

## India-Israel: The Maturing of a Steady Relationship

### Why in news?

Israel's Prime Minister Naftali Bennett will visit India to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

### What is the history of India-Israel relation?

- India recognised Israel in 1950 but normalisation took another four decades.
- The full diplomatic relations were established after the opening of embassies in 1992.
- In the wake of the first Gulf War, Arab support for the Palestinian cause began to weaken due to Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) backing for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.
- From 1992, there were defence deals, and co-operation in science, technology and agriculture.
- But India was reserved about its ties with Israel because of its historical support for the Palestinian cause, dependence on the Arab world for oil, and the pro-Palestinian sentiments.
- The first high-level visits took place only after the NDA-1 under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee took office where L K Advani became the first Indian minister to visit Israel.
- In 2000, the two countries set up a joint anti-terror commission.
- In 2003, Ariel Sharon became the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit India.

To know more about the India-Israel Relationship, click [here](#)

### How is the relationship evolving currently?

- Prime Minister Modi undertook the first ever visit by an Indian PM to Israel in 2017.
- Prime Minister Bennett last year addressed all the people of India on 30 years of a wonderful partnership, deep cultural connection and economic and military co-operation.
- He described that the opportunities for collaboration between the two countries is endless.
- Prime Minister Modi had spoken about setting new goals to take the relationship forward, and referred to Jewish communities in India who had lived here without discrimination.
- With the 2020 Abraham Accords that saw the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco normalising relations with Israel, New Delhi is now more confident about its relationships in West.

*The Abraham Accords was signed by the UAE, Bahrain and Israel, under U.S. President Donald Trump's mediation in 2020 to normalise ties with Israel.*

### What is India's earlier stance in the Palestinian cause?

- India continues to walk a tightrope between its historical ties with Palestine and its more recent affection for Israel.

- Earlier, India backed the Palestinian right to self-determination and rallied behind the PLO and its leader Yasser Arafat as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.
- In 1975, India invited PLO to open an office in Delhi, giving it diplomatic status five years later.
- In 1988, when the PLO declared an independent state of Palestine with its capital in East Jerusalem, India granted recognition immediately.
- India voted for Palestine to become a full member of UNESCO in 2011, and also co-sponsored the UNGA resolution that enabled Palestine to become a “non-member” observer state at the UN without voting rights.
- India also supported the installation of the Palestinian flag on the UN premises in 2015.
- The UN Security Council virtually held Israel responsible for the violence, and expressed India’s strong support to the Palestinian cause and unwavering support for the two-state solution.

## How the policy shift happened?

- The first big shift in India’s policy came during the visit of Mahmoud Abbas in 2017 when India in a statement dropped the line in support of East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.
- But the balancing act continued as Modi made a separate visit to Ramallah in 2018, and called for an independent Palestinian state.
- Even as it abstained at UNESCO in 2017, India voted in favour of a resolution in the General Assembly opposing the Trump administration’s recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.
- At the UNHRC’s 46th session in Geneva in 2021, India voted against Israel in three resolutions
  - on the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people
  - on Israeli settlement policy
  - on the human rights situation in the Golan Heights
- It abstained on a fourth, which asked for an UNHRC report on the human rights situation in Palestine, including East Jerusalem.
- In 2021, the International Criminal Court claimed jurisdiction to investigate human rights abuses in Palestinian territory but India did not take a stand against it.

## What does the current visit signify?

- The visit will reaffirm the important connection between the countries and the leaders and will mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of relations between Israel and India.
- The purpose of the visit is to advance and strengthen the strategic alliance between the countries, and to expand bilateral ties.
- The visit also aims to expand the cooperation between the two countries in the areas of innovation and technology, security and cyber, and agriculture and climate change.

## References

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