

3. India-Arab Relation- International Relation

India-Arab League- bridging cultures, creating opportunities

In early 2026, India hosted the 2nd India-Arab Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, marking a significant milestone in India's "Extended Neighbourhood" policy. The summit, co-chaired by India and the UAE, resulted in the Delhi Declaration 2026, reinforcing a shared vision for a multipolar world and strategic interdependence.

Evolution of India-Arab League Engagement

The partnership has evolved from historical civilizational ties to a structured, modern institutional framework.

Institutional Framework-

- 1. 2002- The dialogue was formalised through an MoU establishing a regular framework for consultation.
- 2. 2008- The relationship deepened with a Memorandum of Cooperation, creating the Arab-India Cooperation Forum (AICF).
- 3. 2013- Revision of the framework to streamline structural organization and effectiveness.

Observer Status- India holds Observer Status in the League of Arab States, a pan-Arab body of 22 member nations established in Cairo in 1945.

The Ministerial Summit-

- 1. 1st Meeting (2016)- Held in Manama, Bahrain.
- 2. 2nd Meeting (January 2026)- Held in New Delhi after a decade-long gap; it is the highest institutional mechanism for this partnership.

Key Pillars of the Partnership

The "Delhi Declaration 2026" and the Executive Program (2026-2028) outlined a shift toward technology-driven and security-centric cooperation.

Political and Strategic Coordination- India has upgraded ties to Strategic Partnerships with Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Qatar. Recognition of India as a key partner in Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and alignment with India's Viksit Bharat 2047.

Economic Integration-

- 1. Trade Volume- Bilateral trade exceeds \$240 billion, with a new target to reach \$500 billion by 2030.
- 2. CEPA Agreements- Deepened integration through Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements with the UAE and Oman.

Energy and Food Security-

- 1. Hydrocarbons- Arab states supply ~60% of India's crude oil and ~70% of its natural gas.
- 2. Long-term Resilience- A landmark \$78 billion LNG deal with Qatar (2024) and UAE's investment in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves.

Security and Defense-

- 1. Maritime Security- Access to the Duqm Port (Oman) enhances India's naval reach; collaboration under the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) framework.
- 2. Counter-Terrorism- Reaffirmation of "Zero-Tolerance"; condemnation of the 2025 Pahalgam terror attack.

Digital and Fintech Frontiers- Deployment of UPI and RuPay cards in nations like the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.

- 1. Establishment of the India-Arab Space Cooperation Working Group for joint remote-sensing and satellite development missions.

Comparison of Regional Visions

A major highlight of the 2026 engagement is the alignment of India's domestic growth goals with those of individual Arab nations.

India's Vision	Arab Partner Vision	Areas of Convergence
----------------	---------------------	----------------------

Viksit Bharat 2047	Saudi Vision 2030	Defense manufacturing, manufacturing hubs, and energy transition.
Digital India	UAE Centennial 2071	Fintech, AI, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), and Space.
Atmanirbhar Bharat	Oman Vision 2040	Logistics (Duqm Port), renewable energy, and green hydrogen.
SAGAR Framework	Arab Maritime Security	Protection of Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Suez Canal trade routes.

Challenges and Strategic Calibration

Despite high growth, the relationship must navigate complex geopolitical fault lines.

Maritime Security Risks- Recent disruptions in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden pose direct threats to India's \$240B trade flow and energy imports.

Intra-Regional Rivalries- Balancing ties between competing powers (e.g., Iran vs. Saudi Arabia, or Israel vs. the Arab League) requires delicate diplomatic manoeuvring.

Consensus Building- The diverse political systems and priorities of the 22 member states make collective, consensus-based multilateralism slower than bilateral progress.

Conflict Diplomacy- India remains a key interlocutor in regional de-escalation, particularly regarding the Gaza peace plan based on UN Resolution 2803.

The Way Forward

The roadmap for 2026-2028 focuses on "Strategic Interdependence."

Trade Diversification- Move beyond hydrocarbons into Green Hydrogen, climate adaptation, and renewable energy.

Connectivity- Leveraging economic corridors like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) to strengthen supply chain resilience.

Institutionalisation- Implementing regular sectoral consultations (Education, Health, Space) alongside ministerial-level dialogues.

Source- https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/india-arab-league-bridging-cultures-creating-opportunities/article70565598.ece#google_vignette