there are various other training courses also for which nominations are called for from time to time. Under the IAFS-II Scheme 5 Libyans attended various training courses in 2012-13. ICCR has also allocated 8 slots for Libya for higher studies under the Africa Scholarship Scheme for the year 2013-14.

Following the launching of the Pan-African e-governance initiative a Centre in Libya pertaining to tele-medicine, tele-education, e-governance, etc. was set up. Under this initiative all nations in Africa Continent are being connected to India through satellite network. After revolution re-activation of this centre is under process.

Libya has suffered heavy casualties during the revolution. In order to provide them better medical care injured Libyans are also treated in India.

Important Bilateral Treaties and Agreements

The following Agreements/Memorandum of Understandings have been signed between India and Libya:

- Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion (1981);
- Agreement for Cooperation in the field of Health and Medical Sciences (1983);
- Agreement on Economic Cooperation (1985);
- Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA) (2007);
- Cultural Exchange Agreement (2007);
- Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in the Field of Elections (2012).
- MoU between the two Election Commissions in Nov 2012.

Economic and Commercial Relations

India and Libya have enjoyed close economic ties. In 1978, the two countries signed a framework agreement on "Protocol on Industrial, Economic and Scientific Cooperation". This was the beginning of consultations on economic cooperation between the two countries under Indo-Libyan Joint Commission (ILJC). Till now, a total of 10 sessions of ILJC have been held. Holding of 11th Session of ILJC has been under consideration and suitable dates are being worked out.

The economic cooperation between the two countries spans the entire spectrum of commercial activities. There are several Indian companies, including major Public Sector Undertakings like Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, ONGC Videsh, Indian Oil Corporation, Oil India, and private companies like Punj Llyod Limited, Unitech Limited, KEC International, Dastur Engineering, Shapoorji Pallonji International, Global Steel Limited (Ispat Group Company), NIIT, Sun Pharma, Simplex Projects and Simplex Infrastructure Limited, which have executed a number of projects in Libya.

Indian companies especially in Hydrocarbon, Power, Construction and IT sectors, have several on-going projects in Libya. Indian Oil majors - Indian Oil, Oil India and ONGC Videsh (OVL) – are engaged in the Libyan Hydrocarbon sector, both in Upstream as well as downstream. Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has successfully completed execution of prestigious Western Mountain Gas Turbine Power Project. I-flex Solutions has implemented a project on core banking solutions with Central Bank of Libya and other five banks. Also over the past three decades, Indian companies have executed several projects in Libya. These include construction of hospitals, houses, schools, roads, power plants, airports, dams, transmission lines, etc. Several Indian companies have conveyed their willingness to resume stalled projects and to partake in new Libya's reconstruction efforts.

A 14-member Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) delegation visited Libya from 30 October-1 November, 2012. The delegation made several interactive meetings with the Libyan Business Council and Chamber of Commerce and individual meetings with government authorities, like the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health, etc. Delegation's meeting with Prime Minister of Libya was also arranged during which the Prime Minister was accompanied by his three Ministers and senior officials.

A 2-member OVL delegation participated in the CWC "Libya Forum on Oil and Gas" held in Tripoli on 17-18 September 2013. A 2 member technical delegation from BHEL headed by the CMD Mr. B.P.Rao visited Libya to finalize completion of their power plant and also attended board meeting of ECCO. Three Indian companies participated in the Pharma Expo which was held from 10-12 September, 2013. Some Indian companies participated in the 11th Tripoli International Book Fair from October 1-10, 2013 that was held for the first time post-revolution of 2011. Furthermore, a 27-member business delegation headed by the, Chairman of Tripoli Chamber of Commerce and Vice Chairman, Libya Business Council (LBC) participated in 'I for Afrika' event organized by the Indo-African Chamber of Commerce in Mumbai from 3-6 October, 2013. A MoU for cooperation between LBC and CII was also signed.

Bilateral Trade

Bilateral trade between India and Libya has witnessed a phenomenal growth in recent years. During April-March 2013 period India's exports to Libya was US\$ 215 million whereas imports from Libya have been US\$ 1700 million. The main items of India's exports to Libya are coffee, tobacco manufactured, marine products, processed minerals, drugs, pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals, machinery & instruments, transport equipments, natural silk yarn, fabrics, and other commodities. The main item of India's imports from Libya is petroleum (crude and products). During 2012 India imported 3% of total Libyan crude.

India-Libya Cultural Relations

India and Libya have signed a Cultural Exchange Agreement in 2007 during the External Affairs Minister's visit to Libya. In the last few years, a number of Indian cultural troupes, sponsored by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), have visited Libya and staged cultural performances in major cities of Libya. An 8-member Cultural Group of Kathakali, led by Shri Kalamandalam Raman Kutty,

visited Libya in August 2008 and staged two performances in Tripoli and in Sirte. An 8-member Libyan cultural troupe sponsored by the ICCR had visited India to perform during the first India-Africa Forum Summit, which was held in India in February 2008. A 12-member "Anart" Kathak group visited Libya from 16 November to 22 November, 2009, and performed in three cities of Tripoli, Sirte & Benghazi. Coinciding with Indian Republic Day Reception, an exhibition on Mahatma Gandhi was held on January 26, 2013 at Radisson Hotel which a number of Libyans including high dignitaries, foreign diplomats, and prominent Indians visited and highly appreciated.

NRI/PIO population

Prior to the uprising in Libya the number of Indians engaged in Libya was estimated to be around 18,000+. The Indian professionals were mainly engaged in hospitals and other teaching institutions whereas major part of manpower was engaged in the construction projects. During the course of revolution most of them were evacuated to India in February/March 2011. Few hundred Indians continued to serve in Libya even during the revolution period. Gradually more Indians have returned to Libya and presently there are about 4500 Indians engaged in Libya. The demand of medical professionals and nurses in Libya is growing and the Embassy has resumed providing attestation on recruitment documents for doctors, nurses and other categories of paramedics. The help and assistance rendered by Indian doctors and paramedics in Libya during the revolution was appreciated by the Libyans. On September 22, 2013 the Indian Community School (ICS) at Tripoli that was functioning for decades prior to the revolution of 2011 was reopened. The ICS is on the pattern of CBSE, Delhi and has classes up till the 5th grade to begin with.

Air links with India

Presently there is no direct flight from India to Libya. The convenient air routes from India to Libya are via Abu Dhabi (Ettihad), Dubai (Emirates), Doha (Qatar Airways), Istanbul (Turkish Airways) and via Europe.

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