

## India-Oman Relationship

### Why in news?

Recently the Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tarik visited India, it marks a significant milestone as it is the first State visit by an Omani ruler in 26 years.

### What is the history of India-Oman relations?

- **Historical relations**-The maritime trade routes established between the *Sumerian civilisation* and the *Harappan civilisation* in the Indus Valley highlight the great historical significance.
- Oman had links with the India through *Gujarat*, and with Tamilakam along the *Malabar Coast*.
- **Political relations**- The political engagement between the two countries has increasingly taken on a more strategic shape.
- Oman is a strategic partner of India and an important interlocutor at [Gulf Cooperation Council](#) (GCC), Arab League and [Indian Ocean Rim Association](#) (IORA) forums.
- **Oman's friendly relation**- Oman was one of the few Arab countries that maintained close ties with India during and after the Cold War, despite the pro-Pakistan stance of most of the Arab world.
- **G20 summit**- As a mark of this special friendship, India has invited Oman as a guest country during India's Presidency in 2023.
- **Diplomatic relations**- Both countries established diplomatic relations in 1955 and the relationship was upgraded to Strategic partnership in 2008. It is based on the twin pillars of *mutual trust* and *shared interests*.
- **Economic relations**- India is among Oman's top trading partners.
  - Crude oil- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest market for Oman after China.
  - Non-oil exports- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest market for Oman after Saudi Arabia

Main items of India's export	Main items of India's import
Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation	Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation
Inorganic chemicals, Organic or Inorganic compounds of precious metals	Fertilizers
Iron and Steel	Ships, boats and floating structures

- **Oman-India Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF)**- It was set up in 2010 as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to invest in India, which is a 50-50 joint venture between the State Bank of India and the erstwhile State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) of Oman.
- **Rupay debit card**- Both launched the Rupay debit card in Oman, a key footprint of India's initiative of promoting *digital public infrastructure* (DPI) in the world.
- **Defence cooperation** - Oman is India's closest defence partner in Gulf region. Oman

is the first Gulf country with which all the three wings of India's defence forces hold joint exercise.

Defence wing	Joint Exercise
Maritime exercise	Naseem al-Bahr
Military exercise	Al Najah IV
Air exercise	Eastern Bridge VI

- The 1<sup>st</sup> ever *India-Oman Defence Industrial Seminar* was held in Muscat in 2023.
- **Operation Sankalp**- During the Persian Gulf crisis in 2019, the Indian Navy launched this operation to ensure the safe passage of Indian flagged ships which most often operated off the coast of Oman
- **Cultural relations**- There is a deep socio-cultural bond between India and Oman, rooted in the strength of people-to-people contacts.
- **Yoga special events**- 'Oman yoga yatra' and 'Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' was launched by embassy, it reflects the rich Indian cultural tradition celebrated by the people of Oman.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> ever '*Festival of India in Oman*', organized by the Embassy with support of Ministry of Culture of India in 2017.
- **Indian community in Oman**- It is organized under *Indian Social clubs* in Muscat, Salalah, Sohar, and Sur.
- These clubs have several sub-groups called *Linguistic Wings* which cater to their members' cultural and social needs.
- **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards**- It is given to recognize the outstanding contributions of Indians and People of Indian Origin in Oman to the strengthening of our bilateral relations.



### What are the key takeaways from the recent visit?

*A vision document titled, 'A joint Partnership for the future' touching all grounds of development is endorsed and accepted firmly.*

- **Digital connectivity**- Both have agreed to enhance cooperation on digital payment systems, such as RuPay and e-Dirham, to facilitate trade and remittances between the two countries.

*India has also proposed to link the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) with Oman's mobile wallet app, Thawani.*

- **Hospitality**- India promises to reopen historic maritime voyage to Oman sailing through Mandvi to Muscat tentatively in 2025-26.
- **Terrorism**- An MoU has been signed between Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and National Centre for Financial Information (FNCI) on cooperation in the exchange of intelligence related to money laundering, associated predicate offences and terrorism financing.
- **Food security**- Both have recognized the importance of ensuring food security and enhancing agricultural cooperation, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Cultural relation**- Dhofar University and the Indian Council For Cultural Relations

(ICCR) on establishment of the ICCR Chair of Indian Studies- Hindi Language.

- The vision document acknowledges the remarkable synergy between *Oman Vision 2040* and India's development objectives, under '*Amrit Kaal*', affirming commitment to harnessing these complementarities for deepening the partnership between Oman and India.

### Why Oman is India's gateway to West Asia?

- **Connectivity-** [India-Middle-East-Europe Connectivity Corridor](#) (IMEEC) infrastructure project to link India to Europe across West Asia, Oman will play a key vital role in undersea connectivity.
- **Defence base-** India has been granted access to the *Duqm port* in Oman, which can serve as a strategic base for India in the region.
- **Geopolitical significance-** Oman's location is of utmost strategic importance to India due to the coastline along Arabian Sea as well as the Gulf of Oman leading into the Persian Gulf and towards the Gulf of Aden.
- **Key strategic partners-** Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman completes the trio of key strategic partners of India in the Gulf region.
- **Oman's peaceful neutral policy-** Oman has adopted a moderate and mediating role in the region, avoiding involvement in conflicts and disputes.
- **Persian Gulf crisis-** Oman facilitated dialogue and communication between US and Iran, its efforts were praised by the international community as a constructive contribution to regional stability

### References

1. [The Hindu- Time honoured connect](#)
2. [MEA- India-Oman bilateral brief](#)

