

India-Oman Relations

The relationship between the Republic of India and the Sultanate of Oman is marked by trade and people-to-people communications that date back to ancient times.

Along with trade relations there are several defence and cultural cooperation agreements which complement the India-Oman relations.

India-Oman relations is an important topic covered in the International Relations segment of the UPSC Mains Exam.

History of the India-Oman Relations

Archaeological excavations in Oman have shown that India had trade relations in the region dating back to thousands of years. At one point of time Tipu Sultan even sent a diplomatic mission for establishing relations with the Sultanate of Oman. Oman would become a British protectorate in 1891, which it would continue to be until it shook off the protectorate status during the decolonization of the Middle-East in the 1950s.

An Indian consulate was opened in Muscat in February 1955 which was upgraded to a consulate general in 1960 and later into a full-fledged embassy in 1971. The first ambassador of India arrived in Muscat in 1973. Oman established its embassy in New Delhi in 1972 and a consulate general in Mumbai in 1976. Cordial diplomatic relations between the two nations have existed ever since then.

Cultural Ties of India-Oman Relations

Both Oman and India have strong cultural ties. This is further reinforced by the presence of a large number of Indian expatriates living in Oman, who organise cultural events in the country from time to time.

India is a major destination for Omani students pursuing higher studies and in recent years there have been increasing numbers of medical tourists coming into the country from Oman. Oman has also been trying to promote itself as a tourist destination in India.

Economic relations

Economic cooperation between the two countries is overseen by Joint Commission Meeting and Joint Business Council. These two institutes look into matters of bilateral trade and cooperation. The investments between India and Oman have been constant with an upward trend. The value of trade between the two nations rose from \$ 3.8 billion in 2015-2016 to \$ 4 billion in 2016-2017.

There are 2900 Indian enterprises and establishments who have invested close to \$ 4.5 billion in Oman. Certain Indian companies such as Air India, Bank of Baroda, New India Assurance CO have made investments in aviation, banking etc. Other avenues of investment include iron and steel, cements, chemicals, automotives, fertilizers, textiles etc.

Defence Relations

Oman is the first nation in the Persian Gulf to have formal defence relations with India. Both countries conducted joint military exercises in 2006 and later signed a defence agreement. The India Navy has berthing rights in Oman and has used the ports to conduct anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. The Indian Air Force has also been holding biannual joint exercises with the Royal Air Force of Oman since 2006.

Oman also sought India's assistance in fencing the border it shared with Yemen due to the growing unrest over there.

The standard issue rifle of the Royal Army of Oman is India's INSAS rifle. Naseem al-Bahr Naseem al-Bahr is a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Oman. The exercise was first held in 1993. The tenth edition was held in January 2016.

Relevant Questions for India-Oman Relations

What is the latest development regarding the defence in India-Oman relations?

In February 2018, India announced that it had secured access to the facilities at Duqm for the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy. Duqm had previously served as a port for the INS Mumbai.

How many expats from India are there in Oman currently?

As of October 2020, there are about 499,431 Indian expats living in Oman. The number of expats came down in wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in which many of them elected to return to India for a variety of reasons.

How is the strategic relations with Oman favourable to India?

The Sultanate of Oman is a strategic partner of India in the Gulf and an important member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC), Arab League and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). This helps in India in expanding its influence in the region through a reliable strategic partner.

