

INDIA- PALESTINE BILATERAL RELATIONS

India's support for the Palestinian cause is an integral part of the nation's foreign policy. In 1974, India became the first Non-Arab State to recognize Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In 1988, India became one of the first countries to recognize the Palestinian State. In 1996, India opened its Representative Office in Gaza, which was later shifted to Ramallah in 2003.

2. India has always played a proactive role in garnering support for the Palestinian cause in multilateral fora. India has consistently supported, co-sponsored, and voted in favour of UN General Assembly Resolutions securing the right to self-determination of Palestinians (Res.74/139, 2020), urging Israel's compliance with legal obligations viz. ICJ's Construction of the Wall Opinion (ES-10/15, 2004), and its status as a non-member State at the UN (Res.67/19, 2012). In 2011, India also voted in favour of Palestine becoming a full member of UNESCO. The NAM Ministerial Committee on Palestine was established under India's Presidency during the VII NAM Summit in New Delhi in 1983. As a member of the Security Council, India continued to voice its support for a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, within secure and recognized borders, at peace beside Israel as endorsed in the relevant UNSC and UNGA Resolutions.

Important Bilateral Visits and Political Interactions

3. There have been regular high-level bilateral visits between India and Palestine. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a historic visit to Palestine on 10 February 2018, the first for an Indian Prime Minister. Prior to that, President Shri Pranab Mukherjee visited Palestine in October 2015 (first ever visit by an Indian President to Palestine). There have been other high-level visits from India to Palestine in recent years viz. Visit of Smt. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister in January 2016 and Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs in November 2016. Late President Yasser Arafat visited India several times. President Mahmoud Abbas visited India in 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012 and in May 2017 on his third State Visit. During his visit in 2017, President Abbas had discussions with Rashtrapatiji and Prime Minister while the Vice President and EAM called on him.

4. During the COVID-19 pandemic, in April 2020, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi spoke with President Abbas over the phone. Later in April 2020, External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar discussed issues of mutual interest including cooperation in the fight against Coronavirus, with Foreign Minister of Palestine Dr Riad Malki telephonically. EAM S Jaishankar also met FM Malki at Doha in June 21. On November 2, 2021, Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister of Palestine Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh met during the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference held at Glasgow, United Kingdom.

Joint Commission Meeting

5. The first ever Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between India and Palestine was held in Ramallah in November 2016. The JCM was co-chaired by Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs and Dr. Riad Malki, Foreign Minister of Palestine.

Foreign Office Consultations

6. The first ever Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs) between India and Palestine were held in Ramallah in May 2015. The second round of FOCs was held in New Delhi in April 2017. The third round of India-Palestine Foreign Office Consultations was held virtually in September 2020 with Shri Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Secretary (CPV & OIA) leading the Indian delegation and Dr. (Mrs.) Amal Jadou Shakka, Deputy Minister for Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, leading the Palestinian side.

Developmental Cooperation

7. India has provided various forms of developmental cooperation assistance to Palestine over the years, amounting to approximately US\$ 141 million. India has also provided a total of US\$ 39 million of budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority. Our support also includes the provision of medical assistance in the form of medicines. In July 2021, India offered a Line of Credit worth USD 50 Million to Palestine for implementing developmental and sustainable projects.

8. The major development assistance projects executed successfully by India include:

- Palestine-India Techno-Park
- Construction of Jawaharlal Nehru Library at the Al Azhar University in Gaza city
- The Mahatma Gandhi Library-cum-Student Activity Centre at the Palestine Technical College at Deir Al Balah in the Gaza Strip;
- Providing land and funding the construction of the chancery building for the Embassy of Palestine in New Delhi;
- Two schools built in Palestine in 2015;
- India-Palestine Centre of Excellence in ICT and Innovation in Al Quds University, Abu Dis in 2015 and another ICT centre in Ramallah in 2016, and;
- Vocational Training Centers at Yatta and Palestine Polytechnic University, Hebron.

9. Currently, eight developmental projects are in progress, the details of which are as follows:

- Palestinian Institute of Higher Diplomacy in Ramallah;
- National Printing Press at Ramallah;

- Construction of Super-specialty hospital in Ramallah;
- “Turathi” - Women Empowerment Centres at Ramallah and Gaza;
- Construction of additional floor in GoI-funded Jawahar Lal Nehru School for Boys at Abu Dees; and
- Construction of Schools in Muthalath Al Shuhada Village In Jenin Governorate and in Tamoon village in Tubas Governorate.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)

10. As part of its developmental cooperation, in 2021-22 India implemented four Quick Impact Projects viz. Rehabilitation of Yasser Arafat Square in Ramallah City amounting USD 50,000, Integration of Technology into Education with the Young Scientists Club (Al Muntada) amounting USD 46,960, Establishing Beitunia Municipality Nursery amounting USD 50,000, and Construction of Aqraba Children Park amounting USD 50,070.

Bilateral Trade

11. Trade between India and Palestine is conducted through Israel and therefore, comprehensive trade statistics are not available. India-Palestine annual bilateral trade volume was USD 67.77 million for the year 2020. As per the data published by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Indian exports and imports were USD 67.17 million and USD 0.6 million, respectively. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reports that India has a share of 0.06% of Palestine’s exports, while India ranks 13th among the importing countries for Palestine with 1.1% share of total Palestine’s imports.

12. Indian exports to Palestine include marble, granite, articles of stone, plaster and cement, basmati rice, raw material for making vaccines, coffee, cashew nuts, sugar, sweet biscuits, sacks and bags for the packing of goods, animal products, vegetable products, prepared foodstuffs, mineral products, chemical Industries, plastics, leather and furskins, wooden industries, textiles, headgear, umbrellas, walking sticks, seat-sticks, natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals, mineral products, base metals, machinery and mechanical appliances; vehicles and associated transport equipment, optical, photographic, cinematographic, measuring, checking, precision, medical or surgical instruments and apparatus; clocks and watches and musical instruments’ parts and accessories. On the other hand, Palestinian exports are mainly Fresh and dried dates, virgin olive oil and its fractions and articles of base metal.

13. In terms of sectors - automotive spare parts, medical tourism, agro and food products, textiles, fabrics, ready made garments, household appliances, stationery products, leather and leather products, agro-chemicals, plastic products, pharmaceuticals and engineering goods could be the target sectors for Indian manufacturers and exporters.

14. An MoU on cooperation between Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) and Ramallah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) was signed in February 2022. With a view to impart momentum to bilateral trade, the Mission, in partnership with the Palestinian Minister of National Economy, organized the first business seminar "India Surging Ahead" in 2019 and a Business Webinar between Palestinian Businessmen Forum and Indian Economic Trade Organization "Bridging Markets, India-Palestine" in 2020. Moreover, Representative Office of India, Palestine, organized "Jharokha: Celebrating Crafts of India" Exhibition, in association with Hebron Chamber of Commerce and Industries, in February 2022.

15. Palestinian business delegations attended India Stone Mart Exhibition at Jaipur in March 2019, PRINTPACK INDIA 2019 International exhibition (14th edition) at India Expo Centre, Greater Noida, Delhi NCR in February 2019, and the 4th and 5th edition of 'IndusFood' organized by Trade Promotion Council of India in March 2021 and January 2022.

Training and Capacity Building

16. **ICCR Scholarships:** India provides 50 ICCR scholarships for Palestinian students annually for Graduate, Post-Graduate and Ph.D courses in India. Over 170 students have availed scholarships in the fields of computer engineering, mechanical engineering, management, among other, from Delhi university, Gujarat Technical university, IITs, and other premier universities. Additionally, Palestinian students can avail of ICCR scholarships under the Scholarship Scheme for Indian Art & Culture and Graduate, Post-graduate and Ph.D courses under the AYUSH Scholarship Scheme to study Indian Traditional Medical System such as Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH).

17. **Indian Technical & Economic Co-operation (ITEC):** 168 slots are offered to Palestine annually under the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC) for training courses in India aimed at capacity building and skill enhancement in various disciplines such as Information Technology, Public Administration, Proficiency in English Language, Entrepreneurship, Rural Development, Renewable Energy, Cyber Technology, Quality Management, Health & Yoga etc. More than 1300 Palestinian nationals have availed ITEC training in India.

IBSA Cooperation

18. India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) Fund has also funded four projects in Palestine worth US\$ 5 mn. Approximately. These projects include Indoor Multipurpose Sports Complex in Ramallah, Phase I and Phase II of Cardio-Thoracic Unit of Palestinian Red Crescent Society's Al Quds hospital in Gaza, Atta Habib Medical Center in Gaza; and Rehabilitation Centre for People with Mental Disabilities in Nablus.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

19. India supports Palestine and Palestinian refugees through its contributions to UNRWA. India is a member of its Advisory Commission since 2020. India increased its annual contribution to UNRWA from US\$ 1.25 million to US\$ 5 million in 2018. Since 2002, India has contributed a total of US\$ 36.5 million to UNRWA till 2022-23.

Culture Relations

20. Indian arts and culture, especially Indian movies, enjoy immense popularity in Palestine. In 2014, a bust of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled at the Garden of Nations in Ramallah. In 2015, an exhibition of paintings of Islamic Monuments in India, and a food festival was organized in Ramallah. Since 2015, International Day of Yoga (IDY) celebrations have been celebrated with immense popular support and participation. As part of ongoing Azadi ka Amrit Mahostav, several cultural activities, including film screenings and photo exhibitions have been organized by the Representative Office of India in various Palestinian cities. An Indian Cultural Week was also organized by the Mission, in association with ICCR and Palestinian Ministry of Culture in November 2021. The week-long cultural event covered the cities of Bethlehem, Jericho, Nablus and Ramallah.

21. India-Palestine Youth Exchange Programme was started in 2017. A 50-member Palestinian youth delegation visited India in May 2017 followed by a 29-member Indian youth delegation visiting Palestine in September 2017. During the visit of the Prime Minister in February 2018, it was announced that from 2018, 100-member youth delegations would visit New Delhi and Ramallah.

Useful Resources

Website : www.roiramallah.gov.in
Facebook : www.facebook.com/IndiaInPalestine
Youtube Channel : www.youtube.com/user/roiramallah
Twitter : www.twitter.com/roiramallah
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