

القطاع *GREEN & ECO* لبنان - التجاري بين البلدين في الهند

LEBANON – INDIA BILATERAL TRADE IN GREEN & ECO SECTOR

लेबनॉन - इंडियाहरित / पारिस्थितिकी द्विपक्षीय व्यापार



Lebanon's govt is encouraging eco tourism and environment friendly construction, and its people are increasingly appreciative of organic and herbal products, Yoga and Ayurveda

By Anita Nayar



Lebanon is a small country, about 10,000 sq km in area, with a population of 4.3 mn people (though it is currently giving refuge to over 2 mn Syrians and Palestinians). But the Lebanese diaspora comprises around 15 mn people, and is scattered all around the world, but mainly in Latin America (especially Brazil) and in Africa (especially Francophone Africa). Even though India-Lebanon trade is currently around USD 430 mn per annum (with exports from India amounting to about USD 410 mn), many Lebanon-based businessmen export directly from India to these regions. The major exports from India directly to Lebanon include diamonds, frozen meat, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, textiles and processed foods.

TASTE OF LEBANON IN INDIA

The three major sectors of the Lebanese economy are tourism, banking and real estate. Lebanon has very little industry to speak of, and its exports entail mainly agricultural products (fruits, vegetables, olive oil and wines) and artisanal products, such as jewellery, metalwork, woodwork and designer fashion. It is only recently that Lebanese businessmen have turned their attention to the Indian market, and their participation in the 'Surajkund Mela 2015' showed them the potential of India as a consumer, especially for Lebanese food – at least three restaurant projects are under discussion as a consequence of the exposure given to Lebanon in the *Mela*.

LEBANON: POTENTIAL CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

As far as India is concerned, Lebanon can become a major destination for all green industries and technologies, from alternative energy sources (especially solar and wind energy), eco tourism, environmentally friendly construction etc, as all these areas are being encouraged by the Lebanese government. Lebanese are also becoming very health conscious and the organic products sector, as well as, alternative therapies such as Yoga, Ayurveda and meditation are very popular here. In fact, at least half of Lebanese tourists travelling to India focus on these therapies, and Indian spas are very popular, especially those in Kerala, Hyderabad and the Himalayan foothills.

INDIA-LEBANON ECONOMIC INTERACTION

Incentives for doing business in Lebanon are sector and project specific but there are very few incentive programmes. The business environment also is not very transparent, and standards are high, so it is essential to find a good local partner for any investment project here, and to work to EU standards. The Indian government could help by providing credit lines and financial assistance for companies wishing to invest here.

LEBANON TOURISM

Lebanon is a beautiful country, and can offer fabulous beaches, as well as, breathtaking mountain scenery, with unique experiences such as the Jreita Grotto and the Cedar reserves, as also a very good standard of hotel

OPPORTUNITY SECTORS

Ecotourism
Handicrafts
Organics
Eco friendly Construction
Olive Oil, Wine
Yoga & Ayurveda

accommodation. It also has a rich and ancient history, with heritage sites such as Baalbeck, Byblos and Tyre. Beirut is a lively city, with a vibrant nightlife and café culture, and Lebanese food is not only delicious but much of it is suited to Indian tastes.

OPPORTUNITY IN LEBANESE HANDICRAFTS

Since the cedar trees now mainly grow in protected reserves, there are very few cedar wood products in the market. Other traditional Lebanese handicrafts, such as carpet and silk weaving have virtually died-out, and glass-blowing and pottery are now practised only in a few areas by a few craftsmen. The Indian experience of keeping our traditional handicrafts and skills alive and bringing them back into the mainstream would be very relevant here.

Anita Nayar is the Ambassador of India to Lebanon