

India-Oman Bilateral Brief

1. The Sultanate of Oman is a strategic partner of India and an important interlocutor at the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Arab League, and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) fora. India and Oman are linked by geography, history, and culture and enjoy warm and cordial relations. While people-to-people contact between India and Oman can be traced back 5000 years, diplomatic relations were established in 1955, and the relationship was upgraded to a Strategic Partnership in 2008.

Political Relations:

2. Oman is a crucial pillar of India's West Asia Policy and its oldest regional strategic partner. The political engagement between the two countries has increasingly taken on a more strategic shape. The historical India-Oman bilateral ties were transformed into a strategic partnership in November 2008.

3. Visits at the highest level have been exchanged frequently between India and Oman.

Visits from India to Oman:

a) Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Oman in February 2018.

b) Shri Vikram Misri, Deputy National Security Advisor visited Oman during 26-27 February 2024 for 9th round of Strategic Dialogue.

c) Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri V. Muraleedharan visited Oman on 18-19 October 2023.

d) Shri Ajit Doval, National Security Adviser (NSA) of India paid an official visit to Oman on 25-27 June 2023.

e) Shri S. Somanath, Secretary of the Department of Space and ISRO Chairman, led a five-member delegation on an official visit to Oman on 14-15 June 2023.

f) Dr. Ausaf Sayeed, Secretary (CPV) & OIA, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India visited Oman on 27 February 2023 for India-Oman Strategic Consultative Group (IOSCG) meeting.

g) Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare, Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar visited Oman on 24-25 November 2022 to attend the 3rd Global Ministerial Conference on Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) in Muscat.

h) Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri V. Muraleedharan visited Oman on 3-4 October 2022 and on 15-17 December 2020.

i) External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Oman on 23-25 December 2019.

Visits from Oman to India:

a) His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, paid a State visit to India on 16-17 December 2023.

b) HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations & Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty Sultan visited India to participate in G20 Summit held on 09-10 September 2023.

c) H.E. Eng Said bin Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, visited India on 18 August 2023.

d) The Foreign Minister of Oman, H.E. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi visited India on 01-03 March 2023 to participate in G20 Foreign Minister's Meeting and Raisina Dialogue 2023.

e) Dr. Fatma Al Ajmi Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs led 5 member delegation to India on 24-25 February 2023 to participate in 1st JWG meeting on Health.

f) H.E. Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion of the Sultanate of Oman visited India in May 2022 to attend 10th JCM.

g) The Foreign Minister of Oman, H.E. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi (FMSB) visited India on 23-24 March 2022.

h) Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi, then Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs (MRDA) visited India in September 2018.

G-20 Engagements:

4. As a mark of special friendship, India extended an invitation to the sultanate of Oman to participate in the G20 Summit and meetings as a guest country during India's Presidency in 2023. Oman actively participated in more than 150 meetings of the Working Groups, and 9 Omani Ministers travelled to India to participate in G20 Ministerial Meetings. HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations & Cooperation Affairs

and Personal Representative of His Majesty Sultan represented Oman in the G20 Summit held on 09-10 September 2023.

Important Telecons:

5. At the HOS/HOG level, PM Modi and Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik held phone conversations in April 2020 and February 2021, discussing COVID-19 and bilateral cooperation. On 11 June 2024, PM Modi received a congratulatory call from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on his re-appointment as Prime Minister of India. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar held telecons with Oman's Foreign Minister in October 2023, February 2024 and June 2024.

Agreements and Bilateral Cooperation mechanisms:

6. Key bilateral agreements/MoUs between India and Oman cover cooperation in Health; Tourism; Military Cooperation; peaceful uses of Outer Space; visa exemption for diplomats/officials; Legal and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters; Extradition; legal and judicial cooperation in civil and commercial matters; Agriculture; Civil Aviation; Avoidance of Double Taxation; Standards and Measures; Manpower; Maritime Issues; Maritime Transport; Joint Investment Fund; and Cultural Cooperation. There are also MoUs for Cooperation between Oman's National Defence College (NDC) and the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) of India; Cooperation between FSI and Omani Diplomatic Institute; and State Audit Institution of Oman and the Office of Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

7. During the visit of Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan (MOSVM) in October 2022, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to link the payment systems between the two countries. Another MOU between Oman News Agency and Asia News International was exchanged. The MOU facilitates the exchange of news and information between both countries.

8. During the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik to India in Dec. 2023, various MoUs/agreements inked were MoU for cooperation in IT, MoU between the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and the National Center for Financial Information (FNCI) on intelligence exchange related to money laundering, associated predicate offenses, and terrorism financing, MoU in the field of Culture, MoU for the establishment of the ICCR Chair of Indian Studies-Hindi Language at Dhofar University and an Agreement addressing the gainful employment of accompanying persons of official employees.

Defence Cooperation:

9. Oman is India's closest defense partner in Gulf region and defense cooperation has emerged as a key pillar of the strategic partnership between India and Oman. Oman is the first Gulf country with which all the three wings of India's defense forces hold joint exercises. In recent years, both countries have cooperated in ensuring maritime security in the Indian Ocean region. In this regard, the first meeting of the Joint Maritime Committee constituted was held on 23 February 2022 virtually. On 30 July – 03 August, 2023, Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff of India led a delegation to Oman and held important bilateral meetings. The first ever India-Oman Defence Industrial Seminar was held in Muscat on 24 September 2023. Shri Giridhar Aramane, Defence Secretary of the Republic of India visited Oman on 30-31 January 2024 to hold the 12th meeting of the India-Oman Joint Military Cooperation Committee (JMCC). The 5th HLM was also held in New Delhi from 22-26 April 2024, and the ICG delegation was led by DG ICG and Deputy Commander, ROPCG, represented ROPCG.

Economic & Commercial Relations:

10. The economic and commercial relations between India and Oman are robust and buoyant. Bilateral trade during FY 2022-2023 reached US\$ 12.388 billion and for the year 2023-2024 reached US\$ 8.947 billion. Investment flows, both ways, have been robust, as reflected in numerous joint ventures, established both in India and Oman. There are over 6000 India-Oman joint ventures in Oman with estimated investment of over US\$ 7.5 billion.

11. Oman-India Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF) is a 50-50 Joint Venture between the State Bank of India and the erstwhile State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) of Oman. It was set up in July 2010 as a special purpose vehicle (SPV) to invest in India. OIJIF commenced its operations in 2011 with an initial seed capital of US\$ 100 million, fully invested across seven Indian companies from diversified sectors. After successful utilization of funds under Tranche I and II, the 3rd Oman-India Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF) tranche worth 300 million dollars was announced during the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik to India on 16 December 2023.

12. India is among Oman's top trading partners. India is the 4th largest market for Oman's crude oil exports for the year 2023 after South Korea. India is also the 3rd largest market for Oman's non-oil exports for the year 2023 after Saudi Arabia and 3rd largest source of its import after UAE and Saudi Arabia. India's exports to Oman in FY 2023-2024 is US\$ 4.426 billion. Oman is India's 29th largest export market for the FY 2023-2024. India's imports from Oman in FY 2023-2024 were US\$ 4.520 billion. Oman is India's 29th largest import source for the FY 2023-2024. Overall, Oman is India's 30th largest trading partner in FY 2023-2024 with total trade of US\$ 8.947 billion.

Year	Export from India	Import by India	Total trade
2017-2018	2,439.46	4,264.29	6,703.76
2018-2019	2,246.31	2,759.00	5,005.31
2019-2020	2,261.81	3,669.33	5,931.14
2020-2021	2,355.30	3,087.93	5,442.22
2021-2022	3,148.33	6,840.65	9,988.98.
2022-2023	4,477.25	7,911.18	12,388.43
2023-2024	4,426.47	4,520.84	8,947.32

13. Main items of India's exports to Oman: Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; Inorganic chemicals; Organic or Inorganic compounds of precious metals; Iron and Steel; cereals; Ships, boats and floating structures; electrical machinery & equipment; Boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances, parts thereof; organic chemicals, Article of Iron and Steel; Ceramic products etc. in addition to traditional export items like tea, coffee, spices, dairy produce, articles of apparel, meat and other food items, etc.

14. Main items of India's imports from Oman: Mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; Fertilizers; Ships, boats and floating structures; Plastics and Articles thereof; Salt; Sulphur; Earth and Stone; Plastering Materials, Lime and Cement; Organic Chemicals; Inorganic Chemicals; Organic or Inorganic compounds of precious metals; Aluminum and Articles Thereof; Aircraft, spacecraft, and parts thereof; Iron and Steel.

Cultural Cooperation:

15. India and Oman share a close cultural bond rooted in millennia-old people-to-people exchanges and the presence of a substantial Indian community in Oman. A notable event was the announcement of the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2019, awarded to the Late HM Sultan Qaboos in March 2021, fostering immense goodwill for India.

16. Indian Embassy, in association with the National Archives of India (NAI), conducted a first of its kind special digitization and oral history project, titled 'The Oman Collection – Archival Heritage of the Indian Community in Oman' from 19 to 27 May 2024. Under this project, digitization of over 7,000 historical records of 32 old Indian diaspora families living in Oman for more than 250 years was done. These documents included personal diaries, account books, trade invoices, passports, letters, etc. These documents, dating from 1838 to early 20th century, were in English, Arabic, Gujarati and Hindi.

Indian Community in Oman:

17. Oman hosts a sizeable Indian community totalling approximately 659,789 individuals (512,611 males and 147,128 females) as of March 2024. 508,913 Indian nationals hold work visas, according to National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) data from April 2024. Some Indian families have established roots in Oman for more than 150-200 years. As of May 2024, 1910 individuals of Indian origin possess Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards. Thousands of Indians work as doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, teachers, lecturers, nurses, managers, etc. The role played by the Indian expatriate community in building Oman is often acknowledged by Omani Government. 22 Indian schools are offering a curriculum catering to the educational needs of more than 42,922 Indian students.

18. Indian community in Oman 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.

19. The Hindu merchant community has two temples, one over a century old, and cremation grounds. Churches have been permitted, and a Gurudwara has been there for over two decades, along with at least two other temporary structures used as Gurudwaras. Indian Embassy receives good support from local authorities in delivering services aimed at the welfare of the Indian community in Oman.

20. Outstanding contributions of Indians and People of Indian Origin in Oman to the strengthening of our bilateral relations have been recognized by the Government of India through Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards. The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awardees from Oman are: ShriKanaksiKhimji (2003), Dr. P. Mohamed Ali (2004), P.N.C. Menon (2009), S.K. Virmani (2010), Kiran Asher (2012) R.M Parakh (2015) and Dr. Vinodan V. T. (2019).

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