

## **India-UAE Bilateral Relations**

India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) established diplomatic relations in 1972. UAE opened its Embassy in Delhi in 1972 & India opened its Embassy in Abu Dhabi in 1973.

The traditionally strong bilateral relations enjoyed by India & UAE received impetus with the visit of PM Modi to UAE on 16-17 August 2015 that marked the beginning of a new strategic partnership between the two countries. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, (MBZ) Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of UAE Armed Forces, visited India in from February 2016. MBZ visited India again in January, 2017 as the Chief Guest at India's Republic day celebrations. It was during this visit that the bilateral relations were upgraded to a 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership'.

PM Modi visited UAE again in February 2018 for the 6th World Government Summit in Dubai, where India was the Guest of Honor; he also met Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE & Ruler of Dubai.

PM visited UAE again in August 2019 to receive the UAE's highest civilian award, 'the Order of Zayed' that was conferred on him by the UAE President in April 2019. The visit also witnessed the official launch of the 'RuPay Card' in UAE, and the release of a set of stamps issued by Emirates Post commemorating the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi jointly by PM Modi and MBZ.

The momentum generated by these regular visits at the highest level was sustained at the level of Foreign Ministers too. Between 2014- 2019, the then EAM Mrs. Sushma Swaraj visited the UAE three times, the latest being in March 2019 when she represented India at the 46th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), where India was invited as 'Guest of Honor' country by the UAE. The UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah (SA) also visited India twice in June 2018 and July 2019. The present EAM, Dr. S. Jaishankar, visited UAE to attend the 10<sup>th</sup> Sir Bani Yas Forum in Nov 2019 during which he met with SA as well as MBZ on the margins of the Forum.

Other recent Ministerial exchanges included, the visit of Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister for Railways, Shri Piyush Goyal from 21-23 September, 2019 for the 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the UAE-India High Level Joint Task Force on Investments (HLTFI); Mr. Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Minister of Steel, from 9-12 September 2019 to participate in the 8th Asian Ministerial Energy Round table and 24th World Energy Congress & for the 35<sup>th</sup> ADIPEC meeting.; Minister of State for External Affairs & Parliamentary Affairs, Shri V. Muraleedharan from 6-8 Nov., 2019 for the 10<sup>th</sup> IORA Ministerial Meeting.

## **Economic & Commercial Relations**

India and UAE have shared trade links through the centuries. Trade, which was dominated by traditional items such as dates, pearl and fishes, underwent a sharp change after the discovery of oil in UAE (oil exports began from Abu Dhabi in 1962). The real impetus, however, started after Dubai positioned itself as a regional trading hub by the early 1990s and about the same time, the economic liberalization process started in India.

Growing India-UAE economic and commercial relations contribute to the stability and strength of a rapidly diversifying and deepening bilateral relationship between the two countries. India-UAE trade, valued at US\$ 180 million per annum in the 1970s, is today around US\$ 60 billion, making UAE, India's third largest trading partner for the year 2018-19. Moreover, UAE is the second largest export destination

of India (after US) with an amount of over US\$ 30 billion for the year 2018-19. For UAE, India was the second largest trading partner during 2018 with US\$ 36 billion (non-oil trade).

UAE's investment in India is estimated to be around US\$13-14 billion; it is the 10th biggest FDI investor for India. UAE's investments in India are mainly in five sectors: Services Sector (15.78%), Sea Transport(8.80%), Power(8.34%), Construction Activities (Infrastructure -7.15%) and Construction Development (Townships, Housing, Built-Up Infrastructure And Construction-Development Projects - 7.08%).

Indian investments in the UAE are estimated at around US \$ 85 billion. There are 4365 Indian companies, 238 commercial agencies and 4862 trademarks registered in the UAE, and the inward Indian FDI stock into the UAE amounted to \$6.2 billion at the end of 2017, as per UAE Ministry of Economy data. Most Indian companies have invested in real estate, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, transportation, logistics, construction, financial and insurance activities.

Many leading Indian companies like HCL Infosystems, Wipro, TATA, Nagarjuna Construction Company Limited, Danube, L&T, ESSAR, Dodsai, Punj Lloyd, EIL, Sobha Group, Indian Oil Corporation, Reliance Industries, Essar Group and banks like Bank of Baroda, State Bank of India, IDBI Bank, Union Bank of India, Oriental Bank of Commerce, Punjab National Bank, Indusind Bank, Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, HDFC, ICICI, Axis Bank, Andhra Bank, Canara Bank, Corporation Bank, New India Assurance Co. have offices in the UAE.

A consortium led by India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) including Indian Oil and Bharat PetroResources, were awarded a 10 per cent stake in the Lower Zakum Concession in February 2018. The deal marked the first time that the Emirate (Abu Dhabi) had awarded a stake in a functioning oil field to an Indian group.

**Air connectivity:** At present there are 1068 direct flights operating every week between India and UAE, serviced by Air India/Air India Express, Spicejet, Indigo, Go Air, Vistara, Emirates, Etihad, Flydubai and Air Arabia.

**NRI Remittances:** The annual remittances made by the large Indian community in UAE (estimated to be around 3.3 million) amount to over US\$ 17.56 billion (Year 2018, source : UAE Central Bank).

### **Cultural Relations**

UAE has over 3.3 million Indians and Emiratis are quite familiar and receptive to Indian culture. The importance given to Indian culture by the UAE was further highlighted in April, 2019 when India participated as the Guest of Honour Country in Abu Dhabi International Book Fair 2019. Indian cinema/ TV / radio channels are easily available and have good viewership; major theaters/cinema halls in the UAE screen commercial Hindi, Malayalam and Tamil films. The Emirati community also participate in our annual International Day of Yoga events and various schools of yoga & meditation centres are running successfully in the UAE. Some of the following events reflects the enhanced cultural cooperation between India and the UAE:

Soft launch of Gandhi Zayed Digital Museum was done in Abu Dhabi by the then EAM and the Foreign Minister of the UAE on 04 December, 2019. The Museum was opened for the public on 12 March, 2019 by Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, UAE's Minister of Culture & Knowledge Development. In recognition of this unique initiative, the UAE Government presented the Embassy of India and the UAE Ministry of Culture the Pioneers Award for 2019.

The foundation stone for the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi was laid on 20 April 2019 and the ceremony was attended by H.E. Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, the Minister of Climate Change & Environment of the UAE along with other representatives of the Government of the UAE and the Ambassador.

### **Education**

**Indian schools:** There are 130 Indian schools in the UAE following the CBSE and Kerala Board curricula with approx 219,000 students, mostly children of Indian expatriates.

**Conduct of Examinations:** The Mission & CGI Dubai assist in organizing the Annual and Supplementary Examinations of the Grade 10 & 12 of CBSE & Kerala Boards. Apart from the CBSE and Kerala Board, we also co-ordinate examinations twice a year for Indira Gandhi National Open University, National Institute of Open Studies and Institute of Chartered Accountants.

**Issue of Equivalency:** The Mission issues Genuineness Certificates after obtaining verification from the concerned University / Technical board in India to expatriate Indians to facilitate grant of Equivalency Certificate for their Indian educational degrees/certificates by the UAE Ministry of Education. The Equivalency Certificate has now become mandatory to continue / obtain employment in the UAE.

### **Defence and Security Cooperation**

Bilateral Defence Interaction between India and UAE has been steadily growing in accordance with other aspects of the bilateral relationship. There have been regular high level & functional level exchanges between the two countries. The ships of the Navies of both countries have regularly made port calls enhancing bilateral defence co-operation.

UAE Minister of State for Defence Mr. Mohammad Al Bowardi had visited India in Jan., 2017 along with the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi; in April 2018 for the Def Expo in Chennai and in October 2018 for the Aero India along with high level delegations. Visits from India included, Admiral Sunil Lanba in Feb., 2017, Vice Admiral Girish Luthra in Dec., 2017, Vice Admiral Srikant in Oct 2018, Ar Marshal J K Singh in Feb 2019 & Ar Marshal H S Arora in Nov 2019. In the recent years, IAF participated in a bilateral exercise with the UAE counterparts in May 2016 & UAE Air Force Officers participated as Observers in Trilateral Air Exercise on Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) theme held in March 2018. Two Indian Navy Ships participated in the maiden IN-UAEN Bilateral Exercise in March 2018 named Gulf Star 1; and Indian Navy and Coast Guard have made a number of port calls to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, along with the associated PASSEX. IN Ships have been regularly participating in IDEX/NAVDEX held in Abu Dhabi biennially.

### **Indian Community**

Indian expatriate community of approx. 3.3 millions is the largest ethnic community in UAE constituting roughly about 30 per cent of the country's population. Among the Indian States, Kerala is the most represented followed by Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. However, Indians from the Northern States, all put together, also form a significant portion of the UAE Indian population.

The profile of the community has changed from the 1970s and 1980s, when 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.

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.

15 eminent Indians and one Indian Community Association from the UAE have been honored with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award namely Mr. Yussuff Ali M.A, Mr. Syed M Salahuddin, B.R. Shetty, Mr.

Krishnamurthy Kumar, Dr. J.R. Gangaramani, Dr. Azad Moopen, Mr. Mohan Jashanmal, Mr. P. Bava Haji, Dr. Shamsheer Vayalil Parambath, Mr. Bharat Kumar Jayanti Lal Shah, Mr. Ashraf Palara Kunnummal, Mr. Vasu Shroff, Mr. Girish Pant, Mr. Surender Singh Kandhari, Dr. Zulekha Daud and the India Social & Cultural Centre (ISC) Abu Dhabi.

Mr. Yussuf Ali was conferred the Padma Shri in 2008 and in 2009 Dr. B.R. Shetty and Mr. Sunny Varkey were also honoured with Padma Shri award. Dr. J.R Ganagaramani, Shri Azad Moopen and Shri Sundar Menon were also conferred the Padma Shri award in the year 2010, 2011 and 2016 respectively.

There are various linguistic/regional associations for social and cultural activities. These associations extend support to the welfare initiatives of the Mission/Consulate and conduct cultural/welfare activities regularly including sports activities.

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