
TRADE, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COOPERATION

Besides agriculture, science and technology too assumes greater dimensions in the bilateral cooperation between India and Israel. Way back in 1993, an agreement on Science and Technology was signed between the two states during the visit of the then Israeli foreign minister, Shimon Peres. This agreement stood for direct scientific and technological cooperation between governmental agencies, academies of science, research institutes, and enterprises, institutions of higher education and scientific communities of the two states.¹

However, a detailed work plan was finalized in September 1993, identifying specific areas of cooperation namely bio-technology, lasers, electro-optics and information technology. In November 1994, during the visit of the Israeli minister for communications and science and technology, Shulamit Aloni, the two governments installed an agreement setting up a science and technology fund with a corpus of \$ three million.² This was made possible by equal share by both the governments to facilitate joint R and D projects in the areas identified for cooperation.

Subsequently, a meeting of the Joint Working group and a Seminar on advanced materials was held in July 1996 in Israel. The next meeting of the Joint Working Group and a seminar on Biotechnology was held in March 1997 in Delhi. In 1999, another one was extended for the research on 'Human genome'³. The project found enthusiasm and interest in both the states and a series of collaborative endeavours on human genome' have been initiated in 2000. The Joint Committee which met in New Delhi in 1997 agreed that four to six Indian researchers will visit Israel in 1998 for a period of four to six weeks each. So far, four such visits have been approved and undertaken. Thus, there has been an impressive representation of Israeli and Indian scholars in International Scientific Conferences in both the countries and also there is a regular flow of Indian students of advanced studies to Israel.⁴

The tempo of bilateral cooperation is reflected in the Bi-national Conferences that have already taken place. At first, a bi-national conference on genetics and research on human genome was organized in Israel in 1998. This conference was attended by six Indian scholars. Second bilateral symposium on current issues of condensed matter and material physics took place in Delhi in the beginning of 1999 .

In this conference over twenty Israeli students participated.⁵ The momentum gained in the scientific sector is reflected in the sharing of technology as well. Tahal Consulting Engineering Ltd, an Israel based multinational company, has entered an agreement with several Indian partners in the field of engineering, ground water management, de-salination, agro-industries and prevention of desertification. Already, this firm has played an active role in the development of Israel's water resources, agricultural industry and infrastructure. It has signed an MoU with the state governments of Gujarat and Rajasthan for the transfer of technical know-how.⁶ Likewise, Tadiran, Israel's leading electronic industry is also cooperating with India in transfer of technology and production on sharing arrangements.

An agreement has also been signed between the Indian Science Academy and Israeli National Academy of Science and Humanities for providing regular cooperation and exchange in the field of science and technology. In this regard, discussions have been held regarding collaboration in the field of commercial application of solar energy, operationalization of Indian solar energy on the lines of those in Israel. Joint R and D with the Weizman Institute in a project for direct conversion of solar energy into steam and petrochemical refining.⁷

The fourth Indo-Israeli joint committee meeting on science and technology was held in Jerusalem on 3rd of November 1999. The meeting finalized four proposals for joint research projects in the area of human genome research.⁸ In short, there was a very healthy bilateral relationship in almost all the areas of common interest between the two countries. On 22 January 2002, Indo-Israeli cooperation attained yet another zenith, this time in the field of electronics and information technology close on the heels of the Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres's visit to India, communication and information technology minister of India Shri Pramod Mahajan made a three day visit to Israel with an auspicious proposal up his sleeve very earnestly, the two countries signed a MoU to promote bilateral trade in electronics and information technology, thus giving a fillip to research and development activities and technology transfer between the two countries. The memorandum was signed between Shri Mahajan and his Israeli counterpart, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, as a first step towards the establishment of a framework for cooperation between the two countries in information technology and electronics. Earlier, an agreement had been initiated in the area of telecom and posts in 1994 that came into effect from 1998. This new

agreement would enhance industrial and technical competitiveness of both countries through cooperation in industrial research and development. Besides the memorandum would add further bytes to technology transfer potential between the two countries. One of the areas India is keen on enhancing with the applications of this cooperation is the defence sector. During Mr. Mahajan's visit to Israel in 2002 he also called upon the defence minister of Israel, Binyamin Ben-Elizer, which clearly indicated that India is very much interested to utilize the Israeli information technology techniques in its defense sector.⁹

India and Israel also have signed various agreements to cooperate in Space Research in an effort to benefit from each other's experience and form an alliance to reach out to the global market. The agreements were signed during the visit of the Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), K. Kasturirangan to Israel in August 2003. The ISRO chief also met the Israel's Science and Technology Minister, Eliezer Sandberg, and the Director of Israel Space Research, Avi Hareven and exchanged the information regarding the ongoing developments in Space Research.¹⁰

At the economic level, relationship between India and Israel has been showing some upward trend almost since 1992. The total bilateral trade showed some increase after the establishment of diplomatic relations. In 1991 the total trade between the two States was 129 US\$ million. However, slowly increase year by year pushed the trade to 1099 US \$ million in 2000. India's exports to Israel are mainly precious stones and jewelry, cotton yarn, fabrics, drug , pharmaceuticals, and so on.¹¹ Whereas the Israeli exports to India apart from pearls, fertilizers are the military arms, which are being sold to India worth million dollars. Defence analysts estimated that Israel sold weapons to India crossed \$ 500 millions during the 1977-2000.¹² By 2001, India had signed weapons contracts worth \$ 2 billion with Israel.¹³ The Isreali Cabinet headed by Ariel Sharon has approved the sale of Phalcon Airborne Warning and Control Systems worth US \$ 1.1 million.¹⁴ It is clear from the above estimations that India is providing the market to Israel for selling her arms worth million US dollars to India. From the above estimation, one can easily analyse that India is being treated by Israeli arms exporters as conducive market, which could be exploited by them even if they sold their hardware at exorbitant price. Indo-Israel arms trade is unilateral. Only the

pretext is combating terrorism and fundamentalism. This is high time top echelons in the government realize and save the poor Indian taxpayers from misery.

Bilateral trade in the year 2000 maintained the momentum of growth set earlier. The trade figures for 2000 show a volume of \$1084 million, 10 per cent higher than 1999. Israel's exports to Israel in this period amounted for \$535 million, thus registering an increase of 18 per cent. Main export products were diamonds (58 percent), chemicals, textiles, tea and domestic apparels. Israel's exports to India in this period amounted for \$549 million, thus registering an increase of 3 per cent.¹⁵

Bilateral trade stood at \$475.6 million (January –April 2003), up by 25.29 per cent compared to \$379.6 million in the previous year. The balance hinged in India's favour by \$75.8 million. India's exports grew by 46 per cent in 2003 and Israel's by 4.5 per cent. Trade between India and Israel stood at \$2.2 billion in 2005-06 of which India's exports are valued at \$1.2 billion and imports at \$1 billion. During 2004-05, India's exports to Israel crossed \$1 billion, registering a growth of nearly 39 per cent.¹⁶ Major items exported from India include diamonds, pearls, precious stones, electronic goods, fertilizers, inorganic chemicals and computer software, whereas main imports were transport equipment, metals, machinery and equipment.¹⁷

Israel is in a unique position of having free trade agreements with the European Union, the US and more recently with Canada and Turkey. This network of agreements would further help the Israeli exports to new markets. During the visit to India by Israel's Deputy Prime Minister and Industry Minister, Eli Yashai, discussion held with the Indian Commerce and Industry Minister, Kamal Nath, both side agreed on a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) based on the recommendations of a joint study group.¹⁸

Agro technology is an important Israeli export industry. The excellent results by the Israeli farmers in agriculture, horticulture and other agro-industries have fascinated the Indian farmers. The Agri tech 1993 in Tel Aviv, which was attended by about 600 Indian farmers, resulted in many agro-commercial associations developing in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and parts of Haryana. These are the relevant geographical regions for Israeli agro-technologies such as drip irrigation, fertilizers and effective post-harvesting techniques and packaging systems.¹⁹

There is also the beginning of a major Indian garments exporter setting up a manufacturing base in Israel for the export of ready-made garment to the US and the European Economic Community (EEC). The Israeli companies are also contemplating investing in India for diagnostic centres, power generation, telecom and high value agricultural project. All this would act as a catalyst for promoting further investments to mutual advantage. Israel's total approved Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow to India is \$1347 million. Telecommunications, electrical equipment and chemicals are sectors attracting bulk of the FDI. There will be a bilateral thrust on agriculture; biotechnology and space research. Industry sees growing synergies in tele-communications, manufacturing of high-speed modems, voice-mail systems and fibre-optic products.²⁰

There are several joint ventures mainly in agriculture, telecom, software and medical equipment. Israel's famous drip irrigation systems are jointly manufactured in three different locations in India. In tele-communications, there is production of high-speed modems, voicemails and fibre optics. In software, a few Israeli companies have set-up their offices and research and development centres in India.²¹ Israel is interested in investment in R and D. Daniel Sohar Zonshine, Israel's Consul –General in India, said: Israel had about the highest spending on R and D, with 4.6-4.7 per cent of the GDP goes into this critical area. The government itself committed 20 percent of the roughly \$ 6 billion spent on R and D. We provide the right atmosphere and scientists for research, but we cannot manufacture its product of research at competitive rates. We can work with countries such as India to take this forward.²²

Minister of State for Science and Technology, Shri Kapil Sibal visited Israel from 28-31 May 2005. He called on Israeli Vice-Prime Minister Mr. Ehud Olmert and signed an MoU for setting up a joint Research & Development Fund (India-Israel Industrial Research & Development Cooperation Initiative) under which the two sides would contribute US\$ 1 million each to provide financial support for joint R&D by companies of both countries. It was also agreed by the two sides to set up joint groups for furthering cooperation in the areas of nanotechnology, biotechnology, space and aeronautics, non-conventional energy and water.²³

The 9th round of India-Israel Foreign Office consultations at Senior Officials level was held on August 28,2005 in Jerusalem. Secretary (East) who led the Indian

delegation also called on Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister of Israel Mr. Silvan Shalom.²⁴ Commerce and Industry Minister Shri Kamal Nath visited Israel from 9-11 November 2005 to attend the Prime Ministers Economic Conference. Shri Kamal Nath met his Israeli counterpart, Mr. Ehud Olmert, Minister of Industry, Trade and Labour, and the Finance Minister of the State of Israel. They adopted and released the Joint Study Group report identifying areas of future cooperation and outlining the mechanism to further boost the bilateral trade. India participated in the Israel Gateway 2005 Exhibition held on 9 November 2005.

Between January –October 2005, bilateral trade reached US\$ 2135.4 million, a growth of 18.21% compared to the same period in 2004.²⁵ Several Israeli companies established manufacturing and R&D facilities in India. Indian companies also set up operations in Israel. The State Bank of India was granted permission to open a branch in Israel and is in the process of starting its operations. Shir Sharad Pawar Minister of Agriculture, Food and Civil Supplies, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution visited Israel from 13-16, November, 2005 to participate in the State ceremonies organized to commemorate the 10th death anniversary of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He called on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and had a bilateral meeting with the Agriculture Minister of Israel, Mr. Israel Katz.

A bilateral agreement on Cooperation in the field of health and medicine that was signed in September 2003 entered into force on 20 June 2006. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel, the bilateral trade figures that stood at US\$ 2500.50 million at the end of year 2005, reached US\$ 1956.20 million during the period January –September 2006, an overall increase of 0.86% as compared to the corresponding period last year.²⁶ As part of the Joint Working Group established at the recommendation of the Joint Study Group for enhancing bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries. Grisha Deitch, Commissioner of Standardisation, Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Labour of the State of Israel visited India from 31 October -1 November 2006 to discuss standardisation and related issues. The year witnessed an increasing number of visits by business delegations from India and Israel, including agriculture, and industrial delegations from the States of Rajasthan and Gujarat to Israel. The State Bank of India that was granted the License by the Government of Israel to open its branch in Tel Aviv has initiated the

process of setting up its offices, and is expected to be operational by the beginning of year 2007.²⁷

The year 2007 marked the 15th Anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel. The multifaceted relations between the two countries were consolidated through exchange of visits and delegations in various fields. Ashwani Kumar, Minister of State for Industry led a delegation to Israel from 4-7 August 2007. During the visit he met with Israeli President Shimon Peres, Minister of Trade, Industry and Labour, Eliyahu Yishai and Minister of Transport and Road Safety, Shaul Mofaz.

Special Envoy of the Government of India for West Asia and Middle East Peace Process, Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, visited Israel in February and September 2007. He met with Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and other senior officials. From Israel, Minister of Transport Shaul Mofaz visited India in March 2007; National Security Adviser of Israel Ilan Mizrahi visited India in October 2007. Minister of Interior of Israel, Meir Sheerit, visited India to attend the 2nd Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in New Delhi on 7-8 November 2007.²⁸

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics of Israel, the bilateral trade figures amounted to US \$ 2440.3 million during the period January –September 2007 , an overall increase of 22.87% as compared to the corresponding period last year.²⁹ Business delegations from the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Misoram and others visited Israel during 2007.

Other significant commercial developments during the year included the inauguration of a branch of the State Bank of India in Tel Aviv in June 2007 making it the first Indian Bank to operate in Israel, investments and acquisitions in the areas of pharmaceuticals, tires, and irrigation equipment manufacturing by the Indian companies in Israel, and large scale investments by Israeli companies in infrastructure and realstate sector in India.

Secretary, Department of Science and Technology Dr. T. Rmasami along with Secretary, Department of Bio-Technology Shri M.K Bhan visited Israel from 8-10 November , 2008 to discuss cooperation in science and technology. Defence

Secretary, Shri Vijay Singh visited Israel in November 2008 for the seventh India Israel Joint Working Group meeting on Defence Cooperation.³⁰ The Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, Mr. Aaron Abrahamovich visited India from 7-8 July, 2008 during which he called on External Affairs Minister and held delegation level talks with Shri N.Ravi, Secretary (East).

The second Meeting of the India Israel Forum was held in Tel Aviv from 8-10 September, 2009. A 19 member CII delegation and 34 Israeli businessmen, academics and officials participated in the Forum. The Governor of Bank of Israel and the Israeli Ministers of Infrastructure and Finance also addressed the participants. The Forum deliberated on ways to increase cooperation between India and Israel in infrastructure, real estate, investment and financial resources, technology, industry and agriculture, renewable energy and water technology.

Gen Deepak Kapoor, Chairman Chief of Staffs Committee and Chief of Army Staff visited Israel from 8-11 November, 2009. The Chief Ministers of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab were among Indian participants in the Second International Conference and Exhibition on Water Technologies, WATEC 2009, in Tel Aviv from 17-19 November, 2009.³¹ Israeli Chief of Defence Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi visited India from 8-10 December, 2009. Head of the Israeli National Security Council. Dr. Uzi Arad visited India on 4 January, 2010. Israeli Minister of Industry, Trade & Labour Mr. Benjamin Ben Eliezer visited India from 8-14 January, 2010 and called on External Affairs Minister Shri S.M. Krishna, Commerce & Industry Minister Shri Anand Sharma, Agriculture, Food Distribution and Consumer Affairs Minister Shri Sharad Pawar and Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia. The Israeli Chief of Naval Staff Vice-Admiral Eliezer Maroom visited India from 18-22 January, 2010.

On the other hand, India's relation with the Arabs dates back to many centuries. The intensive interaction among the people of Arabia and the Indian subcontinent since centuries was primarily promoted by trade, which saw the flowering of the two-way exchanges that have left, their imprint also on literature, lifestyles and the languages of the two regions.³²

India's trade relations with the Arabs are growing fast since decades. The oil, which is in abundance in the Arab World, has built these trade relations very much

strong and almost still overwhelming India is heavily dependent on this oil of Arabia. Almost the GCC countries including Iran presently account for almost all of the India's oil imports.³³ Ever since OPEC became an effective cartel in 1973-74, oil has become the biggest single Indian import. Now in this age (1990's), India's security hinges critically on the oil exporting countries of the region (Arab/Gulf). Analysts point out that India can easily lose a war for its poor petroleum policies.³⁴ It was thought that India's stakes were much higher in the region, as according to one analyst, "the Gulf is our lifeline as much as that of the West. We could be thwarted much more easily by development in this region."³⁵ Even though at the time of the invasion of Iraq, India had major economic stakes in both Iraq and Kuwait. India was importing crude oil from Iraq to the tune of 2.2 million tons and 1.5 million from Kuwait. Further, there were around 170000, Indian workers in both Iraq and Kuwait when the crisis broke out.³⁶

The total indo-Arab trade reached \$4463 million in 1990 and in 1991, it stood at \$4232 million. In the following year, the total bilateral trade between Arab and India reached \$6415 million. In this year, India established the diplomatic relations with Israel but this step could not reach the trade figures of India and Arab in the same year or after that, India's trade relations with the Arabs were overwhelming not only prior to the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel but are still increasing and overwhelming and are still higher than Israel. The Indo-Arab trade which was \$4232 million in 1991, reached \$ 6727 million in 1993 and the trade stood at \$10448 million in 1996, whereas it touched \$9941 million in 2000. On the other hand the Indo-Israel trade was \$129 million in 1991 and in 1993 it reached 5370 million but in 2000 it reached \$1099 million.³⁷

From the trade figures mentioned above, it is clear that Indo-Arab trade is overwhelming than its trade with Israel. The oil, which is mainly imported from the Arabs, has increased the trade levels. This oil is playing a very much significant role in the industrial development in India. On the other hand, the arms and ammunitions that are being imported worth of million dollars from Israel can strangle the industrial development since huge amount is being wasted on the purchase of Israeli arms and ammunitions.

Moreover above three million Indian workers are working in the Gulf States. They constitute the largest proportion of the total foreign population living in the Gulf region as whole, as well as in each of the gulf countries, ranging from 21.5% in Kuwait to 54% in Oman, from 25.4% in Saudi Arabia to 41.1% in UAE. It means that the Gulf is playing a significant role in minimizing the job crisis in India by providing jobs to millions of Indian workers in the region. The Indian expatriates remit some four billion dollar per annum to India.³⁸ It should be noted that Israel's recent step of recruiting Indian workers in their hotels³⁹ is minimal compound to millions of India workers already working in the Gulf and sending remittances strengthening Indian economy.

As far as India's trade relations with Israel one can deduce that through this relationship Israel have gained immensely and India meagrely. While Israel exports to India are of larger volume, the Indian exports are negligible. The trade relations between the two countries at this stage are tilted heavily to Israel's advantage at a heavy cost of Indian taxpayers' money and without dividends in real terms. Moreover, the tables depict that trade volume with the Arab world is very substantial and India cannot afford to annoy the Arabs at the cost of its new found trade relations with Israel.

The cooperation between India and Israel in areas such as the economic and technology started off with the simple exchange of commodities which is now growing rapidly, covering trade, technology transfer as well as investments into industry. Considering the fact that the two economies are complementary to each other, coupled with an investor friendly environment, the future of trade relations look bright. India's liberalization policies and globalization strategies make Israel well positioned to fulfil the economic and technical demands of India's rapidly developing economy. Israel's achievement in agricultural technologies as well as better industrial known-how, combined with India's large pool of scientific and technical personnel, create a bigger scope for cooperation.

Table 2: India's Trade with Arab States (Mentioned in Table No.3&4) From 1990-2000, US \$ Million.

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Imports	3391	2700	4648	4655	5379	6537	7624	8036	5002	4921	6655	59548
Exports	1072	1532	1767	2072	2190	2355	2834	2834	3062	2922	3286	25916
Total	4463	4232	6415	6727	7569	8892	10870	10870	8064	7843	9941	85464

Source: Direction of Trade Statistics Year book (Washington, DC : IMF) 1998 and 2001

Table 3: India's Trade with Arab States (1990-2000) US \$ million (Exports)

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Bahrain	39	49	47	49	60	62	65	55	57	81	93	677
Egypt	120	81	446	476	116	138	165	208	270	245	281	2546
Jordon	23	102	62	65	60	68	79	67	64	54	58	702
Kuwait	69	52	120	97	125	131	149	163	263	259	-	1428
Lebanon	2	9	9	7	9	15	19	23	35	37	56	221
Oman	56	74	84	78	80	99	122	105	147	147	182	1174
Qatar	22	19	27	29	26	29	38	39	56	60	84	429
Saudi Arabia	249	352	431	478	442	425	521	625	750	672	834	5779
Syria	9	18	24	29	25	30	45	46	51	51	59	387
UAE	455	738	480	726	1210	1306	1491	1451	1303	1268	1585	12013
Yemen	28	38	37	38	37	52	130	52	46	48	54	560
Total	1072	1532	1767	2072	2190	2355	1824	2834	3062	2922	3286	25916

Source: Direction of Trade Statistics Year book (Washington, DC : IMF) 1998 and 2001

Table 4: India's Trade with Arab States (1990-2000) US \$ million (Imports)

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Bahrain	200	49	371	520	632	794	931	640	612	647	744	6140
Egypt	45	67	576	446	230	92	63	190	46	148	170	2073
Jordan	190	145	157	106	140	172	129	153	181	280	267	1920
Kuwait	421	215	965	1066	1386	1884	2208	2493	326	0	0	10964
Lebanon	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	16	15	36
Oman	40	43	18	20	23	15	15	30	53	79	99	435
Qatar	24	36	102	118	106	98	147	84	77	76	141	1009
Saudi Arabia	1475	1109	1649	1601	1513	1860	2428	2733	1887	1872	2321	20445
Syria	0	0	1	10	22	5	21	12	5	7	8	94
UAE	964	994	727	650	1307	1594	1657	1686	1801	1782	2216	15391
Yemen	32	42	82	10	20	23	24	14	8	9	674	1838
Total	3391	2700	4648	4655	5379	6537	7624	8036	5002	4921	6655	59548

Source: Direction of Trade Statistics Year book (Washington, DC : IMF) 1998 and 2001

Table 5- Total Import and Export Trade with some Arab Countries (Mentioned in Table No.3 &4) (1990-2000), US \$ million.

Country	Barhain	Egypt	Jordon	Kuwait	Labanon	Oman	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	Syria	UAE	Yemen	Total
Exports	677	2546	202	1428	221	1174	429	5779	387	12013	560	25916
Imports	6140	2073	1920	10964	36	465	1009	20448	94	15391	1038	56548
Total	6817	4619	2622	12392	257	1609	1438	26227	481	27404	1598	85464

Source: Direction of Trade Statistics Year book (Washington, DC : IMF) 1998 and 2001

Table 6: India's Trade with Arab States (1990-2000) US \$ million (Imports)

Country	1995-1996	1996-1997	1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	Total
Saudi Arabia	1539.76	2140.93	1769.73	1191.81	1691.45	8333.68
UAE	1050.52	1382.73	978.69	909.90	1633.20	5955.04
Kuwait	1872.38	2276.44	2109.66	1334.54	1381.70	8974.72
Iran	433.69	677.14	429.32	256.25	781.77	2578.17
Bahrain	807.11	778.19	500.83	361.81	258.54	2706.48
Iraq	-	24.82	185.60	150.90	200.37	561.69
Yemen	17.15	12.20	10.04	1.78	6.37	47.54
Qatar	0.87	26.77	7.84	7.80	2.41	45.69
Total	5721.48	7319.22	5991.71	4214.79	5955.81	29203.01

Source: Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, Cited in Girijesh Pant, "India's Energy Security :The Gulf Factor", GSP Occasional Paper Series, GSP 2002/03)

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