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, Indian Embassy in UAE was opened in 1973.

The traditionally strong bilateral relations enjoyed by India-UAE have received impetus with exchange of high-level bilateral visits from time to time. The visit of Prime Minister of India to UAE on 16-17 August 2015 marked the beginning of a new Comprehensive and Strategic partnership between the two countries. His Highness (HH) Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ), then Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and now the President of the UAE, visited India from February 10-12, 2016. HH MBZ visited India for the second time from 24-26 January, 2017 as the Chief Guest at India’s Republic day celebrations. It was during this visit that the bilateral relations were upgraded to ‘Comprehensive Strategic Partnership’.

PM Shri Narendra Modi visited UAE for the second time in February 2018 for the 6th World Government Summit (WGS) in Dubai, where India was the Guest of Honour. He delivered the key note address at WGS and met HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (MBR), Vice President and Prime Minister of UAE & Ruler of Dubai.

The third visit by PM to the UAE was in August 2019 during which he received the UAE’s highest award, ‘Order of Zayed’ conferred upon him by the UAE President in April 2019. The visit also witnessed official launch of ‘RuPay Card’ in UAE and release of a set of stamps commemorating the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

In February 2022, a virtual summit took place between UAE President MBZ and PM Shri Narendra Modi during which the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and several other MoUs/Agreements were signed. During the virtual summit, both leaders also issued a Joint Vision document that will guide India-UAE strategic partnership in times to come. Both leaders also launched an India-UAE Joint Commemorative Stamp to mark 75 years of India’s Independence (Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav), 50 years of the formation of the UAE and 50 years of the India-UAE Diplomatic relations.

In June 2022, PM had a stop over by Abu Dhabi while returning from Munich, Germany after attending the G-7 summit. During this visit, PM was received by UAE President HH MBZ at the VVIP Airport in Abu Dhabi. PM conveyed his condolences on the demise of former President of the UAE Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. He also congratulated HH MBZ on succeeding Sheikh Khalifa as the third President of the UAE.

The momentum generated by PM’s visits was sustained by back to back reciprocal visits at the level of Foreign Ministers. During the period 2014- 2019, External Affairs Minister of India visited the UAE thrice. Her last visit to the UAE was in March 2019 when she represented India at the 46th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of Organisation of Islamic Organisation (OIC), where India was invited as “Guest of Honour” country by the UAE.

Current External Affairs Minister, Dr. S Jaishankar visited the UAE seven times since May 2019. In November 2019, EAM visited UAE for the first time to attend the 10th Sir Bani Yas Forum. During the visit, he met with UAE Foreign Minister HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan (ABZ) as well as HH MBZ on the margins of the Forum. In November 2020, he...
visited UAE for the second time when he met with the UAE Foreign Minister HH ABZ and had courtesy meetings with HH MBZ in Abu Dhabi and with HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Defence Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai in Dubai. In April 2021, EAM visited the UAE on a day long trip when he met HH ABZ where they reviewed the COVID-19 pandemic and cooperation between India and the UAE in this regard. In November 2021, he visited the UAE to attend Sir Bani Yas Forum in Dubai. During the visit, he also had meetings with HH ABZ and HH MBZ. In December 2021, he visited Abu Dhabi to attend the 5th Indian Ocean Conference and on the sidelines, he met with HH MBZ and HH ABZ.

In September 2022, EAM visited the UAE on a 3-day long trip during which he co-chaired the 14th Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) and the third Strategic Dialogue with HH ABZ. During the visit, he also met UAE President HH MBZ, interacted with the press and had a discussion on foreign policy with the Director General of Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy in Abu Dhabi. On 12 Dec 2022, EAM came to UAE on a working visit, attended India Global Forum, had meetings with HH ABZ, ADNOC CEO Dr Sultan Al Jaber and Mubadala MD and Group CEO Khaldoon Al Mubarak.

In the last five years, the UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah has visited India five times – in June 2018, July 2019, Feb 2021, in Nov 2022 and in Mar 2023. In addition, Dr. Anwar Gargash visited India on 30 August 2021 and met EAM. During the meeting, they discussed latest regional and international developments and strategic issues of mutual concern. In October 2022, MoS (International Cooperation) Ms. Reem Al Hashimy led a delegation to participate in the Special meeting of the UNSC Counter Terror Committee in Mumbai and Delhi.

In December 2021, Health Minister Shri Mansukh Mandaviya visited the UAE and met with the UAE Minister of Health and Prevention Abdul Rahman Al Owais, Minister of State in MOFAIC Sheikh Shakhbout Nahyan Al Nahyan and the CEO of Mubadala Health H J Al Nowais. Both Ministers discussed and explored health cooperation at bilateral and plurilateral levels.

Minister of Commerce and Industry (CIM) and Minister for Railways, Shri Piyush Goyal visited UAE in October, 2021 for the 9th meeting of the UAE-India High Level Joint Task Force on Investments (HLTFI). He also visited UAE in Mar 2022 during which he delivered the keynote address at UAE-India Startup Forum 2022 in Abu Dhabi, chaired a number of G2G, G2B and B2B meetings during the visit. In October 2022, HH Sheikh Hamid bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Managing Director of Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) visited Mumbai to co-chair the 10th meeting of HLTFI with CIM.

In November 2022, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) and Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri visited UAE to attend the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference (ADIPEC) 2022. During the visit, he had bilateral meetings with UAE Energy Minister Suhail Al Mazroui, ADNOC CEO & UAE Climate Envoy Sultan Al Jaber and interacted with media channels besides inaugurating the India Pavilion at ADIPEC.

UAE has been invited as one of the Guest Countries by India in G20-2023. UAE has an active participation in G20 Ministerial, Working Group and Engagement Groups meetings. From the UAE, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Education, Climate Change, Economy, Industry &
Advance Technology, Foreign Trade, Energy and several others have participated in G20-2023 meetings held across India.

**Plurilateral/Multilateral Cooperation**

India and the UAE are currently part of several plurilateral platforms such as I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) and UFI (UAE-France-India) Trilateral, etc. UAE has been invited as a Guest Country to the G-20 Summit being held in India this year. UAE has been one of the most active participating countries to the G20-2023 as there have been visits of UAE’s Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy, Education, Advance Technology, Energy, Foreign Trade, Climate Change, etc for different meetings of G20. On 28-29 Oct 2022, UAE MoS for International Ms Reem Al Hashimy visited India and participated in the Special Session of the UNSC Counter Terror Committee.

On 15 Jul 2022, for the first I2U2 Leaders’ Summit was held, virtually attended by PM Modi and MBZ while President Biden and Israeli PM joined together from Tel Aviv. During the Summit, the UAE pledged to invest US$ 2 billion in India in Integrated Food Parks.

The first I2U2 Business Forum meeting was hosted in Abu Dhabi in Feb 2023 where business delegations led by the government officials from all sides participated. Our delegation was led by our Sherpa Secy ER. He also held bilateral meetings with UAE Sherpa MoS Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh, ADIA Managing Director Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed. The business delegation was divided in six sub-groups and had focused discussions touching areas such as food security, water, energy, space, transportation, health, and technology. There have been follow up meetings and further discussions on space cooperation and few others.

The UFI Trilateral has also seen consistent progress in the last few months as EAM and his UAE and French counterparts had a telecon in Feb 2023 when they adopted the roadmap of the UFI Trilateral followed by a meeting in Paris in the same month at Foreign Secretary level where the roadmap was discussed in detail. There have been follow up meetings to take the partnership forward.

**Economic & Commercial**

India and UAE have shared trade links through the centuries. The 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 begun from Abu Dhabi in 1962). With the emergence of 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 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. 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, is today US$ 84.84 billion making UAE, India’s third largest trading partner for the year 2021-22 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.

The UAE’s investment in India is estimated to be around US$ 20-21 billion of which US 15.18 billion is in the form of FDI while the remaining is portfolio investment. UAE is the 7th
biggest investor in India in terms of FDI. The UAE Sovereign Wealth Funds (SWFs) invested over US$ 10 Billion in India during period 2020-22. Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) is the principal Sovereign Wealth Fund of the UAE and one of the world’s largest. UAE has committed to invest US$ 75 billion in India’s infrastructure sector over a period of time. ADIA is an anchor investor in NIIF Master Fund and through an investment of US$ 1 billion in National Infrastructure Investment Fund (NIIF). Since 2020, GOI has announced several measures to facilitate and further ease investments by ADIA and other sovereign funds from UAE.

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.

**Air connectivity**: During the Covid-19 pandemic, an air-bubble agreement between India and the UAE was signed which continued throughout the pandemic period, ended with resumption of scheduled commercial international flights w.e.f 27th March 2022, the normal air services resumed.


**Cultural Relations**

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 partake 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 Indian diaspora in sports, fitness, and cultural activities.

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.

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.

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

**Education**

There are over 100 International Indian schools in the UAE following the CBSE and Kerala Board curricula with approx 3.25 lakh students, mostly children of Indian expatriates residing 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.

Embassy and 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 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.

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 obtain skilled employment in the UAE.

A tripartite MoU is to be signed on 15 July 2023 between 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, a Master in Energy Transition & Sustainability and regular bachelor and few other Masters program from Sep 2024.

**Defence Cooperation**

Defence cooperation between India and UAE is steered through a Joint Defence Co-operation Committee (JDCC) at the Ministry level, with the signing of Agreement on Defence Cooperation in June 2003, which came into effect since April 2004.

Both countries have frequent exchanges between defence establishments. The most recent ones being the good will visit of General Manoj Narawane, Chief of Army Staff, in December 2020 and the visit of Air Chief Marshal Rakesh Kumar Singh Bhadauria, Chief of Air Staff from 31 July to 03 August 2021. From the UAE, a 05 member delegation led by Staff Major General Pilot Ibrahim Naser Mohamed Saif Al Alawi, Commander of the UAE Air Force and Air Defence attended the Aero India 2021 at Bengaluru from 03-07 February 2021 followed by the first goodwill visit of Commander of the UAE Air Force and Air Defence in Sep 2022.

The prestigious International Defence Exhibition and Conference (IDEX) and the Naval Defence and Maritime Security Exhibition (NAVDEX) held in February 2021 in Abu Dhabi was attended by the Indian Defence Industry participated through an India Pavilion. The pavilion showcased the Indian Defence industry with representation from Defence PSUs like Ordnance Factory Board, Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited, Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited and Bharat Dynamics Limited. DRDO took part in the India pavilion as did Brahmos Aerospace (BAPL), through an independent chalet in NAVDEX.
Indian Defence delegation also joined the Dubai Air Show from 15-19 November 2021. Its pavilion was structured around the products of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) and Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO). Brahmos also had an independent chalet just across the Indian Pavilion. The IAF aerobatic teams of Suryakiran and Sarang participated in the Air Display of the Dubai Air Show. Light Combat Aircraft Tejas also received wide attention.

In November 2022, a 26-member National Defence College (NDC) delegation from the UAE visited India on a study tour during which the visiting delegation had interactions and briefings in Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance among others.

Latest edition of IDEX / NAVDEX was held at Abu Dhabi from 20-24 Feb 2023. It marked concrete opportunities for the Indian Defence Industry to engage with various agencies of the UAE in order to enhance defence exports. The mission facilitated several negotiations and projects to fructify and this resulted in three Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) being signed.

Indian Air Force participated in the recent Ex Desert Flag 08 in Feb-Mar 23 which was a multi-lateral Air Force Exercise held at Abu Dhabi involving several FFCs.

Indian Naval Ship Brahmaputra made a ‘port call’ at Port Rashid at Dubai from 20-22 Jun 23. International Day of Yoga was celebrated on 21 Jun 23 at Port Rashid as a part of ‘The Ocean Ring’ initiative of MoD and IN. More than 250 participants excluding the ship’s crew took part in the event which was graced by H.E. (Dr.) Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister for Foreign Trade.

**Space Cooperation**

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the UAE Space Agency signed an MoU regarding cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes on 11th February 2016. UAE’s National Centre of Meteorology signed an MOU with the Ministry of Earth Sciences on scientific and technical cooperation in the field of atmospheric sciences, during a virtual meeting in January 2021. ISRO signed similar agreement with Muhammed bin Rashid Space Center (MBRSC, Dubai) in January 2022. During the same time, ISRO also signed an Implementation Agreement (IA) with MBRSC on Cooperation in Aerosol and Greenhouse monitoring satellite Mission.

The commercial arm of Department of Space, Antrix Corporation Limited launched UAE’s nano-satellite (NAYIF-1) from India’s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), to collect environmental space data in February 2017. In June 2018, during the visit of UAE Foreign Minister ABZ to India, he visited the ISRO HQ in Bengaluru along with a 7-member delegation. In addition, Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, Honorary Distinguished Advisor & Former Secretary, DOS/ Chairman, Space Commission/ Chairman, ISRO was also a part of the UAESA Advisory Committee meetings in April 2018 and March 2019.

In August 2022, the Director General of MBRSC presented Indian Flag to Indian Ambassador which was taken to the space by the first Emirati astronaut Hazzaa Al Mansoori in September 2019.

In Dec 2022, MoS PMO Dr Jitendra Singh visited the UAE to represent PM at the inaugural Abu Dhabi Space Debate where he delivered the keynote address along with Israeli
President. On the margins, he had meetings with his counterparts from the UAE and other countries.

Space is an important element of the I2U2 cooperation and during the first Business Forum Meeting of I2U2 held in Jan 2023, Space cooperation was discussed in detail. There have been follow up meetings to take the cooperation forward.

Indian Community

Indian expatriate community of approximately 3.5 million is the largest ethnic community in UAE constituting roughly about 35 per cent 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.

The profile of the community has changed from the 1970s and 1980s, when majority of the Indian community was blue-collar 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.

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 associations for social and cultural activities. These associations extend support to the welfare initiatives of the Mission or 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.

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 and the Ambassador. This will be the first Mandir in Abu Dhabi and will further deepen the people-to-people ties between the two countries.

Along with the Community Affairs Wing of the Embassy, Pravasi Bhartiya Sahayata Kendra (PBSK) has been functioning to assist the Indian diaspora though 24x7 helplines and a PBSK Mobile App.

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July 2023