

India-Qatar Bilateral Relations

India-Qatar cooperation in diverse sectors has been steadily growing in an excellent framework provided by historically close ties and regular and substantive engagement, including at the highest levels of the two Governments. The large, diverse, accomplished and highly regarded Indian community is making an important contribution to Qatar's progress and in nurturing the bonds of deep-rooted friendship and multi-faceted cooperation between the two countries.

Political Relations

2. There has been regular exchange of high-level bilateral visits. The Amir of Qatar H.H. Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani had paid a State Visit to India in March 2015. Previously, the then Amir H.H. Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani [now the Father Amir] had visited India in 1999, 2005 and 2012. The then Qatari PM Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al Thani visited India in December 2016. During H.H. the Amir's visit to India in March, 2015, the two sides discussed ways and means to build a forward-looking partnership by further broadening and deepening the bilateral engagement and by better leveraging the existing complementarities between the two countries in key areas of mutual interest including inter alia, energy, power, petrochemicals, investments, infrastructure development, project exports, education, culture, health, human resource, media and information technology. Six Agreements / MOUs were signed during the visit, in the following areas: (i) Transfer of sentenced Persons; (ii) Mutual Cooperation between Foreign Service Institute, MEA and Diplomatic Institute, MFA; (iii) Cooperation in Information and Communication Technology; (iv) Cooperation in Atmospheric and Ocean Sciences; (v) Cooperation in Radio and Television; and (vi) Mutual Cooperation and Exchange of News between Qatar News Agency and United News Agency.

3. Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a state visit to Doha from 4-5 June, 2016 at the invitation of H.H. Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar. PM's visit provided an excellent opportunity to both sides to engage at the highest level, and imparted fresh momentum to our bilateral ties. This was the highest-level visit from India to Qatar since the visit of former PM Dr. Manmohan Singh in November 2008.

4. During his visit to Doha in June 2016, PM held extensive talks with H.H. the Amir and exchanged views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual concern. Seven MoUs/ Agreements between the two sides were signed during PM's visit, which includes (1) MoU for investment in National Investment and Infrastructure Fund of India; (2) MoU between Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND) and the Qatar Financial Information Unit (QFIU); (3) MoU for Cooperation in Skill Development and Recognition of Qualifications; (4) MoU for Cooperation in the field of Health; (5) Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Custom Matters; (6) MoU on Tourism Cooperation; and (7) First Executive Program for MoU in the field of Youth and Sports.

5. Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of Qatar, H.E. Sheikh Abdullah Bin Nasser Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, undertook an official visit to India from 2-3 December, 2016.

During the visit, various Agreements/MOUs were signed, including the Agreement for Exemption of Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic, Special and Official Passport Holders, and MOUs on Technical Cooperation in Cyber Space and Combating Cyber Crime; and between the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy of Qatar and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) in addition to a Letter of Intent for e-visas for tourists and businessmen. Separately, an MoU between Qatar Ports Management Company ("Mwani Qatar") and Indian Ports Global Private Limited was concluded.

6. Prime Minister met with H.H. the Amir of Qatar on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on 23 September 2019 in New York. They discussed bilateral relations and regional and international issues of mutual interest. They have been in constant touch with each other telephonically. Most recently, they spoke on 27 April, 2021 and discussed Covid situation in both countries and bilateral cooperation in the same.

7. There have been several high-level visits between the two countries in the recent past:

- (i) EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar, during his visit to Doha, met Qatar's DPM/FM Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani and DPM/MoS for Defence Affairs Dr Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah (15 June, 2021) and NSA Mohammed bin Ahmed al Misnad (09 June, 2021) and reviewed the bilateral relations and discussed global and regional developments.
- (ii) EAM paid a two day stand alone visit to Qatar on December 27-28, 2020. During the visit, he called on Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, PM & Minister of Interior Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz al-Thani and Qatari DPM and FM Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. EAM handed over a written message from Indian Prime Minister to Amir, inviting him to visit India in the near future. He also met Qatar Chamber, QBA officials and urged Qatari businessmen to invest in India. EAM held a virtual interaction with the Indian community in Qatar.
- (iii) Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah visited India from 03-05 February 2020 and met with Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar. During the visit, Dr. Al Attiyah also visited the DefExpo 2020 exhibition in Lucknow.
- (iv) Qatar's MOS for Energy Affairs Saad Sherida Al Kaabi visited New Delhi on 27 January 2020 and met with Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Dharmendra Pradhan. The two leaders discussed bilateral cooperation in the field of energy. Earlier, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas of India Shri Dharmendra Pradhan visited Qatar from 11-12 September 2019 and met with MOS for Energy Affairs and Qatar Petroleum CEO & President Saad Sherida Al Kaabi in Doha. He also called on the then Qatari PM and Interior Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser Al Thani and discussed bilateral relations and issues of mutual concern.

- (v) Gen. (Dr.) V. K. Singh (Retd), the then MOS for External Affairs of India, visited Doha from 01-02 May 2019 to attend the 16th Ministerial Meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD). On the sidelines of the event, he held meetings with his Qatari counterpart Soltan bin Saad Al Muraikhi.
- (vi) A high-level delegation from Qatar led by Minister of Transport and Communications Jassim Saif Ahmed al-Sulaiti visited Mumbai from 14-16 January 2019 to participate in the Global Aviation Summit. On the sidelines, Qatari delegation held meeting with India's Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha. The two sides discussed aspects of co-operation in the fields of transport and aviation services, and potential investment opportunities in these areas.
- (vii) Smt. Sushma Swaraj, the then EAM visited Doha on 28-30 October 2018 which was the first-ever visit by any Indian External Affairs Minister to Doha. During the visit, EAM called on H.H. the Amir and discussed issues of common concern. She also called on the then Qatari PM Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani, and discussed of bilateral relations. EAM held delegation level talks with the Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and reviewed the whole gamut of bilateral relations. During the visit the two sides also signed a Joint Declaration to establish Joint Commission.
- (viii) Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani visited India on 25-26 August, 2017 and held delegation-level talks with EAM Smt. Sushma Swaraj on 26 August during which matters of mutual interest were discussed. The two sides reviewed progress on the follow-up of key decisions taken during the high-level bilateral visits which have been contributing to building a mutually beneficial partnership between the two countries. The visiting Qatari Minister called on PM Modi to hand over a letter from H.H. the Amir of Qatar. During the meeting, the Qatari side welcomed participation of the Indian companies through project exports in Qatar's infrastructure development, including for the ongoing FIFA 2022 related infrastructure. Sheikh Mohammed briefed his Indian interlocutors about the situation in the Gulf region.

8. Other recent virtual engagements include:

- (i) EAM Dr S Jaishankar participated in Qatar Economic Forum virtually, on 22 June 2021.
- (ii) Commerce and Industry Minister of India Mr. Piyush Goyal and Commerce and Industry Minister of Qatar Mr. Ali bin Ahmed Al-Kuwari held a virtual meeting on 6 May 2021 to discuss bilateral trade relations.
- (iii) Mr Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas of India and Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Mr. Saad Sherida Al Kaabi held telephonic conversation in the first week of May 2021 to discuss Covid situation. Earlier, they had spoken on 11 December 2020 and agreed to set up Joint Task Force on Energy.

- (iv) Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister participated in Raisina Dialogue virtually on 13 April 2021.
- (v) Minister of Transport and Communications of Qatar Mr. Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti participated virtually in the 2nd edition of Maritime India Summit on 2 March 2021.
- (vi) India and Qatar held 4th Round of Foreign Office Consultations virtually on 1 February 2021. The Indian side was lead by Secretary (CPV & OIA) Sanjay Bhattacharya and the Qatari side by Secretary General (SG) of the Foreign Ministry Dr. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Hammadi. During the meeting, the whole gamut of bilateral relations were reviewed including political, energy, trade, investments, defense, food security, health security, science and technology, consular, community and cultural aspects.

Covid cooperation

9. Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) sent Covid medical relief material to India for combating second wave of Covid-19 by special Amiri Air force plane. Qatar Airways transported medical aid from across the globe to India, free of charge. Qatar Petroleum (QP) filled Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) in cryogenic tankers which were shipped through various Indian Naval Ships to India. Indian community in Qatar too contributed in a big way in sending oxygen related material to India.

Defence

10. Defence cooperation is an important pillar of our bilateral agenda. India offers training slots in its defence institutions to a number of partner countries, including Qatar. India regularly participates in the biennial Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX) in Qatar. Indian Naval and Coast Guard ships regularly visit Qatar as part of our bilateral cooperation and interaction. India-Qatar Defence Cooperation Agreement, signed during the PM's visit to Qatar in November 2008, and further extended for a period of five years in November 2018. The agreement is implemented through the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC), which held its fifth meeting in Doha on 27-28 November 2019.

11. Major visits by defence delegations and ship visits:

- Dr. Khalid bin Mohammed Al Attiyah, Deputy PM and Minister of State for Defence Affairs visited India in Feb 2020 and held bilateral talks with Raksha Mantri and EAM. The Minister also attended the opening ceremony of DefExpo 2020 in Lucknow.
- C-17 Aircrafts of Indian Air Force visited Doha in the month of May and June 2021 to transport cryogenic containers as part of Covid relief operation.

- INS Kolkata, INS Tarkash, INS Trikand and INS Shardul visited Hamad Port, Doha in the month of May and June 2021 to undertake shipping of medical supplies for Covid Relief from Qatar as part of “Op Samudra Setu- II”.
- Indian Naval Ship INS Tarkash, commanded by Captain Happy Mohan, paid a port call at Hamad Port on 22-23 April, 2021.
- The Chief of Staff of Qatar Armed Forces, Lt. Gen. (Pilot) Ghanim bin Shaheen Al Ghanim, visited in India from 19-22 June 2018 and called on all the three service chiefs and Defence Secretary. An agreement on white shipping information sharing was signed during the visit.
- The Commander of the Qatar Amiri Naval Forces (QENF) visited in India from 02-05 April 2019 and called on Chairman of Chief of Staff Committee (COSC), Defence Secretary and Vice Chief of Air Staff.
- Indian Navy’s first Sail Training Ship (STS) INS Tarangini visited Doha Port from December 08-09, 2019. A six-member team from the Qatari Navy visited the ship on December 09 for a familiarization event and interacted with the Indian Navy officials.

Commercial & Investment Relations

12. India's bilateral trade with Qatar in 2020-21 was US\$ 9.21 billion. India’s export to Qatar during 2020-21 was US\$ 1.28 billion and India’s import from Qatar was US\$ 7.93 billion. Qatar’s key exports to India include LNG, LPG, chemicals and petrochemicals, plastics, and aluminium articles, while India’s key exports to Qatar include cereals, copper articles, iron and steel articles, vegetables, fruits, spices, and processed food products, electrical and other machinery, plastic products, construction material, textiles & garments, chemicals, precious stones and rubber. India is among the top three largest export destinations for Qatar (Japan and South Korea being the other two) and is also among the top three sources of Qatar’s imports, along with China and Japan.

13. Qatar is the largest supplier of LNG to India, accounting for over 50% of India's global LNG imports. Besides LNG, India also imports ethylene, propylene, ammonia, urea and polyethylene from Qatar. Therefore, the balance of trade continues to be heavily in Qatar’s favour. However, there has been a substantial growth in India’s exports to Qatar in the last few years.

14. According to the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), there are over 6000 big and small Indian companies operating in Qatar. Indian companies are today pursuing collaborations in various sectors like infrastructure, communications and information technology, energy and other areas in Qatar. The extensive infrastructure development in Qatar as it prepares to host the prestigious FIFA World Cup in 2022 and attain its National Vision 2030 objective, and the acknowledged competences of India’s corporate sector, offer attractive opportunities for cooperation. Indian companies

have invested about US\$450 million in Qatar, according to a statement by Qatar Financial Centre (QFC). Indian companies from across sectors have been present in Qatar for over several years and among them are Larsen & Toubro, Voltas, Shapoorji Pallonji, Wipro, TCS and Tech Mahindra.

15. There has been a substantial increase in Qatar's imports from India past 2-3 years, facilitated by the opening of direct shipping lines linking Indian ports with Qatar. The increase has been in the area of food products, vegetables, pharmaceuticals, steel products and construction materials.

16. Major Qatari investments in India since 2019:

- In January 2019, QIA invested US\$ 200 million through a primary equity issuance in Bharti Airtel's arm Airtel Africa Ltd.
- In July 2019, BYJU'S announced that it has received an investment of US\$150 million led by Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), the sovereign wealth fund of the State of Qatar.
- In February 2020, Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) invested about US\$450 million for a 25.1% stake in a unit of Adani Transmission Ltd. The deal includes a subordinated debt investment by QIA, according to the filing, which said the two sides have signed a definitive agreement.
- In February 2021, QIA invested US\$100 million in Verse Innovation, the parent company of vernacular news aggregator Dailyhunt and maker of short video entertainment app Josh, along with Glade Brook Capital Partners.
- In April 2021, QIA along with other investors (GIC of Singapore, Falcon Edge, Amansa Capital, Think Investments, Carmignac and Goldman Sachs) invested US\$ 800 million in Swiggys.

17. Joint Task Force on Investment has been set-up between both the countries to facilitate investments by Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) into India, and also to explore Qatari investments in the entire energy value-chain in India. Over the years, many Indian and Qatari trade and commerce delegations have visited and participated in events in both the countries.

Cultural Relations

18. Cultural ties between India and Qatar are deep-rooted and actively nurtured by both sides. There are regular cultural exchanges between the two sides, under the provisions of the Agreement on Cultural Cooperation signed between the two sides in 2012. Qataris admire India's cultural diversity.

19. The year 2019 was celebrated as India-Qatar Year of Culture, as envisaged in the Joint Statement issued during the visit of PM Modi to Qatar. Over 45 cultural events including exhibitions, fashion shows, art displays, dance performances, musical concerts, etc. were organized in Qatar by the Embassy during the year with the

cooperation of Ministry of Culture & Sports of Qatar, Qatar Museums, Katara Cultural Village, Qatar Posts, and Qatar Foundation.

20. The Mission is currently holding its celebrations under “Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav” in Qatar. The inaugural event on 26th March was attended by Ambassador Khalid Bin Ibrahim Al-Hamar, Director of Asian Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar as Chief Guest. Various events in different fields are being held regularly.

21. Mission also has a regular and active engagement with several Qatari organizations, like Katara, Qatar National Tourism Council and Qatar Museums in the areas of arts, culture, education, etc. and has organized major events in partnership with them.

22. **Yoga:** Qatar, as a co-sponsor, supported Resolution at the UNGA, adopted unanimously with a record 177 co-sponsors, declaring 21 June as the International Day of Yoga (IDY). A commemorative stamp to mark the occasion was also released by Qatar Post in June 2015. International Day of Yoga is being celebrated every year attended by large number of yoga enthusiasts. The 7th International Day of Yoga on June 21, 2021 was celebrated in 6 locations simultaneously in Qatar from beaches of Dukhan to sand dunes of Mesaed, iconic FIFA stadium in Al Khor, Museum of Islamic Art and Corniche in Doha.

23 **Ayurveda:** Qatar has allowed the practice of complementary medicine, including Ayurveda, in Qatar. A 2-member delegation from the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India, visited Doha from 09-10 September 2019 and held discussions with the officials at Qatar’s Ministry of Public Health on establishment of legal framework in Qatar for practice of Ayurveda. On the margins of the visit, a business event was organized to spread awareness about the prospects of cooperation in the field of complementary medicine.

Indian Community

24. There are over 700,000 Indian nationals residing in Qatar. They comprise the largest expatriate community in Qatar and are engaged in a wide spectrum of professions including medicine; engineering; education, finance; banking; business; and media apart from a large number of blue-collared workers. They are highly regarded for their honesty, hard work, qualifications and contribution to the development and progress of Qatar.

25. The welfare and well-being of the Indian community in Qatar is a matter of priority for the Embassy. There is a dedicated Labour and Community Welfare Wing that systematically registers and follow-up grievances brought to its notice.

26. Both countries have a Joint Working Group on Labour and Manpower Development, which held its 6th meeting virtually in December 2020. The Embassy remains in close contact with the concerned authorities in Qatar to ensure the well-being of our workers and other Indian expatriates. Recent reforms introduced to labour laws in Qatar like abolition of the sponsorship system (Kafala System) through Law No.

21 of 2015, removal of the requirement to obtain's employer's consent to change jobs if the expatriate has completed his fixed term contract and imposition of penalty upon illegal confiscation of passports by employers are of interest to India. Qatar has also abolished requirement of Exit Permit for 95% of the work force in private sector. Other reforms include the setting up of the Exit Permit Grievances Committee in the Ministry of Interior, streamlining the recruitment process through setting up of Labour Dispute Settlement Committees, bringing domestic-sector workers under a legal framework similar to other workers, creation of a Support Fund to settle the salary dues of workers of financially-distressed companies, setting up of International Labor Organization Office in Doha and also the proposal to institute a system of minimum wages for various categories of workers. With effect from March 2021, Qatar has introduced Minimum Wage Law for all sectors of work and provided for change of jobs without requiring NOC from the previous employer.

27. The Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), functioning under the aegis of Embassy of India, Doha - ICBF was awarded Pravasi Bharatiya Samman in January, 2011. ICBF operates a help-desk beyond working hours and also organizes medical camps for low-income workers from time to time in different cities of Qatar, in collaboration with the Indian Doctors Club and medical centers who are willing to partner with the Embassy in this initiative. The Embassy also regularly organizes consular camps in cities outside Doha for the benefit of Indian nationals living there. A monthly 'Open House' is organised on the last Thursday of every month, where any Indian national having a grievance can meet the Ambassador and other officers.

28. The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), an umbrella community organisation of Indian socio-cultural associations in Qatar, functioning under the aegis of Embassy of India, Doha, undertakes a number of cultural and other activities with Mission's guidance, support and cooperation.

29. The Indian Business and Professionals Council (IBPC) is a community based organization working under the aegis of the Embassy of India consisting of prominent businessmen and professionals. It works to promote bilateral trade and investment. It organises on a regular basis - Buyer Seller meets, business meets and takes part in trade exhibitions and fairs locally.

30. The Indian Sports Centre (ISC) is a community based organization working under the aegis of the Embassy of India, formed exclusively to focus on all aspects relating to the promotion of various sports and games, not only amongst the Indian community, but also amongst other expatriate communities. ISC also aims to support Qatar in hosting various national and international sporting events in a sustained manner.

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