

4. First India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue – International Relations

Resolution of Palestinian question necessary for India-Middle East-Europe-Economic Corridor – Egyptian FM. The first India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue discussed strengthening bilateral ties and regional connectivity through the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), while reaffirming India's support for the two-state solution for Palestine. IMEC aims to enhance trade, strategic partnerships, and energy security by connecting India with the Middle East and Europe via ports, railways, and pipelines, though geopolitical, financial, and technical challenges remain.

India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue & India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

1. Context – The first India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue was held in New Delhi.

Co-chairs – EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar (India) and Egyptian FM.

Primary discussion – Progress and cooperation on the India-Middle East EU Economic Corridor (IMEC).

2. Egypt's Position on Regional Connectivity – Egypt supports regional connectivity projects like IMEC. However, it believes progress is contingent on addressing the Palestinian question. Proposed India's participation in the Egyptian Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE), where countries like Russia and China already have industrial complexes, to strengthen connectivity and trade cooperation.

3. India's Support to Palestine – India reiterated its consistent backing of the two-state solution – peaceful coexistence of Israel and Palestine as independent states.

4. Egypt's Geostrategic Role – Acts as a bridge between Asia, Africa, and Europe. SCZONE provides industrial and trade cooperation opportunities. Played a role in Gaza Peace Agreement (2025) as a mediator, enhancing its centrality in Middle East peace efforts and connectivity diplomacy.

5. India-Egypt Relations – Diplomatic relations established at Ambassadorial level – 1947. Founding members of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) – 1961.

Bilateral Relations

Aspect	Details
Trade Agreement	India-Egypt Bilateral Trade Agreement (MFN basis) since 1978
Bilateral Trade	FY 2021-22 – US\$ 7.26 billion; FY 2024-25 – ~US\$ 5.2 billion (India exports – US\$ 3.84 B; imports – US\$ 1.3 B)
Defence & Security Cooperation	MoU signed in 2022; Joint tactical air exercise “Desert Warrior” (IAF-EAF) in 2021; Exercise “Cyclone” (Special Forces) 3rd edition held in 2025
Indian Community	~6,000 Indians live in Egypt; ~2,000 Indian students
Mechanisms for Cooperation	Joint FOCs, Joint Trade Commission (JTC), Joint Defence Committee (JDC), Joint Working Groups (JWGs) on energy, animal husbandry, health, medicine

6. India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

6.1 Background

Proposed in 2023 during G20 Summit.

Participants – India, EU, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, UAE, USA.

Length – ~4,800 km.

Objective – Integrate Asia, West Asia/Middle East, and Europe.

6.2 Corridor Structure

East Corridor – India → West Asia/Middle East

Northern Corridor – West Asia/Middle East → Europe

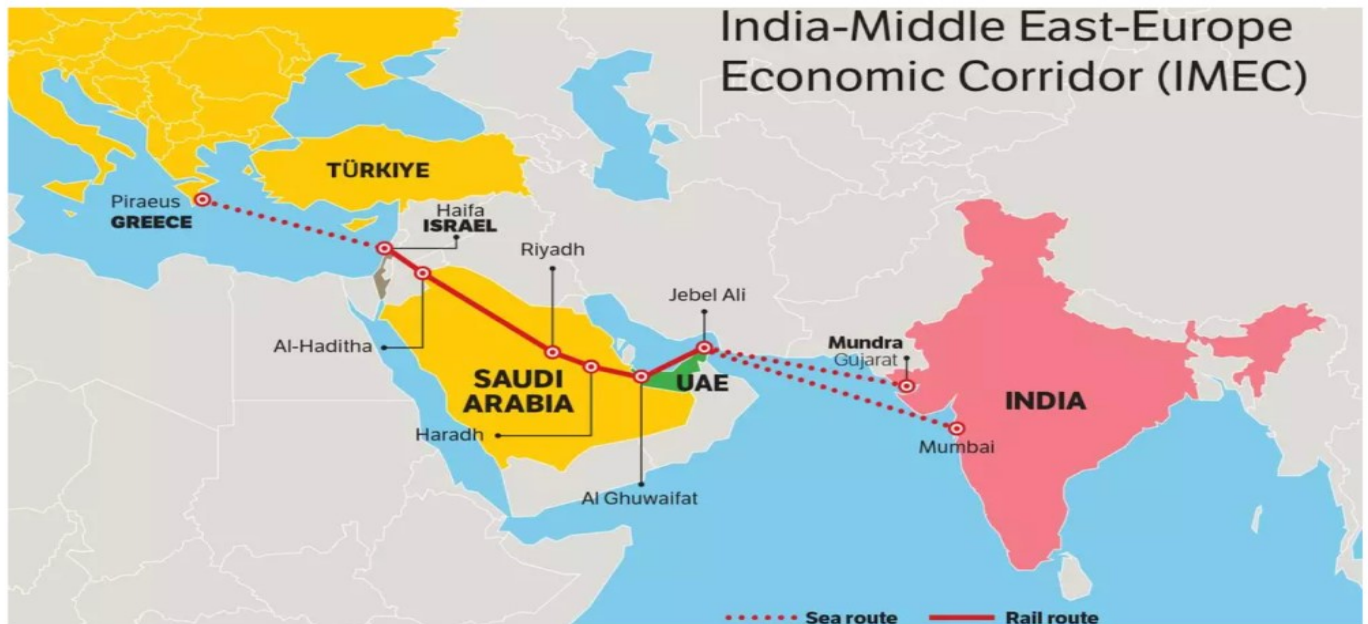
6.3 Ports Part of IMEC

Region	Ports
India	Mundra (Gujarat), Kandla (Gujarat), Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (Navi Mumbai)
Europe	Piraeus (Greece), Messina (Southern Italy), Marseille (France)
Middle East	Fujairah, Jebel Ali, Abu Dhabi (UAE); Dammam, Ras Al Khair (Saudi Arabia)
Israel	Haifa

6.4 Railway Connectivity

Railway line linking Fujairah (UAE) → Haifa (Israel)

Passes through Saudi Arabia (Ghuwaifat, Haradh) and Jordan



The US sees the IMEC project as a tool to normalise relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, according to Ahmed Aboudouh, Associate Fellow at the British think tank Chatham House.

6.5 Significance of IMEC

Economic Development – Boosts trade and economic integration across Asia, Middle East, and Europe.

Trade Access – Provides India a direct, faster, and safer trade route to Europe.

Shipping Efficiency – Reduces dependence on Suez Canal; cuts shipping time by ~40%, costs by 20–30%.

Strategic Partnerships – Strengthens ties with US, EU, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Israel.

Policy Alignment – Supports India's "Act West Policy."

Energy Security – Facilitates integration of energy pipelines and green hydrogen networks.

Eco-friendly Infrastructure – Emphasis on sustainable development.

7. Concerns and Challenges

Category	Details
Security	Regional instability creates reluctance among partners to invest; project may face delays
Political Consensus	IMEC MoU is voluntary, not legally binding; divergent member priorities slow execution
Economic & Financial Viability	High costs across ports, railways, pipelines, and digital infrastructure; unclear financing mechanisms
Technical & Infrastructure	Deficits in cross-border railway connectivity; differing railway gauges and customs procedures

8. Way Forward

1. Balance geopolitical interests of participating nations.
2. Maintain robust security apparatus in unstable regions.
3. Ensure coordination among members to manage execution delays.
4. Address technical and financial challenges to ensure economic and strategic viability.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/resolution-of-palestinian-question-necessary-for-imec-connectivity-projects-to-progress-egyptian-fm-badr-abdelatty/article70176594.ece>