

India-UAE Bilateral Relations

Political Relations

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) established diplomatic relations in 1972. While the UAE opened its Embassy in India in 1972, the Indian Embassy in UAE was opened in 1973.

2. The traditionally strong bilateral relations enjoyed by India-UAE gained a new momentum when the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited in 2015, the first PM of India in 34 years which marked the beginning of a new Comprehensive and Strategic partnership between the two countries. This was followed by five other visits of PM in the last 8 years, most recently in Nov-Dec 2023 to attend COP28-World Climate Action Summit in Dubai.

3. From the UAE, there have been multiple visits by the President HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed (MBZ). In 2016 and 2017, he visited as Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi. In Sep 2023, he visited India as the President of the UAE to attend the G20 Leaders' Summit. In Nov 2023, President MBZ participated in the 2nd Virtual Global South Summit. In Jan 2024, he visited Gujarat to attend the 10th Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit as the Chief Guest.

4. To complement these high level visits, there have been regular ministerial visits from India to the UAE, including the visit of EAM Dr S Jaishankar to UAE and other Ministers. Likewise, there have been multiple visits from the UAE to India including the visit of UAE Foreign Minister HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed.

Plurilateral/Multilateral Cooperation

5. India and the UAE enjoy strong cooperation at the United Nations. Both countries are also currently part of several plurilateral platforms such as BRICS, I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) and UFI (UAE-France-India) Trilateral, etc. UAE was invited as a Guest Country to the G-20 Summit held under India's Presidency.

Economic & Commercial

6. India and UAE have shared trade links through the centuries. The trade, which was dominated by traditional items such as dates, pearls and fishes, underwent a sharp change after the discovery of oil in the UAE (oil exports began from Abu Dhabi in 1962). With the emergence of the UAE as a unified entity in 1971, exports from India started growing gradually over the years. The real impetus, however, started after Dubai positioned itself as a regional trading hub by early 1990s and about the same time, the economic liberalisation process started in India.

7. Growing India-UAE economic and commercial relations contribute to the stability and strength of a rapidly diversifying and deepening strategic partnership between the two countries. Both sides are striving to further strengthen these ties for mutual benefits. India-UAE trade, valued at US\$ 180 million per annum in the 1970s, reached US\$ 85 billion in 2022-23 making UAE, India's third largest trading partner for the year 2022-23 after China and US. Moreover, UAE is the second largest export destination of India (after the US) with an amount of nearly US\$ 31.61 billion for the year 2022-23.

8. The UAE's investment in India is estimated to be around US\$ 20-21 billion of which US 15.5 billion is in the form of FDI while the remaining is portfolio investment between April 2000-March 2023. In 2022-2023, UAE was the 4th biggest FDI investor for India. UAE has committed to invest US\$ 75 billion in India's infrastructure sector over a period of time. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), the principal Sovereign Wealth Fund of the UAE and one of the world's largest, is an anchor investor in NIIF Master Fund through an investment of US\$ 1 billion in National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF). ADIA has also invested US\$ 1.8 billion in HDFC Affordable Housing, USD 500 million in two renewable energy companies – GreenKoi and ReNew and US\$ 300 million in Cube Highways. ADIA has also announced the opening of its office in GIFT City in Gujarat. Since 2020, GoI has announced several measures to facilitate and further ease investments by ADIA and other sovereign funds from the UAE.

9. India's exports to the UAE are well diversified with a large basket. India's major export items to the UAE are: Petroleum Products, Precious Metals, Stones, Gems & Jewellery, Minerals, Food Items (Cereals, Sugar, Fruits & Vegetables, Tea, Meat, and Seafood), Textiles (Garments, Apparel, Synthetic fibre, Cotton, Yarn) and Engineering & Machinery Products and Chemicals. India's major import items from the UAE are: Petroleum and Petroleum Products, Precious Metals, Stones, Gems & Jewellery, Minerals, Chemicals, Wood & Wood Products. UAE is the 4th largest source for crude oil and 2nd largest source for LNG and LPG for India.

10. To further boost trade and commerce between India and the UAE, both countries signed a historic MoU between the Reserve Bank of India and the Central Bank of UAE for the establishment of a Local Currency Settlement (LCS) System to promote the use of INR and AED

for Cross-border Transaction. This MoU was exchanged during the visit of PM Modi to Abu Dhabi on 15 July 2023. Trade transactions in gold, crude oil and food products have already taken place, where settlements have been in local currencies.

11. **Air connectivity:** Both countries enjoy excellent air connectivity between them. During the Covid-19 pandemic, an air-bubble agreement between India and the UAE was signed which continued throughout the pandemic period.

12. **NRI Remittances:** The annual remittances made by the large Indian community in UAE (estimated to be around 3.5 million) is one of the highest in the world and is 18% of the total remittances to India [2020-21 data].

Cultural Relations

13. UAE has over 3.5 million Indians and Emiratis are quite familiar and sensitive to Indian culture. Indian cinema, TV, and radio channels are easily available and have good viewership; major theatres and cinema halls in the UAE screen commercial Hindi, Malayalam, Telugu and Tamil films. The Emirati community also takes part in celebrations of International Day of Yoga events and various institutions and studios of yoga & meditation are running successfully in the UAE. Abu Dhabi Sports Council (ADSC) and the UAE Ministry of Tolerance & Coexistence are actively involved in promoting collective community events and encourage participation of the Indian diaspora in sports, fitness, and cultural activities.

14. The Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi, the only branch of Louvre Museum outside Paris has a number of artefacts from India as well, including Mughal painting ‘The Huntress’ painted in one of the Mughal courts in South India.

15. A Joint Commemorative Stamp was launched in February 2022, jointly by the Emirates Post and the India Post to mark 75 years of India’s Independence, 50 years of the formation of the UAE and 50 years of the India-UAE diplomatic relations. The stamp was launched by the UAE President HH MBZ and PM during the virtual summit.

16. On 26 August 2021, an Agreement was signed between the New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) New Delhi to establish a Visiting Professorship in Social Science at New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD). The agreement aims to promote broader engagement in academics between the two countries.

17. On 01 September 2022, on the margins of the 14th Joint Commission Meeting, an MoU was signed to set up the India-UAE Cultural Council Forum that will facilitate deeper Cultural Cooperation and People to People interactions between the two countries.

Education

18. There are more than 100 International Indian schools in the UAE following the CBSE and Kerala Board curricula with mostly children of Indian expatriates settled in the UAE. The Embassy and CGI, Dubai also provide No-Objection Certificate to the Indian schools in the UAE for opening a new school/renewal of the affiliation from CBSE board, as a precondition prescribed by the CBSE.

19. Embassy and Consulate assist in organising the Annual and Supplementary Examinations of the Grade 10 & 12 of CBSE & Kerala Boards. Apart from the CBSE and Kerala Board examinations, the respective Education Wings coordinate the conduct of examinations for Indira Gandhi National Open University, National Institute of Open Studies and Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.

20. The Embassy and the Consulate also issue Genuineness Certificates after obtaining verification from the concerned University or Technical board in India to expatriate Indians to facilitate grant of Equivalency Certificate for their Indian educational degrees or certificates by the UAE Ministry of Education. The Equivalency Certificate has now become mandatory to continue or retain skilled employment in the UAE.

21. A tripartite MoU was signed on 15 July 2023 between the Ministry of Education of India, IIT Delhi and Abu Dhabi Department of Education & Knowledge (ADEK) to establish an overseas campus of IIT Delhi in Abu Dhabi. The IIT Delhi-Abu Dhabi Campus will offer its first program from Jan 2024, Master's in Energy Transition & Sustainability and regular bachelor and few other Masters program from Sep 2024. Other leading Indian institutions like Manipal, BITS Pilani, Amity University also have set up their campuses in the UAE.

Indian Community

22. The Indian expatriate community of approximately 3.5 million is the largest ethnic community in UAE constituting roughly about 35 percent of the country's population. 15% of the diaspora is in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the rest in 6 Northern Emirates including Dubai.

23. The profile of the community has changed from the 1970s and 1980s, when the majority of the Indian community was blue-collared to the extent of 85% - 90%. Today, around 35% of the Indian community is made up of professionally qualified personnel, businessmen & other white collar non-professionals. 10% of the total Indians constitute dependent family members. The Indian community has played a major role in the economic development of the UAE and is respected for its technical competence, sense of discipline & law abiding nature.

24. 17 eminent Indians and one Indian Community Association from the UAE have been honoured with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award. 7 Indians received Padma awards. There are various linguistic or regional Indian associations for social and cultural activities in the UAE. These associations extend support to the welfare initiatives of the Mission and Consulate and conduct cultural and welfare activities regularly including sports activities. During the Covid pandemic, the associations played a stellar role in relief and repatriation operations undertaken by the Embassy and the Consulate.

25. A BAPS Mandir is under construction on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi and expected to be inaugurated in Feb 2024. The foundation stone for the Mandir was laid on 20 April 2019 and the ceremony was attended by Dr. Thani Al Zeyoudi, the then Minister of Climate Change & Environment of the UAE along with other representatives of the Government of the UAE. This will be the first Mandir in Abu Dhabi and will further deepen the people-to-people ties between the two countries.

26. Along with the Community Affairs Wing of the Embassy, Pravasi Bhartiya Sahayata Kendra (PBSK) based in the Consulate in Dubai has been functioning to assist the Indian diaspora through 24×7 helplines and a PBSK Mobile App.

Jan 2024