

**Embassy of India
Muscat**

India - Oman Bilateral Relations

The Sultanate of Oman is a strategic partner of India and an important interlocutor at 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 Strategic partnership in 2008.

2. Late HM Sultan Qaboos, long time ruler of Oman and one of the architects of close India-Oman bilateral relations passed away in January 2020. Government of India announced national mourning for one day on 13 January 2020 in his honor. Gandhi Peace Prize 2019 was conferred on Late HM Sultan Qaboos in March 2021, in recognition of his leadership in strengthening the ties between India & Oman and his efforts to promote peace in the Gulf region. HM Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik was appointed the Sultan of Oman on 11 January 2020. He is the cousin brother of Late HM Sultan Qaboos.

Bilateral Visits

3. Visits at the highest level have been exchanged frequently between India and Oman. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Oman in February 2018.

Other Visits from India to Oman:

- Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs, Shri V. Muraleedharan visited Oman on 15-17 December 2020.
- Minority Affairs Minister, Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi visited Oman on 14 January 2020 and conveyed condolences on behalf of leadership and Government of India on passing away of Late HM Sultan Qaboos.
- External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Oman on 23-25 December 2019.
- Shri Suresh Prabhu, then Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation visited Oman on 15-18 July 2018 for co-chairing the 8th session of India-Oman Joint Commission Meeting and 9th session of India-Oman Joint Business Council.

- Dr. Mahesh Sharma, then MOS (I/C) for Culture, visited Oman in December 2017 to participate in the Second UN World Tourism Organization/UNESCO World Conference on Tourism and Culture.
- Late Shri Manohar Parriker, then Raksha Mantri had visited Oman on 20-22 May 2016 accompanied by a high level delegation.
- Shri M J Akbar, then Minister of State for External Affairs, visited Oman to attend the 5th India-Arab Partnership Conference, held in Muscat in December 2016.
- Late Smt. Sushma Swaraj, then External Affairs Minister (EAM), paid an official visit to Oman on 17-18 February 2015.

4. **Visits from Oman to India:**

- Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al-Harthy, Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs, Foreign Ministry visited India in January 2021 for India-Oman Strategic Consultative Group (IOSCG) meeting.
- Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi, then Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs (MRDA) visited India in February 2020 to attend DEFEXPO 2020.
- Mohammed Salim al-Toobi, then Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs, visited New Delhi in October 2018 for attending the 2nd IORA Ministerial meeting.
- Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi, then Minister Responsible for Defence Affairs (MRDA) visited India in September 2018.
- Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, then Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, visited India in April 2017, June 2014 and February 2014.

5. **Recent Engagements:** In the wake of COVID19, there have been several telephone / virtual interactions between the leadership of both the countries. At **HOS / HOG level**, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi spoke on telephone with His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman on 7 April 2020 and again on 17 February 2021. Both the leaders discussed the health and economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and bilateral cooperation. The leaders have also exchanged messages on important occasions. HM Sultan Haitham sent message on Independence Day and on demise former President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee. While, President and Prime Minister have sent congratulatory messages to HM Sultan Haitham on the occasion of 50th National Day of Oman in November 2020.

6. EAM, Dr. S. Jaishankar had a virtual meeting with his counterpart, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud Al-Busaidi on 2 December 2020. Both the leaders reviewed bilateral relations and discussed regional and international issues. India-Oman Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) was held virtually on 19 October 2020. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion of the Sultanate of Oman and H.E. Shri. Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister (Independent Charge), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs; Ministry of Civil Aviation and Minister of State, Ministry of Commerce & Industry of India. The JCM discussed enhancing cooperation in economic, trade, investment and service fields, and increase trade exchange between both the countries. The Health Minister of Oman, Dr. Ahmed Mohammed Al Saeedi had a telephone conversation with his Indian counterpart Dr. Harsh Vardhan in September 2020 and discussed cooperation in combating COVID19 pandemic.

7. **Cooperation during COVID19:** During the COVID19 period both the countries worked in close coordination to facilitate repatriation of respective nationals. Omani government extended cooperation in repatriation of Indian nationals under Vande Bharat Mission and Charter flights. Approximately 100,000 Indian nationals traveled to India during May to September 2020. Air bubble agreement was signed and became operational between both the countries w.e.f. 01 October 2020. India released supply of 1 million HCQ tablets in April 2020. India gifted 100,000 doses of made-in-India COVID19 vaccines to Oman in January 2021. India also facilitated return of Indian medical professionals to Oman and emerged as a reliable supplier of food and other commodities to Oman during COVID19 period.

Political Relations

8. The historical India-Oman bilateral ties were transformed into a strategic partnership in November 2008. Pursuant to this decision, the Higher Committee on Economic Cooperation, led by Adviser to HM the Sultan for Economic Planning and Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission of India, concluded a Report which identified nine areas of cooperation between the two countries, i.e. agriculture, healthcare, infrastructure, tourism, chemicals & fertilizers, education, oil & gas, power and mining.

9. India and Oman have JWG's in Manpower, Agriculture, Health and Science & Technology currently. Under the MoU on Manpower signed in 2008, India-Oman JWG was set up to review bilateral cooperation in the field of manpower. It

has held six meetings. The 7th Meeting was held in New Delhi in February 2019, in which Omani delegation was led by Welfare Adviser to the Manpower Minister. The 1st JWG on Agriculture held its first meeting in Muscat in November 2012 and the 2nd meeting is to be held in India. First meeting of JWG on Science & Technology was held in September 2019. Proposal for meeting of JWG on Health is under discussion.

10. **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 is also MoUs for Cooperation between Oman's National Defence College (NDC) and 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.

Economic & Commercial Relations

11. Both India and Oman accord high priority to strengthening economic and commercial relations between the two countries. Economic cooperation between India and Oman is reviewed through the institutional mechanism of Indo-Oman Joint Commission Meeting (JCM). Traditionally, Indo-Oman Joint Business Council (JBC) also runs parallel with JCM and serves as a platform for interaction between captains of Industry in India and Oman. The 8th Session of JCM and 9th Session of JBC were held on 16-17 July 2018 in Muscat, co-chaired by Ministers of Commerce and Industry of the two countries. The 9th Session of JCM was held virtually in October 2020.

12. India is among Oman's top trading partners. For Oman, India was the 3rd largest (after UAE and China) source for its imports and 3rd largest market (after UAE and Saudi Arabia) for its non-oil exports in 2019. During 2019-20, bilateral trade was US\$ 5.93 billion and during 2020 – 21 (April 2020 – February 2021) the total trade was US\$ 4.6 billion. Major items of Indian exports are mineral fuels and products of their distillation, textiles, machinery, electrical items, chemicals, iron and steel, tea, coffee, spices, rice and meat products and seafood. Among major Indian imports are: urea, LNG, polypropylene, lubricating oil, dates and chromite ore.

13. Bilateral Investment flows, have been robust, as reflected in numerous joint ventures, established both in India and Oman. According to Oman's Ministry of Commerce and Industry, there are over 4100 Indian enterprises and establishments in Oman with an estimated investment of US\$ 7.5 billion. Oman-India Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF) is a 50-50 Joint Venture between State Bank of India and 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 initial seed capital of US\$ 100 million which was fully invested across seven Indian companies from diversified sectors. OIJIF has raised another US\$ 220 million for its Tranche-II and is being invested in India.

14. Indian firms have invested heavily Oman in various sectors like iron and steel, cement, fertilizers, textile, cables, chemicals, automotive, etc. In Sohar, with an estimated total Indian investment of over US\$2 billion, Indian entities comprise the largest foreign investors. In Salalah, Indian investments are in manufacturing of automotive parts, textiles, cables, guar gum, etc. In Duqm SEZ, an Indo-Oman JV Sebacic Oman has established a US\$ 62.7 million project for setting up the largest Sebacic acid plant in Middle-East. In addition, L&T, Jindal, EPIL, Shapoorji Pallonji, Shriram, Aditya Birla Group, Nagarjuna Construction Company, KEC International, etc. are some big Indian companies which have been executing various projects in Oman. Indian financial institutions like SBI, Bank of Baroda, and HDFC Ltd as well as Indian PSUs like Air India, Air India Express, BEL, LIC, New India Assurance Co., TCIL, EIL, EPIL and NBCC have presence in Oman.

15. **ITEC:** Under the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme, Omani Officials have been availing training in many premier institutes of India. In FY 2020-21, Oman was offered 125 slots under ITEC programme. For the year 2021-22, 125 ITEC slots have been allocated for Oman. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, physical courses are not being conducted. However, e-ITEC courses are being conducted online.

Cultural Cooperation

16. India and Oman have close cultural relations. Omanis are familiar with Indian culture on account of millenia old people-to-people exchange, presence of large Indian community in Oman and geographical proximity. Indian Social Club and its various regional, linguistic and sports wings actively promote Indian

Culture in Oman, celebrating National Days, Festivals and Cultural diversity of India. However due to the COVID19 pandemic, all the events are being organized virtually. Yoga is quite popular in Oman specially among expatriates and local population. The number of participants in celebration of International Day of Yoga has increased from around 3,000 persons in 2016 to 6000 in 2019. International Day of Yoga 2019 was also celebrated in other cities of Oman including Sur, Suhar, Nizwa and Salalah. In view of restrictions on public assembly due to COVID19 pandemic, International Day of Yoga (IDY) was held online in 2020 and 2021. The Mission organized several online sessions / events in the run-up to main IDY events.

17. In wake of COVID19 pandemic most of the events were held virtually in 2020. The Embassy organized many events in 2020 to celebrate 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, including Gandhi Katha, several webinars and grand finale event on 5 October 2020. Hundreds of Indian community members participated enthusiastically in the virtual Independence Day celebrations on 15 August 2020 and Republic Day celebrations on 26 January 2021. In addition, the Embassy also organized webinar on National Education Policy 2020, Ayurveda Day and Constitution Day in November 2020.

18. India and Oman signed MoU on Cultural cooperation in July 2010, which is automatically renewed every five years. The first ever 'Festival of India in Oman', organized by the Embassy with support of Ministry of Culture of India during November 2016-March 2017, which was inaugurated by then Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs of Oman. In a sign of growing cultural cooperation, chairman of National Records & Achieves of Oman led a delegation to India in June 2019. Mr. Jamal al-Moosawi, then Director General of National Museum of Oman visited India from 25 August-3 September 2019 under ICCR's Distinguished Visitor's Program (DVP). During his visit to India he delivered lectures on India-Oman relations at National Museum, Institute of History of Art, Conservation & Museology and Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA). Oman's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced establishment of Oman-India Friendship Association in November 2020. Its members include prominent Omani and Indian origin businessmen and it will give further impetus to people-to-people and bussiness-to-business ties.

Indian Community in Oman

19. There are about 624,000 Indians in Oman (February 2021), of which about 4,83,901 are workers and professionals (May 2021). There are Indian families

living in Oman for more than 150-200 years. Total 2911 Indian origin people have Omani citizenship (408 males / 2503 females) as on July 2020. There are 21 Indian schools offering CBSE curriculum, catering to the educational needs of approximately 42,000 Indian students. Indian community in Oman is organized under Indian Social clubs in Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Sur. These clubs have a number of sub-groups called Linguistic Wings which cater to cultural and social needs of their members. Pravasi Bharatiya Samman has been awarded to seven NRIs/PIOs from Oman (Shri Kankasi Khimji-2003, Dr. P. Mohammed Ali-2004, P.N.C. Menon-2009, S.K. Virmani-2010, Kiran Asher-2012, R.M. Parekh-2015 and Dr. Vinodan V. T.-2019) in recognition of their contribution towards strengthening India-Oman relations as well as welfare of Indian community in Oman.

20. The Basic Law of Oman recognizes the right to different forms of worship. The Hindu merchant community has two temples, including one over a century old, and their own cremation grounds. Churches have been permitted and a Gurudwara has been there since over two decades, along with at least two other temporary structures, which are used as Gurudwaras. Indian Embassy receives good support from local authorities in delivery of services aimed at welfare of Indian community in Oman.

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