

## TOURISM, CULTURAL AND AGRICULTURAL RELATIONS

In the past, that is, prior to diplomatic relations, there were limited points of contact between India and Israel. But after developing diplomatic ties, trade relations between these two countries have been growing.<sup>1</sup> Soon after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two states in January 1992, the Consulate in Bombay was made Consulate General. In addition, there was also an honorary Consulate in Calcutta (now Kolkata). Since 1992 various agreements have been signed between India and Israel. Prior to 1992 there was little direct trade between India and Israel. However, trade in diamonds was carried through Indian merchants in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, India had brisk economic relations with the Arab world, which dates back to the ancient times. In those times, India with exportable surplus of resources like coffee, tea, spices and other consumer goods had been a centre of big competitive market to the West and to the Arab World. India's trade relations are not only confined to the consumer and commodity products but also entered potential fields like engineering goods, gems, jewellery, chemicals and so on, which has widened the scope for trade. Further, India depended much on the Arab world for its oil consumption. This indicates that Indo-Arab trade relation is a complementary and not competitive one.<sup>3</sup> This emerging trade relationship and mutual economic dependency led to the increasing economic and technological cooperation between India and the Arab World in the subsequent periods. During the later years, it turned out to be a fact that India's main imports from the Arab states consisted of oil, cotton, phosphate and dates, where the Arab states have alternative and easy source of supply of tea, textile, jute and light engineering goods, India's alternative of oil, cotton, phosphate are too far away to be commercially advantageous to her.<sup>4</sup>

Actually, the oil factor and the Indian manpower in the Gulf region influenced the economic relationship further. Some believed that these strategic and economic factors have largely conditioned India's West Asia policy in a bigger way. The same view was substantiated by M.C. Chagla, as "Even our material interest dictated the very same policy which we were preserving. There was a large volume of trade between India and Arab countries and this would be jeopardized if we adopt a pro-Israeli policy".<sup>5</sup>

Because of the tremendous trade relationship between India and the Arab States, the state of Israel remained off from the policy priorities of India in the region for a long run. But by 1990's some events in the world changed the very character of global politics. It also brought technological progress and shifted traditional approaches to economic policies. Further, the end of the Cold War has unleashed a wave global political integration and the Marrakesh Agreement of 1994 changed the rules of the global trade.<sup>6</sup> This changed scenario probably brought both India and Israel closer to each other which resulted in the establishment of diplomatic relations between these two States in 1992. But the low level of diplomatic relations was a deterrent for the development in trade. According to the Israeli Consul General Giora Becher:<sup>7</sup>

“The official Indian policy on trade with Israel is still preventing the public sector from dealing with us even if it means spending more money or buying less quality products else where. Further more, although there is no restriction whatsoever on the private sector to do business with Israel, the political atmosphere prevailing between the two countries makes many Indian businessmen believe it is better not to be engaged in many commercial contacts with their Israeli counterparts.”

By the early 1990 all this started changing around the time that India and Israel established the diplomatic relations, India globalize its economy and opened its doors to economic cooperation with the West and the rest of the world. Subsequently, there was a government to Government interaction between the two states which led in forging of a framework for the trade and economic cooperation. In May 1993, the two states signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and this followed by the signing of an agreement on such cooperation in December 1994. This agreement came into action from August 28, 1995. This agreement grant the Most Favoured Nation, MFN status to both the countries and allowed for import of Indian goods to Israel without import permits, except where such permits are required, from all countries under Israeli custom regulations.<sup>8</sup>

The agreement on customs cooperation was signed in January 1996. Under the standards of cooperation MoU the standards Institution of Israel (SII) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) have agreed to cooperate in testing of the quality of goods in both the countries. The industrial Research and Development cooperation MoU envisaged the setting up of a fund to finance Research and Development projects in the private sector, which cover the developments of products and applications of commercial use.<sup>9</sup> the final draft of the agreement was initiated in January 1996, besides this, the agreements on double taxation and bilateral investments were also signed in January 1996. These agreements have smoothed the frame work for trade and economic cooperation between the two states. The double taxation treaty signed by both the countries widened the business relationship between the two markets.<sup>10</sup> Despite of imposing new taxes, this treaty ensured that an entity conducting business in the other country will not be exposed to double taxation on the same income both in the country of origin and in the country of residence.

As a result of this facilitation, the trade volume between the two countries has risen by an average of 50% every year from 1992 to 1996. Steadily from \$186 million in 1992 to \$ 386 million in 1995 and from \$456 million in 1996 it reached to \$1004 million in 1999<sup>11</sup> (see also Table No.1). This was five times the level of trade in 1992. Amiram Halevy, the Israeli counsellor for Economic Affairs remarked that “it was something unexpected”. He further said, “A level of one billion \$ bilateral trade was targeted only for the year 2000, but in reality it turned out to be better than expectation”<sup>12</sup>. But in 2000 the bilateral trade reached to \$1009 million. However it declined to \$857 million in 2001<sup>13</sup>. The trade between the two states is almost limited to two major items in both sides. That is, rough diamonds and chemicals together form about 63% of Israel’s export to India. While as the polished diamonds and cotton yarn account for approximately 76% of Indian exports to Israel.<sup>14</sup>

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between these two states, many delegates from both the countries visited each other for exploring the market opportunities. The delegates from Israel included Ministers of External Affairs, Finance, Industry, Trade, Telecom, Agriculture and various other dignitaries from different firms and associations.<sup>15</sup> But the recent visit of Israel Premier Ariel Sharon to India in September 2003 is considered very important as he was the first Israeli

Prime Minister who visited India since the establishment of the diplomatic relations between the two countries. Six bilateral agreements in different fields have been signed during his visit<sup>16</sup>. From the Indian side, the high level delegation included Ministers of Finance, Commerce, Agriculture and Chief Ministers of various states. These visits have led to the signing of a series of bilateral agreements between the two governments.<sup>17</sup> The outcome of these exchanges of visits by the delegations of both the countries was the increased cooperation and Joint Ventures in industries and trade. Israelis believe that the Joint ventures could be the best way of doing business with India.<sup>18</sup>

### **Joint Ventures**

Joint venture is an area where both the countries find common areas of cooperation. Ofri, the Israeli Economic Counsellor stated: <sup>19</sup>

“The best way to promote trade between India and Israel is through joint ventures, as India has a well trained workforce of dedicated engineers and scientists as well as technology minded companies. While Israel has good connection with the US and Europe, India has direct access to Asia and the third world.”

In this context, Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. and Solel of Israel has jointly set up a solar power plant at accost of Rs. 4 billion in Rajasthan.<sup>20</sup> The first ever Indo-Israel joint venture was made between Plastro Gvat and Indian company- Finolex in February 1992 in the field of Drip irrigation.<sup>21</sup> Also, a phosphate plant has been setup with joint collaboration of the Gujarat industrial cooperation and Titegarh Steel mills with Rolem fertilizers of Israel.<sup>22</sup> Some other Israeli companies which have agreed for the joint venture were : Amcor and solar (solar energy), Rahan (tissue culture), Tahal (water management), Gadot (citric acid), Zinkal (irrigation pipes), Netafim(drip irrigation), Dan (irrigation ) and others.<sup>23</sup>

Both the countries also have signed an agreement on the establishment of a Joint Business council. In late 1992, a high power delegation of Manufacture’s Association of Israel visited India in a bid to explore markets for their products. However, the first industrial mission to Israel was led by Jamshed Irani, the president

of the Chamber of Indian Industry in September 1992. This was initiated by a mutual programme in Joint ventures, trade agreements and mutually beneficial export and import programmes.<sup>24</sup> And as part of it CII signed on MoU with Manufactures Association in September 1992. It has been assumed that Israel's access with the US and EEC could be converted for better market access to Indian goods. Likewise, India's links with South East Asian countries could be utilized for Israel's access to the region.

After the establishment of ambassadorial relation in 1992 a brisk and probably never ending traffic at the highest level has been going on not just at the government level but also at the level of private industrialists and businessmen. A number of projects in electronics, computer and agricultural sectors are operating under Israeli experts. The active development of Indo-Israeli economic cooperation within the short time is an amazing phenomenon. The India-Israel Business Alliance formed in October 1996 to promote the business industry and trade has a dynamic impact on cooperate sectors. To continue the momentum of the bilateral trade between the two countries commerce Minister Mr. Arun Jaitely visited with a high-level delegation to Tel Aviv in January 2004 to attend the third session of the India-Israel joint trade and economic Committee.<sup>25</sup>

Indian companies also have shown their keen interest in doing business with the Israeli counterpart. The Confederation of Indian Industry CII, organized a seminar on "Indo-Israeli Business Opportunities" on 15 April 1993. The Manufacture's Association of Israel (MAI), was represented by it's the then president. Mr. Dov Lautman. In his presentation, he underlined the advantageous position of both India and Israel in trading with each other. While the India can provide Israel cheap labour, both skilled and unskilled, Israel can provide India with advanced technology. More over, the absence of language barrier will also help trade and make its future prospect brighter.<sup>26</sup>

During 1999, a series of high-level contacts between the Information Technology Associations of India and Israel were initiated in order to exploit the competitive advantages the two countries possessed in the fast growing field. The electronics and computer software export promotion council (EPC) and Electronic

Industrial Association of Israel have signed a MoU. Also, National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), signed an agreement for closer cooperation with their counterparts. Israeli association of software houses (IASH). Above all, a major development in 1999 was the finalization of the details of an agreement for Joint Research and Development between D.S.I.R. and the chief scientist of Israel. They together moved for an area of cooperation between the two states in the area of Bio-technology, Life science technology, Pharmaceuticals, Agricultural food technology, Scientific and Medical instrumentations, Electronics, Automation, Aero space and Environment.<sup>27</sup>

Besides, the 14<sup>th</sup> International Agricultural Exhibition, Agritech- 99 was held at Haifa from September 5-9, 1999. This was attended by a large number of visitors from India. During the same period, two delegations of small Business Authority of Israel and Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce made direct talks with their counterparts in India. Because of these developments, India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO), held a first ever India week in Tel Aviv in May 2000 to project the Indian Industrial strength and business opportunities to the Israel Market<sup>28</sup>. Over hundred leading Indian companies participated in the India week programme, which turned out to be a milestone in the trade relations between the two countries.<sup>29</sup>

Many delegations from India and Israel visited each other's country in order to increase awareness and to explore the economic ties. Notable visitors from Israel were the ministers of External Affairs, Industry and Trade, agricultural and the delegations from the Manufactures Association of Israel, Federation of Israeli Chamber of Commerce, Electronics Association of Israel as well as several top raking companies.<sup>30</sup> However the visit of Israeli Premier, Ariel Sharon with his delegation to India in September 2003 is considered as the most important one from the Israeli side. During his stay both the countries signed six agreements in different fields.<sup>31</sup> Ministers of Finance, Commerce, Agriculture, and the many State Chief Ministers and the representatives of various Industrial Associations have been visited to Israel from the Indian side. During these visits, a number of bilateral agreements were signed between the two governments.<sup>32</sup> But the visits of the Indian Home Minister Mr. Lal Krishna Advani followed by the visit of the Indian External Affairs Minister, Mr.

Jaswant Singh to Israel in 2000 are considered the most important visits from the Indian side so far.<sup>33</sup>

### **Cooperation in Tourism and Culture**

After the commencement of diplomatic relations, the number of Indian tourists to Israel and Israeli tourists to India increased considerably. This was mainly due to the historical and other cultural peculiarities of the two states. One of the Israeli ambassadors to India expressed his words.<sup>34</sup>

“Every corner in Israel is history.....Israel is great centre of attraction of tourists. The major centres are Bethlehem, Nazareth, and the Sea of Galilee and so on. Another is Kibbutz, which is the only communist society. There are minor collective farming communities in which a member does not have property but works according to what Marx said- according to his ability and according to his needs. It is a unique phenomenon.”

In the early 1992, soon after the establishment of diplomatic relations 3000 to 4000 visas had been issued to Indian citizens to visit Israel. This included pilgrims, businessmen, tourists and those visiting their relatives.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the Israelis are also fascinated by the Indian tradition, culture and civilizations. This is evident from the number of visitors who visited India. By 1993, i.e. after the establishment of the ambassadorial relations between the two states 50,000 Israelis visited India.<sup>36</sup> In 2000, their number reached approximately to one Lakh.<sup>37</sup>

When Shimon Peres visited India in May 1993 Agreements in Tourism and culture were signed between the two states.<sup>38</sup> The agreement on tourism envisaged for mutual promotion and publicity. It also undertakes to take measures for simplifying the formalities required for trips. Shimon Peres visited India with a large number of Israeli industrialists and businessmen. This was significant because it showed that Israel was earnestly interested in India and in doing business with India.<sup>39</sup> Peres believed that India and Israel could set up joint ventures in many fields where Israel had a strong scientific research base.<sup>40</sup> According to him Israel was more than eager to extend its cooperation to India in the technological and agricultural fields.<sup>41</sup>

When Peres visited India, the Arab League issued a statement in Delhi and appealed Indian government to use its influence with Israel to make it stop its policy of economic siege and starvation in the occupied territories. The left parties and the Janata Dal also urged the government to make full bilateral ties with Israel conditional on Tel Aviv's recognition of an Independent Palestinian State. The BJP was in a celebratory mood from the very outset, characterizing the Peres visit as a vindication of its foreign policy platform. Peres evidently reciprocated the BJP's feeling and became the first visiting dignitary after a long time to meet the leader of the opposition, L.K. Advani. In fact, Peres was the first important foreign leader to meet the BJP leader after the demolition of the Babri Masjid.<sup>42</sup>

Tourism has become a common spot for people to people contact. Though tourists as such do not flow heavily to Israel, the visitors consist mainly pilgrims visiting to the holy city of Jerusalem. In August 1997 the government of India opened its Tourist office at Tel Aviv to encourage bilateral tourism<sup>43</sup>. As such bilateral tourism is supposed to flourish in the specific context of cultural contacts between the two societies.

Actually, the cultural cooperation between the two societies dates back to the very emergence of both the states. In their days of persecution some of the Jews found shelter in India. The cultural and the tradition of India protected their identity and promoted their well being. The absence of diplomatic relationship was not at all a hurdle for closer cultural interaction between the two societies. Hence, Jewish are fascinated to India and its culture. This could be seen in Israel that some of the streets in Israel are named after Tagore and Gandhi. India's appreciation for Jewish artists was open in 1960's as the famous Jewish Violinist, Yehudi Menuhin, was chosen to receive the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International understanding in 1968.<sup>44</sup> The Israeli Consulate, after its establishment in Bombay has initiated variety of cultural programmes to catch up with the trend. This included symposia, debates, lectures, exhibition and literary events by this time, the veterans from both the societies have travelled to each other's capital.

In 1993, India and Israel signed a cultural agreement and a framework programme for cultural cooperation for the period of 1993-1996, the agreement for

the exchange of Scholars between Tel Aviv University and Banaras Hindu University. The Israeli Academy of Science and Humanities and University Grants Commission and Barllan University and Hyderabad University were made in June 1994.<sup>45</sup> As per the same Israel agreed to seven scholarships annually to students from India for Post-Graduate and Post-Doctoral studies. The scholarships cover West Asian and International Studies, Jewish culture, Hebraic Studies and Agriculture<sup>46</sup>. As part of the academic exchange programme, the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), organized an annual seminar with the Jaffe Centre for Strategic studies, Tel Aviv University. More over, during the visit of Israeli Minister for Education, A.R. Ubinstein, in January 1996, a proposal for the establishment of a chair in Hebrew Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University has been proposed and agreed upon.

Inspite of these academic collaborations, there was fast growing cultural exchanges between the two societies. Leading cultural performers and groups have travelled between Delhi and Jerusalem, Mumbai and Tel Aviv and performed in front of packed houses. These visits have touched nearly every sphere of culture, music, dance, art, literature and so on. The major highlights of these activities included some cultural festivals organized in both the countries. This included the visit of Zubin Mehta to Israel and the Israel Philanthropic orchestra to India in 1994 and the participation of Zakir Hussain in the 1996 Israel festival in Jerusalem.<sup>47</sup> The other important cultural exchanges included, The Gathering 1995, the screening of films and discussion with film director, Arnon Zodak in 1997. Israel's participation in the Delhi International Book Fair, 1996 and Shalom India events.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, India's representation in Israel included the annual Indian participation in the Jerusalem film Festival and Vikram Seth's visit to Jerusalem poet festival in 1997. This also included the Publication of the Hebrew translation of 'A Suitable Boy' and Mallika Sarabhai's dancing programme. During March 1998 in response to the visit of a 33 member Isreli dance group of India, a 6 member Bharatanyam troop led by Alarmel Valli visited Israel.<sup>49</sup>

In addition to this, the bilateral scholarship programmes allow young Israelis to learn about Dance, Music and Sanskrit in India. Equally, a large number of Indian students visit Israel to study about west Asia, the Hebrew language, Literature and

Agriculture. In this context, the cultural treaty, signed in 1993 meant the exchange of mutual support for sharing the two cultures within the framework of the treaty. Two detailed cultural exchange programmes (CEP), have also been signed and implemented. The second CEP was also signed during the visit of President Ezer Weizman in late December 1996. This included future plans for a further increase of exchanges between museums, more academic interaction and mutual participation in Golden Jubilee Celebrations in 1997 and 1998.<sup>50</sup> The joint committee for CEP met again in early 2000 and signed a new cooperation plan for the year 2000-2002.<sup>51</sup>

Again in 1997, Israeli embassy organized the Shalom India Festival, a month long celebration to mark India's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and five years of diplomatic relations. The festival included a fashion show, a dance performance, a food festival and film shows. In 1998 also, Israel's leading theatre actress and film actress, Gila Almagor visited India. Later, in the same year a leading Jazz quintet from Israel collaborated with Ustad Zakir Hussain to produce a joint performance in Delhi. In 1999 also, the Embassy organized a festival to celebrate Israel's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The festival featured the diversity of Israel's culture. This was held in eight states; from Orissa in the East to Gujarat in the West, from Tamil Nadu in the South to Rajasthan in the North. Another joint project was a workshop on Israel by two prominent artists- Menashe Kadishman of Israel and Jalin Das of India.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, with the opening of an Israeli Cultural Centre in New Delhi, a new chapter was added to the already initiated cultural exchange programmes and schemes. This included Hebrew classes, lectures, film shows, cultural discussions and expansion of the Department of East Asian studies at Tel Aviv University to include a track in Indian and Sanskrit studies<sup>53</sup>. It was also envisaged to plan similar programmes at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and at Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

These varying cultural programmes have attained its own novelty and wisdom that the CEP was accepted by many in both the countries. This and the like programmes facilitated the students, artists of both the societies to actively learn about the features of their respective cultures and traditions. Minister of State for Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Kumari Selja, visited Israel from 24-27

September 2005, to attend the “International Conference for Women Leaders on Gender and Migration issues under the Millennium Development Goals”.<sup>54</sup>

Significant exchange at the level of the people is evident from the fact that about 30,000 tourists from Israel visit India every year for an extended stay of six months to one year. The demand for visas to visit India has been increasing steadily, and the Embassy in Tel Aviv has issued 25, 409 visas during the period January – October 2006.<sup>55</sup> Four Israeli youth of Indian origin participated in the “Know India Programme” organized by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs in May –June 2006. An official from the Israeli Foreign Office participated in the 41<sup>st</sup> Professional Course for Foreign Diplomats organized by the Foreign Service Institute held from 4 October 10 November 2006 in New Delhi. Separately, during the current year, within the framework of India-Israel Cultural Exchange Programme, ICCR has sponsored five students from Israel for pursuing year long study courses in the fields of Indian dance, Language (Hindi), Philosophy and Yoga in India.<sup>56</sup>

The exchanges in the field of culture included the performances given by Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, and Priyadarshini Govind at the “Israel Festival” held in My 2006, and later the participation of Aparna Sen in the International Women’s Film Festival held in Israel in September 2006, in which three of her movies were also shown. An Israeli dance troupe “Kamea Company” participated in the ‘Navrtri Mahotsav 2006’ held in Gujarat in September –October 2006. Malayalam poet Tachomm Poyil Rajeevan participated in ‘Sha’ar International Poetry Festival’ organized in Jaffa (Israel) in November 2006. A delegation from the Archaeological Survey of India, led by Director General C. Babu Rajeev visited Israel in November 2006, and held discussions with the Antiquities Department of the State of Israel with a view to explore opportunities for cooperation.<sup>57</sup>

The year 2007 marked the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel. To mark the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel as well as the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India’s independence, Embassy of India in Tel Aviv, in cooperation with ICCR organized “Indian festival” from 16-22 August 2007. In addition, a film Festival of India was also organized in Tel Aviv from 18-30 August 2007 to mark the occasion.

Four Israeli students availed of scholarships to study in India under the Indo-Israel Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP). Five Indian students joined Israeli institutions under the reciprocal scholarship schemes offered by the Israeli government. Under the “Known India Programme” (KIP) organized by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) three Israeli youth of Indian origin participated from 29 August 15 September 2007.<sup>58</sup>

Outsourcing of visa application services became operational in Embassy in Tel Aviv with effect from 15 April 2007 through three service providers. Amidst continued increase in demand for visas to visit India, the Embassy in Tel Aviv issued 19,346 visas during the period April-October 2007. During the same period 51 OCI registration certificate and 7 PIO cards were issued to the persons of Indian origin in Israel.

We continued our active involvement with activities of the Indian Diaspora and supported various events, including the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Maiboli Sneha Sammelan held in Lod (Israel) organized by editorial board of “Maiboli”, a Marathi quarterly magazine published in Israel by the Indian Jewish community hailing from Maharashtra (1 April 2007); evening of Indian – Cochini folklore held in Nevatim by the Jewish community of cochini origin (9 August 2007); anniversary celebrations of the Indian Jewish Synagogue in Lod (30 July 2007) and Magen Shlom Synagogue in Ramle (3 September 2007) ; and inauguration (9 September, 2007 ) of the “Heritage Museum for Indian Jewry” in Dimona.<sup>59</sup>

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations signed a MoU with Tel Aviv University, to establish a rotating Chair in Indian studies. A team comprising the Vice-Chancellors of Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jamia Millia Islamia University, North East Hill University and the University of Calcutta, visited Israel from 6-12 July, 2008. A Kuchipudi dance group led by Ms. Vyjanthi Kashi and a Hindustani violin group led by Ms. Anupriya Deostale, sponsored by ICCR, performed at the Karmiel dance Festival on 24 July, 2008.<sup>60</sup>

An ICCR sponsored Carnatic vocal group visited Israel and participated in the Oudh Cultural Festival 2009 from 15-20 November, 2009. An Odissi Dance group led

by Smt. Rajshree Behera and also sponsored by ICCR, gave cultural performance in Israel from 24-28 November, 2009.

### **Agricultural Cooperation**

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the cooperation in the Agricultural sector has turned out to be a solid and unique one. So far, a number of Joint venture Agricultural projects were initiated in India, mainly in the fields of irrigation, water management fertilizers, greenhouses, chemicals, pesticides, insecticides, tissue culture, horticulture, use of solar energy, animal husbandry, dairy development and so on. Israel's know-how in agriculture, pertaining to these areas and power and food industries were also included in the joint venture projects.<sup>61</sup>

Actually, in short history of bilateral relations between the two countries cooperation in Agricultural sector, is one of the best exploited and explored one by the two parties. By the signing of an agreement for cooperation in the field of agriculture, in December 1993, it assumed unique dimensions. The agreement was signed between Balram Jhakar, the then Indian Agriculture Minister and his counterpart Yaakov Tour. Also they held wide ranging discussions on promoting bilateral cooperation in this sector.<sup>62</sup> Both the states have agreed that the application of the technology in India would also lead to the solution of the intractable problems of water logging and soil alkalinity. This technology could be successfully applied in confronting deserts in Rajasthan and Gujarat and in increasing agricultural productivity in the semi-arid areas of Maharashtra".<sup>63</sup>

Israel has utilized its marginal water resources to make the desert bloom. Its strides in horticulture, aquaculture and floriculture and arid-zone farming hold applications for India. Indians hope to use Israeli expertise to do the same in Rajasthan and other semi-arid states.<sup>64</sup> Earlier, Tel Aviv had organized an Agro-Tech exhibition in May 1993. Maharashtra the then Chief Minister Sharad Pawar led a six member delegation to the exhibition in Israel. The delegation included Union Agriculture Secretary M.S. Gill and Punjab Minister for cooperation and others. About 600 farmers from Maharashtra and more about 300 more from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab and Haryana were also there. The exhibition had generated great interest in the Indian farming community. The delegation had

acquired and familiarized themselves with the technologies for optimum water use and productivity.<sup>65</sup>

Subsequently, several proposals for joint ventures especially in the areas of seed production and manufacture of agricultural machinery have been formulated pilot-projects and turnkey projects have also been identified for promoting Indo-Israeli cooperation in the Agricultural sector. Besides, a travelling seminar was also organized jointly by the Israeli and Indian experts and arranged a visit to Indra Gandhi canal and desert areas of Rajasthan. It was hoped that the same would help in evolving appropriate water management and micro-planning in these areas.

In this context, the planned development of linkages between Ben-Gurion Desert University of Negev and an Indian Academic and Research Institute such as Rajasthan Agricultural University was envisaged to promote the scientists of the two countries in an exchange of ideas in the fields of desert stabilization, water management, poly-green house technology and so on. India was very much optimistic in exploring the cooperation in this sector. She felt satisfied that the industry level collaboration were being underway for manufacture of drip irrigation system, tissue culture, hybrid seed production and manufacture of farm machinery. Further, a MoU to stabilize cooperation in this sector was also finalized.<sup>66</sup>

Israel was also ready to share their technology to the demands from India. A five day visit to India by the then Israeli president, Ezer Weizman in December 1996 opened a new chapter in Indo- Israeli cooperation. His visit was the first ever visit to India by the head of the state of Israel. Visualizing the future role of India he stated, “the 21<sup>st</sup> century belongs to East-China, Japan, Indonesia and India will take its place in the technology world.”<sup>67</sup> Regarding the cooperation between India and Israel, he argued, we will help each other, not teach each other.<sup>68</sup> During his visit to India bilateral agreements were signed between the two countries.<sup>69</sup> President Weizman who was leading the delegation of the Israeli businessman who came to India in December 1996 offered his country as a base for re-exporting Indian goods to the US, Europe and other countries with which Israel has close political and economic links. Israel has free trade agreements with the Western markets, which, according to the Israeli delegation, will help India to access these markets more easily. It may be noted

that Israeli Economy would also get an outlet to the rich markets of East and South East Asia through India.<sup>70</sup> During president Weizman's visit in December 1996, an Indo- Israeli Research and Development Farm were inaugurated in the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) at Pusa in New Delhi.<sup>71</sup> The farm would demonstrate the Israeli know-how in high-tech agriculture and would endeavour to find different techniques and methods of cultivation suitable for the diverse agro climatic zones of India.<sup>72</sup> The demonstration farm in Pusa institute is a joint venture undertaken by the government of Israel and India. The farm is operating since November 1999. Within this farm, through training programmes local farmers are given instructions on various effective measures of crop growing as well as water conservation to increase the growth yield. The purpose of the farm is to demonstrate the cultivation of different kinds of crops, through the use of sophisticated irrigation technology and methods of crop protection, two fields in which Israel has special expertise. The farm serves as a centre for training in various aspects related to the farm technologies, management and so on the farm grows some kinds of crops, vegetables and flowers.<sup>73</sup>

Also, during the same visit, a cotton demonstration farm in Alkola in Maharashtra was established in collaboration with the state government and agriculture development company, AGRIDEV, in Israel Further, a series of projects with many state governments in India have been initiated. This included the projects between the Punjab Agro-Industries cooperation and Ozcot Company of Israel and the Indo-Israel demonstration farm in the field of dairy development in Karnal. Besides, the proposal for setting up a hundred cows dairy farm by Israeli design, the Israeli Dairy Board and Punjab government signed a MoU to established the modern satellite dairy farm in Punjab.”<sup>74</sup>

Tahal, the Israeli water management company is engaged in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu for waste land development, irrigation and water and modern agricultural pilot projects. Israeli company in the field of agriculture has provided turn-key projects for the establishment of tissue culture laboratories in India. Way back in 1997, an executive agreement was signed between the two nations for future programme of action in this sector. This also included the programmes for establishment of green houses, open field facilities. Infra structure and technical

assistance, training and management for specific periods.<sup>75</sup> A steering committee was also constituted comprising experts from both the countries to monitor the entire programmes. It was also decided to provide twenty-five training scholarships for participants from India, particularly in the fields of irrigation, protected agriculture and horticultural production.

Thus, the collaboration in agriculture has turned out to be one of the most attractive and explored one by both the states since the commencement of the diplomatic relations.

So far, there are some 150 joint ventures between India and Israeli companies. Most of them are in the sphere of agriculture. Israeli's famous drip irrigation systems are jointly manufactured in three different locations in India. These ventures enjoy participation by Israel's leading agricultural companies. Agriculture is still the field for which Israel is best known in India, as can be witnessed in Indian participation in Agritech, Israel's tri annual agricultural exposition (held last in 1996 and 1999). However, cooperation also exists in other sectors, such as telecommunications, including joint manufacturing of high speed modems, voice-mail systems and fiber optic production and software where a couple of companies have setup their offices as well as R and D centres in India.<sup>76</sup> This indicates that both the states have shown the interest towards the areas of common interests and mutual benefits.

Ephahim Dowek in an interview stated.<sup>77</sup>

“We have a special experience of developments, which we think is nearer to the needs of developing countries like India, because it is the summing up of a new experience of the last 50 years.” Israel's agricultural sector is characterized by an intensive system of production stemming from the need to overcome the scarcity in natural resources, particularly water and arable land. The constant growth in agricultural production is due to close cooperation between researchers, farmers and agriculture related industries.

Necessity being the mother of invention, Israel's agro technologists learned early on how to overcome such hurdles as low rainfall, lack of fertile soil, hot summer reasons, and a scarcity of investment capital. Then, as today, they were backed by a

network of research stations, academic establishments and an agricultural extension service, turning this small country into one large agricultural experimental station. There is no doubt that the results have been impressive; high-tech irrigation methods coupled with high-yield crops and intensive animal husbandry have made it possible to feed a population that has grown from 650,000 in 1948 to 6.3 million in 2004 with not more than 440,000 hectares of cultivated land (of which about 210000 are irrigated), and at the same time to increase exports steadily Israel has achieved record yields in many agricultural products ; the average milking cow produces 9400 litres of milk a year, compared with 6900 litres in Denmark and the United States and 5,800 in Holland; it averages, 180-200 tons of tomatoes per hectare per year, compared with 80 tons in the United States.

Despite the decrease in the number of farmers, agriculture still plays a significant role in Israel's economy. Total agriculture production in 1998 accounted for 2 per cent of GDP. Approximately 66400 people are involved in agriculture. This number represents about 2.9 per cent of the country's total workforce. The average income of those employed in 1998 was \$1.600 every month. In the early 1950s, one full time agricultural employee fed 17 people, but today one full time employee fed 95 people. Agriculture export in Israel reached 6 per cent of the country's total exports. A fresh produce and processed food exported mainly to Western Europe. In India, out of 65 crore acres of land, 35 crore acres are under agriculture. If every acre production from these 35 crore acres can support five-six people, than India can feed around 500-600 crore people. India must learn from Israelis how to increase the productivity quickly.

As regards vegetables, they represent approximately 18.3 per cent of Israel's total agricultural production. In 2001, Israel produced 1,991 million tonnes of vegetables over an area of 50,000 hectares. Some 1,25,900 tonnes of vegetables valued at \$135.5 million were exported in 2001. They account for 14.1 per cent of total exports of Israel's fresh produce. In addition to the export of fresh vegetables, processed vegetables are also exported. For example, approximately 70 per cent of processed and canned corn are exported, and 65 per cent of processed tomatoes. The total production of vegetables for processing in 2001 was around 48000 tons. To enable the growth of vegetables under a wide range of climatic and topographical

conditions, a number of technologically advanced growing methods are utilized in the vegetable sector, including greenhouses with climate control systems and soil less culture. Some 2500 hectares of vegetables are grown in greenhouses and tunnels using various agro technologies. The main crops cover 825 hectares of tomatoes, including cherry tomatoes, 382 hectares of cucumbers, 432 hectares of peppers, 191 hectares of melons (under plastic tunnels), and 10 hectares of greenhouse melons.

Soil less culture eliminates many hazards that arise when using soil as a growth medium, and allows greater control over irrigation and fertilization. Some 200 hectares are grown using this method. While tomatoes grown in the open field reach yields of 60-80 tonnes per hectare, an average of 200-300 tons can be grown in greenhouses under controlled climate conditions. Peak yields have been reached a record 500 tones. On the other hand, in India with several efforts of researchers and specialists, the average yield of tomatoes per hectare comes out to be 30-40 tonnes in open cultivation.

In order to reduce the use of pesticides, net houses are being used increasingly for production in the summer in Israel. The farmers in Israel and other countries have introduced new varieties of different vegetable crops, such as tomatoes, melons, cucumbers, onions and peppers. Seed production is suited to local conditions and is monitored closely to help maintain high quality. New varieties of strawberries are able to bear fruit throughout the winter, from November onwards. These new varieties excel in both shape and quality, and growing technologies have been introduced to the farmers.

The climate in arid zones, characterized by long hours of sunshine and relatively high temperatures, can be exploited to produce high-quality vegetables during the off-season of competitors overseas. It has overcome some of the most extreme climatic conditions in the world- very hot and arid summers, cold winters with sudden flash floods – to grow melons, peaches and pecans, and arise fish a top – quality dairy cattle in the middle of the desert; and has developed strains of vegetables that grow in the deserts' undrinkable brackish water. Having conquered local needs, Israeli agro-technologists embarked on the second revolution, turning their attentions and imaginations to the export market, and creating the technologies, nearly all

developed by Israeli universities and research institutes, to meet demands for ever increasing produce yields.

The Agro-Advantage Maharashtra Exhibition that was inaugurated in Mumbai on November 6, 1998, gave a great boost to trade in agriculture between India (particularly Maharashtra) and Israel. Enthusiastic participation by the Israeli side was keenly observed. For example, a panel of Israeli firms from the agricultural sector participated in the Expo, with Walid Mansour, consul general of Israel in Mumbai, participating, in the seminar and exhibition. Yaakov Tsur, former agriculture minister of Israel, spoke on the “Relevance of Israeli Experience –Indian Context”. A clear and lucid picture of agriculture in Israel was presented by Amiram Zakay of ADAMIT Resources International of Israel who chaired one of the sessions in the Seminar. (ADAMIT is leading company specializing in packaging food products and vegetables for maintaining freshness). The Israel Export Institute, which is a nodal promotional organization, co-sponsored by the Trade and Industry, Ministry of Israel and private industries, was represented by Yitzhak Kariati.<sup>78</sup>

India and Israel on 11 May 2006 signed a three –year work plan for cooperation in agriculture. The first work plan of its kind, it is expected to lead to a breakthrough in advancing practical cooperation. Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar and his Israeli counterpart, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development Shalom Simhon, signed the work plan on behalf of their respective governments in Tel Aviv. During his visit to Israel, Pawar also hold discussions with the Israeli Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni. Pawar visited in Israel as head of a high –level delegation to Agritech 2006, a tri-annual international agricultural event showcasing the latest technologies in the field. The minister was accompanied by senior delegates from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Nagaland.

The areas of focus elaborated in the word plan include development of agri-business projects, collaborative research and development, academic and farmer-level exchanges and cooperation in gene bank resources. Israel will transfer technologies and techniques relating to post-harvest management and value addition for fruits, vegetables and dairy products; energy efficient and cost- effective greenhouse structures; development of the diary sector; and water management, including

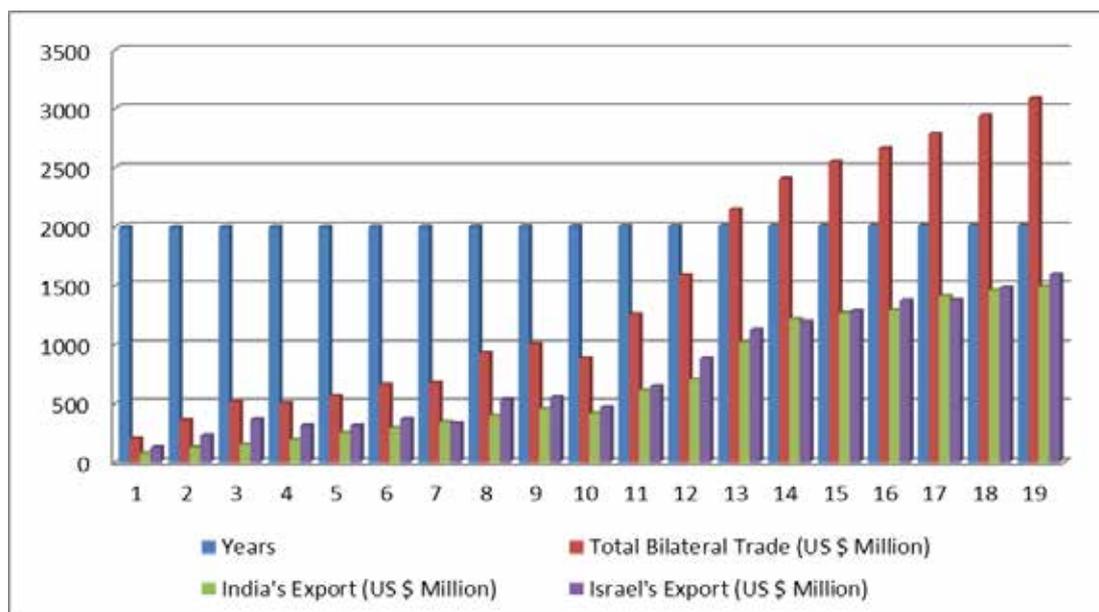
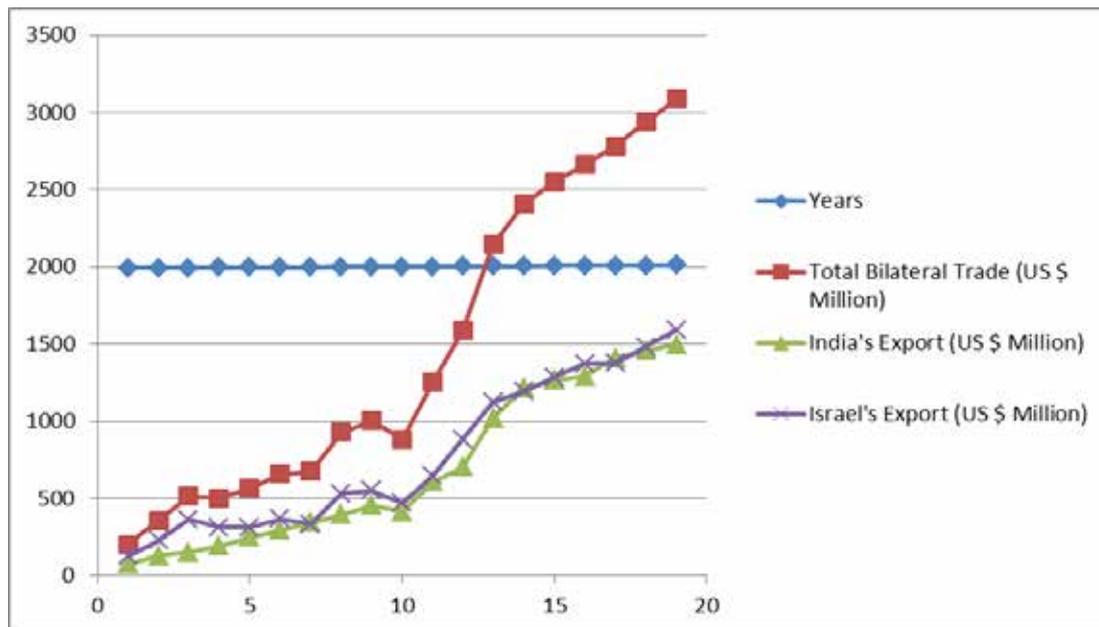
recycling of domestic waste-water for irrigation. Eighty per cent of the water used in agriculture in Israel is recycled waste-water. Collaborative research will include the development of crop-specific irrigation and fertilization schedules for Indian produce (suggested crops include mango, pomegranate, tomato, garlic, capsicum and more). The two countries also plan to set up a joint research and development fund, offering seed money for joint projects promoting agricultural innovation. The work plan also includes attention to Extension Service Systems, providing the individual farmer with real time solutions and access to agricultural know how and research and development- an area well developed in Israel.<sup>79</sup> Pawar last visited Israel in November 2005, as a special envoy of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to the memorial service held for late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Bilateral relations with Israel continued to widen in a multifaceted manner, including in the fields of science and technology, commerce, agriculture, cultural exchange, and people to people interaction. The continued exchanges in various fields helped consolidate the relationship that entered into its fifteenth year in 2006. Sharad Pawar, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution, led a delegation consisting of the Chief Ministers of the States of Gujarat, Nagaland, and Rajasthan, along with eight other State Ministers, officials, and business persons, for participation in the “Agritech Exhibition” in Israel from 9-11 May 2006. He met with his Israeli counterpart, and an inter-Governmental Action Plan for cooperation in Agriculture was signed between the two sides. He also met with Vice-Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Israel, Tzipi Livni. Secretary (Agriculture and Cooperation), Dr. P.K. Mishra, led a delegation to Israel from 1-8 April, 2008. An Action Plan for Bilateral Agricultural Cooperation for 2008-10 was agreed to during the visit.

Thus, the collaboration in tourism, culture and agriculture has turned out to be the one of the most attractive and explored by both the states, since the commencement of bilateral relations. The vivid and varying cultural programmes have attained its own novelty and wisdom that the C.E.P. was accepted by many in both the countries. So far, out of 200 joint ventures made, nearly 100 are in the field of agriculture. This is a clear indication of both the state’s spirit of commitment and enthusiasm shown towards area of common interests and mutual benefits.

**Table 1 Israel - India bilateral trade (1992-2010)**

<b>Israel's Export (in US\$ million)</b>	<b>India's Export (in US\$ million)</b>	<b>Bilateral Trade (in US\$ million)</b>	<b>Years</b>
127	75	202	1992
228	129	357	1993
363	151	514	1994
313	190	503	1995
311	251	562	1996
365	293	658	1997
332	343	675	1998
531	397	928	1999
551	453	1004	2000
470	413	883	2001
648	608	1256	2002
883	703	1586	2003
1123	1021	2146	2004
1191	1214	2405	2005
1283	1267	2550	2006
1372	1291	2663	2007
1374	1410	2784	2008
1483	1457	2940	2009
1592	1495	3087	2010



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