

## **India-Oman Relations**

The Sultanate of Oman is a strategic partner of India in the Gulf and an important interlocutor at the Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC), Arab League and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) fora. Oman also accords a high priority to its ties with India. The two countries across the Arabian Sea are linked by geography, history and culture and enjoy warm and cordial relations, which are attributed to historical maritime trade linkages, intimacy of the royal family with India and the seminal role played by the Indian expatriate community in building of Oman, which is acknowledged by Omani Government.

### **Political relations**

Visits at the highest level have been exchanged frequently between India and Oman. President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma (1996) and Vice-President Shri Krishna Kant (1999) visited Oman. Four Prime Ministers have visited the Sultanate: Shri Rajiv Gandhi (1985), Shri P. V. NarasimhaRao (1993), Shri AtalBihari Vajpayee (1998) and Dr. Manmohan Singh (2008). His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said visited India in 1997. His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, visited India in December 2007.

Ministerial level visits have taken place regularly. H.E. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs visited India in February 2014 and again on June 2014 to greet the new Indian leadership after the general elections making Oman the first nation to have sent a high-level dignitary after assumption of the power by the new Government. Minister of State for External Affairs visited Oman in May 2014 for bilateral engagement. H.E. Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Minister of Commerce & Industry visited India during October 2014 for the Joint Commission Meeting. Minister of Petroleum and Gas, Oman had visited India in April 2014. External Affairs Minister of India paid an official visit to Oman from 17-18 February 2015. Minister of State for External Affairs (MJA) visited Oman to attend the 5<sup>th</sup> India-Arab Partnership Conference, 14-15 December 2016. Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah, visited India on 2-3 April, 2017.

### **Defence Cooperation**

India-Oman Defence cooperation has emerged as a key pillar of the strategic partnership between the two countries. There has been regular exchange of visits by Defence Ministers of both sides. India's Defence Minister visited Oman from 20-22 May 2016 during which four MOUs/Protocol were signed. Over the past few years visits Defence Secretary, CNS and COAS to Oman with reciprocal visits to Indian by all three Omani Service Commanders, Secretary General of Defence etc. have also been witnessed. The Ministries of Defence of both countries review their relations annually under the aegis of Joint Military Cooperation Committee meeting. Both Air Force and Navy undertake staff talks on a regular basis which has been the catalyst for new areas of cooperation. A large number of Omani Military personnel regularly subscribe to numerous courses offered under the ITEC

scheme. In addition, other than the Defence Subject Matter Expert Exchange that regularly takes place Indian Navy has been deploying mobile training teams in Oman on an annual basis for training of RNO personnel.

India and Oman conduct regular biennial bilateral exercises between all three services. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Army exercise 'Al Najah' concluded in Mar 2017 in Himachal Pradesh. The Air Force exercise 'Eastern Bridge' culminated in Jan 2017 at Jamnagar and next Naval Exercise is scheduled in Dec 2017 in Oman. Since 2008, Oman has been extending its support to Indian Navy's anti-piracy missions and Indian Naval Ships are regularly welcomed by Oman for Over Seas Deployments. Royal Navy of Oman's sailing vessel 'Shabab Oman' along with INS Tarangini participated in the joint sailing voyage from Muscat to Kochi in end Nov 2015 tracing the ancient trading routes between India and Oman. The joint sailing was to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India-Oman diplomatic ties. Indian Air Force and Indian Navy aircraft regularly utilize Omani Airports for refueling and operational turnaround. Constant and continues senior leadership engagements have facilitated greater bonds of friendship.

#### Agreements and Bilateral Cooperation mechanisms:

Key bilateral agreements/MoUs between India and Oman cover cooperation in Agriculture; Civil Aviation; Avoidance of Double Taxation; Extradition; Manpower, Maritime issues, Joint Investment Fund and Cultural Cooperation, etc. There is also an MoU of cooperation between the State Audit Institution of Oman and the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. MoUs on Legal and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters and on Standards and Measures were also signed in October 2014 between India and Sultanate of Oman. There are Joint Working Group mechanisms for bilateral cooperation in the field of Agriculture, Higher Education and Manpower (or Labour).

#### India-Oman Economic & Commercial Relations

India accords a high priority to expanding its economic and commercial ties with Oman. Institutional mechanisms like Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) and Joint Business Council (JBC) oversee economic cooperation between India and Oman. The 7<sup>th</sup> session of the JCM and the 8<sup>th</sup> JBC (coordinated by FICCI and OCCI) were held in New Delhi in October, 2014 along with Oman-India B2B Roadshows. The dates for next sessions of JCM and JBC are being finalized.

The bilateral trade and investment between India and Oman remain robust and buoyant. Bilateral trade, which saw a decline during 2014-15 and 2015-16, has resumed its upward trend. It rose about 4 per cent from US\$ 3.8 billion in 2015-16 to US\$ 4 billion in 2016-17. Major items of India's exports to Oman include mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; articles of iron or steel; electrical machinery and equipment, textiles and garments, chemicals, tea, coffee, spices, cereals and meat products and seafood. Main items of India's imports from Oman are include fertilizers; mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; bituminous

substances; mineral waxes; aluminum and articles thereof; organic chemicals; salt; sulphur; earths and stone; plastering materials, lime and cement.

*India-Oman Bilateral Trade in US\$ Millions (Source: DGCI&S)*

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>India's Export to Oman</b>	<b>India's Import from Oman</b>	<b>Total Trade</b>
2011-12	1,322.13	3,345.94	4,668.08
2012-13	2,599.49	2,009.72	4,609.21
2013-14	2,812.27	2,951.18	5,763.45
2014-15	2,379.44	1,752.24	4,131.69
2015-16	2,190.89	1,673.00	3,863.86
2016-17	2,731.48	1,275.11	4,006.59

**Bilateral Investment:**

Investment flows, both ways, have also been robust, as reflected in numerous joint ventures (JVs), established both in India and Oman. There are over 2900 Indian enterprises and establishments in Oman with an estimated investment of US\$ 7.5 billion, out of which Indian investments are estimated to be around US\$ 4.5 billion. Indian financial institutions such as State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, HDFC Ltd and ICICI Securities and Public Sector Undertakings such as Air India, Air India Express, Life Insurance Corporation(LIC), New India Assurance Co., Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd.(TCIL), Engineers India Ltd.(EIL), Engineering Projects India Limited (EPIL) and National Building Construction Company (NBCC) have presence in Oman. Indian companies have invested in Oman in sectors like iron and steel, cement, fertilizers, textile, cables, chemicals, automotive, etc., specially in Sohar and Salalah. India-Oman Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF), a JV between State Bank of India and State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) of Oman, a special purpose vehicle to invest in India, has been operational and the initial corpus of US\$ 100 million has been fully utilized. OIJIF has raised another \$ 220 million for the second tranche which is being invested.

**Visit of business delegations:** Indian business delegations regularly visit Oman to participate in important trade exhibitions in Oman. During 2016-17, Indian business delegations coordinated by Chambers including FICCI, FIEO, ESC, TPCI, ICC and PHD CCI as well as independent delegates visited Muscat to participate in various exhibitions in Oman including Big Show, Infra Oman, COMEX IT exhibition, Oman Med-health, Food & Hospitality Oman, Fire & Safety Exhibition, Medical Travel exhibition (IMTEC), Mineral & Mining Exhibition (OMMEC), Omanplast, Interior Design and Décor Furnishing Exhibition, etc. Similarly, Omani business delegations also visit India to participate in exhibitions related to sectors like Health, Ceramics, IT and Electronics, etc. During 2016-17, Omani business delegations visited India to participate in Global Exhibition on Services, Vibrant Ceramics Expo and IndiaSoft IT Exhibition as well as to promote tourism and investment into Oman.

To facilitate business matchmaking with Omani companies for the Indian delegations, the Embassy organized ten Business-to-business meetings in sectors like healthcare, infrastructure, construction, IT, minerals & mining, food & hospitality, ceramics, fire & safety etc. The Embassy also organized two India Business Forums and an 'Invest in India' Seminar.

*Air Links:* Currently, Air India, Air India Express, Indigo, Spice Jet and Jet Airways alongwith Oman Air are operating flights between India and Oman. There are a total of more than 400 direct flights per week between Oman (Muscat and Salalah) and a dozen destinations in India.

**ITEC:** Oman has been optimally availing the allocated slots under the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme. For FY 2017-18, 100 training slots have been allotted for Oman. India has also offered increased number of slots under the self-financing category of the ITEC for training in Indian defence institutions to Oman Navy (officers & sailors).

### **Cultural Cooperation**

India and Oman have close cultural relations. The vibrant Indian expatriate community in Oman regularly hosts cultural performances and invites celebrity artistes and singers from India. A MoU for cultural cooperation was signed between the two countries in 2010. National Archives of India and the National Records and Archive Authority of Oman (NRAA) actively cooperate under the MoU. First ever Festival of India in Oman was organized by Embassy of India, with the support of Ministry of Culture, India, during November 2016-March 2017. The Festival was inaugurated by Foreign Minister of Oman, H.E. Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah.

In celebration of 70 years of India's Independence, Embassy of India, Muscat, hosted a Special Reception on 15th August 2017. The Embassy has been organizing, since August 2017, a series of events including as dance performances, music performances, theatre festival, painting exhibition, seminars, quiz, essay and painting competitions, etc. and will conclude with a Special Reception on 15 August 2018. Indian Social Club of Oman as well as Indian Schools are also being fully involved in celebration of India@70. To mark the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Day of Yoga on 21 June 2017, around 4,500 persons including Omanis, members of Indian community, members of other expatriate communities, Diplomatic Corps and students joined the yoga session held at Oman International Exhibition Centre.

## **Indian Community in Oman**

Number of Indian expatriates is 8,00,749 (as on April 2017) and the number of Indian workers including professionals in Oman is about 6,90,163 (as on October 2017). The large, diverse and highly regarded expatriate Indian community in Oman is spread over the entire spectrum of professions. Thousands of Indians are working as doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, teachers, lecturers, nurses, managers, etc. A large number of Indian doctors work in Oman in Government hospitals and in clinics in the private sector. There are also some Indian academics in the Sultan Qaboos University's various departments and faculties.

Indian community in Oman is organized under the Indian Social clubs in Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Sur. These clubs have a number of sub-groups called linguistic wings which cater to the cultural and social needs of their members, for example, Indian Social Club in Muscat has 25 linguistic wings catering to all social requirements of Indian community. There are 19 Indian schools offering CBSE syllabus catering to the educational needs of about 45,000 Indian children. The Board of Directors is responsible for managing of Indian Schools in Oman.

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: Shri Kanaksi Khimji (2003), Dr. P. Mohamed Ali (2004), P.N.C. Menon (2009), S.K. Virmani (2010), Kiran Asher (2012) R.M Parakh (2015).

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### ***Useful Resources:***

Embassy of India, Muscat website: <http://www.indemb-oman.org/>

Embassy's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Embassy-of-India-Muscat/142625425804515>

Embassy's Twitter Account: **Indemb\_Muscat**

Embassy's YouTube Channel: [Indian Embassy Muscat](#)

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